

A Guide to Himachal

This 6-day circuit is a slow-travel immersion into Himachal's forested interior — where ancient deodar groves meet sacred meadows, and villages like Shanshar and Upper Neuli preserve centuries-old architecture and rituals. From the ridge roads of Lapah to the temple clusters of Shangarh, this loop is perfect for nature lovers, cultural explorers, and offbeat storytellers.

Trip Overview

Duration: 6 Days

Best Season: April to November (*GHNP buffer zones open; meadows accessible*)

Total Distance: ~300–350 km

Vehicle Type: SUV / High Clearance (*small cars possible but not ideal for Upper Neuli stretch*)

Difficulty: Easy to Moderate (*steep climbs, narrow forest roads*)

Permits: No permits required for Indian nationals; GHNP core zone requires separate trekking permit

Mobile Network: Jio/BSNL in Kullu, Sainj; patchy or no signal in Lapah, Shanshar, Upper Neuli

Fuel Planning: Reliable pumps in Kullu; top up before Lapah leg

Day-by-Day Itinerary

Day 1: Kullu → Lapah

- **Distance/Time:** ~60 km | 3–4 hrs
 - **Highlights:**
 - Forested ascent into **Lapah village** — ridge views, slate-roofed homes
 - Visit **Lapah Temple** and local shrines
 - **Adventure:** Sunset walk to **Lapah ridge viewpoint**
 - **Stay:** Lapah homestay
 - **Tip:** Carry snacks and cash — no ATMs or shops beyond Sainj
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Day 2: Lapah → Shanshar

- **Distance/Time:** ~40 km | 2–3 hrs
- **Highlights:**

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- Drive through dense deodar forests
 - Arrival in **Shanshar** — gateway to GHNP buffer zone
 - **Adventure:** Short walk to **Shanshar meadow** and **temple cluster**
 - **Stay:** Shanshar guesthouse
 - **Tip:** Respect local customs — meadows are sacred
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Day 3: Shanshar → Upper Neuli

- **Distance/Time:** ~30 km | 2–3 hrs
 - **Highlights:**
 - Remote climb to **Upper Neuli** — quiet hamlet with panoramic views
 - Visit **Neuli Temple** and forest trails
 - **Adventure:** Guided walk into GHNP buffer zone (*optional*)
 - **Stay:** Upper Neuli cottage or camp
 - **Tip:** No mobile signal — inform contacts in advance
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Day 4: Upper Neuli → Ropa → Shangarh

- **Distance/Time:** ~60 km | 3–4 hrs
 - **Highlights:**
 - Scenic descent into **Ropa Valley**
 - Arrival in **Shangarh** — sacred meadow and temple complex
 - **Adventure:** Sunset walk across **Shangarh Meadow**
 - **Stay:** Shangarh homestay
 - **Tip:** Photography restricted inside temple sanctums
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Day 5: Shangarh → Sainj → Kullu

- **Distance/Time:** ~80 km | 3–4 hrs
- **Highlights:**
 - Visit **Sainj village**, **GHNP interpretation center**, and **Deohari viewpoint**

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- Return to **Kullu town**
 - **Adventure:** Optional detour to **Raison beach**
 - **Stay:** Kullu
 - **Tip:** Explore local market for woolens and handicrafts
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Day 6: Buffer / Return

- **Options:**
 - Rest day, shopping, or buffer for weather delays
 - **Finish:** Kullu (*trip end*)
 - **Tip:** Visit **Naggar Castle** or **Bijli Mahadev Temple** (*optional*)
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Essentials to Carry

- **Documents:** DL, RC, insurance, ID proofs
 - **Clothing:** Warm layers, rain jacket, trekking gear
 - **Footwear:** Hiking shoes, sandals for riverside walks
 - **Health:** Basic meds, ORS, insect repellent
 - **Gear:** Power banks, torch, offline maps, camera
 - **Misc:** Sunglasses, SPF 50+, lip balm, reusable water bottle
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Permits, Fuel & Checkpoints

- **Permits:**
 - No permits required for Indian nationals
 - GHNP core zone requires trekking permit (*apply in Sainj*)
- **Fuel:**
 - Reliable pumps: Kullu
 - Top up before Lapah leg
- **Checkpoints:**
 - Occasional forest check near GHNP buffer zone

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- **Timing Tips:**

- Start early on forest road days
- Avoid driving after dark in Upper Neuli stretch

- **Insider Tips**

- **Best season:** April–June for bloom; Sept–Nov for clear skies
- **Photography:** Shangarh Meadow, Lapah ridge, Upper Neuli forest trails
- **Local eats:** Try siddu, red rice, and trout curry in Shangarh and Sainj
- **Eco-ethic:** No littering; respect sacred meadows and temple zones
- **Road caution:** Lapah and Upper Neuli stretches require slow, careful driving

- **Route Map Overview (Text)**

Kullu → Lapah → Shanshar → Upper Neuli → Ropa → Shangarh → Sainj → Kullu