

A Guide to Himachal

This 10-day circuit is a journey through Himachal's high-altitude soul — from the apple valleys of Kinnaur to the stark moonscapes of Spiti. You'll cross ancient monasteries, fossil-rich villages, and the world's highest post office, all while tracing the Sutlej and Spiti rivers through some of India's most dramatic terrain.

Trip Overview

Duration: 10 Days

Best Season: May to October (*roads open; Gue, Hikkim, Komic accessible*)

Total Distance: ~1,000–1,200 km

Vehicle Type: SUV / High Clearance (*essential for Spiti stretch*)

Difficulty: Moderate to Challenging (*altitude, rough roads, long drives*)

Permits: No permits for Indian nationals; foreign nationals need ILP for Kinnaur–Spiti border zones

Mobile Network: Jio/BSNL in Shimla, Rampur, Kalpa, Kaza; no signal in Hikkim, Komic, Gue

Fuel Planning: Pumps in Shimla, Rampur, Kalpa, Kaza; top up before Nako–Kaza leg

Day-by-Day Itinerary

Day 1: Shimla → Narkanda → Rampur

- **Distance/Time:** ~130 km | 5–6 hrs
 - **Highlights:**
 - Apple orchards, Hatu Peak detour, Satluj river descent
 - **Adventure:** Short hike to Hatu Peak (*optional*)
 - **Stay:** Rampur
 - **Tip:** Fuel up at Rampur for Kinnaur leg
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Day 2: Rampur → Sarahan → Sangla

- **Distance/Time:** ~100 km | 4–5 hrs
- **Highlights:**
 - Visit **Bhimakali Temple** in Sarahan
 - Drive through Karcham dam into Baspa Valley
- **Adventure:** Riverside walk in Sangla

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- **Stay:** Sangla
 - **Tip:** Sarahan temple closes by 6 pm
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Day 3: Sangla → Chitkul → Nako

- **Distance/Time:** ~150 km | 6–7 hrs
 - **Highlights:**
 - **Chitkul** — last village before Indo-Tibet border
 - Drive to **Nako Lake** and monastery
 - **Adventure:** Walk along Baspa river; explore Nako village
 - **Stay:** Nako
 - **Tip:** Carry snacks; limited food options en route
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Day 4: Nako → Tabo → Dhankar

- **Distance/Time:** ~120 km | 5–6 hrs
 - **Highlights:**
 - Visit **Tabo Monastery** — over 1,000 years old
 - Climb to **Dhankar Monastery** and lake (*optional hike*)
 - **Adventure:** Sunset views from Dhankar cliff
 - **Stay:** Dhankar or Kaza
 - **Tip:** Tabo's frescoes best viewed in morning light
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Day 5: Kaza → Hikkim → Komic → Langza

- **Distance/Time:** ~60 km round trip | 4–5 hrs
- **Highlights:**
 - **Hikkim** — world's highest post office
 - **Komic** — highest village with a motorable road
 - **Langza** — fossil hunting and Buddha statue
- **Adventure:** Send a postcard from Hikkim

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- **Stay:** Kaza
 - **Tip:** Acclimatize properly before exertion
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Day 6: Kaza → Gue → Kalpa

- **Distance/Time:** ~200 km | 8–10 hrs
 - **Highlights:**
 - Visit **Gue Mummy** — 500-year-old naturally preserved monk
 - Scenic descent into Kinnaur
 - **Adventure:** Stop at **Reckong Peo** for views of Kinner Kailash
 - **Stay:** Kalpa
 - **Tip:** Best sunrise views from Kalpa ridge
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Day 7: Kalpa exploration

- **Highlights:**
 - Visit **Hu Bu Lan Kar Monastery, Suicide Point**, apple orchards
 - **Adventure:** Short hike to **Chaka Meadows** (*optional*)
 - **Stay:** Kalpa
 - **Tip:** Try local Himachali siddu and chutney
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Day 8: Kalpa → Rampur → Narkanda

- **Distance/Time:** ~150 km | 5–6 hrs
 - **Highlights:**
 - Scenic drive along Satluj
 - Optional detour to **Stokes Farm**
 - **Adventure:** Sunset walk at Narkanda ridge
 - **Stay:** Narkanda
 - **Tip:** Carry warm layers — nights get cold
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Day 9: Narkanda → Kufri → Shimla

- **Distance/Time:** ~70 km | 3–4 hrs
 - **Highlights:**
 - Visit **Kufri Nature Park, Jakhu Temple, The Ridge**
 - **Adventure:** Café hop on Mall Road
 - **Stay:** Shimla
 - **Tip:** Book dinner with valley view
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Day 10: Shimla → Return / Buffer

- **Options:**
 - Rest day, shopping, or buffer for weather delays
 - **Finish:** Shimla (*trip end*)
 - **Tip:** Visit **Annandale Army Museum** (*optional*)
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Essentials to Carry

- **Documents:** DL, RC, insurance, ID proofs; ILP for foreign nationals
 - **Clothing:** Layered warm gear, gloves, rain jacket
 - **Footwear:** Waterproof trekking shoes
 - **Health:** Diamox (if advised), ORS, portable oxygen, basic meds
 - **Gear:** Tyre inflator, puncture kit, tow strap, jerrycans (20–30 L), headlamps, power banks
 - **Navigation:** Offline maps, paper backup of routes
 - **Misc:** Sunglasses, SPF 50+, lip balm, snacks, thermos
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Permits, Fuel & Checkpoints

- **Permits:**
 - No permits for Indian nationals

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- Foreign nationals need ILP for Kinnaur–Spiti border zones (*apply in Reckong Peo or Kaza*)
 - **Fuel:**
 - Reliable pumps: Shimla, Rampur, Kalpa, Kaza
 - Top up before Nako–Kaza leg
 - **Checkpoints:**
 - Police checks near Kaza, Gue, and Reckong Peo
 - **Timing Tips:**
 - Start early on long drive days
 - Avoid driving after dark in Spiti
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Insider Tips

- **Best season:** May–June for bloom; Sept–Oct for clear skies
 - **Photography:** Langza Buddha, Dhankar cliff, Kalpa sunrise
 - **Local eats:** Try thukpa in Kaza, siddu in Kalpa, rajma in Sangla
 - **Eco-ethic:** No littering; respect monastery customs
 - **Road caution:** Nako–Tabo and Kaza–Kalpa stretches are narrow and landslide-prone
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Route Map Overview (Text)

Shimla → Narkanda → Rampur → Sarahan → Sangla → Chitkul → Nako → Tabo → Dhankar → Kaza → Hikkim → Komic → Langza → Gue → Kalpa → Rampur → Narkanda → Kufri → Shimla