

A traveller's guide



Delve deep into the valleys of Kinnaur & Spiti

*TRIP STARTS FROM SHIMLA
AND FINISHES IN SHIMLA*

Spiti offers fabulous monasteries, breathtaking high-altitude walks and awe inspiring views of the world's highest mountains. The Manali - Kaza road opens after snow has melted over the 4600mtr Kunzum pass. Those planning to visit Spiti between May and early June, will have to travel to the valley through Kinnaur and head back the same route. Early in the season they get to experience the onset of Autumn with apple and apricot blossoms in bloom with upper reaches of the mountains still covered in snow.

In May you'll get to experience 3 seasons as you travel up the valley. Up until Tabo you will experience spring. As you reach Kaza you'll notice plant life is just waking up while around Losar water is still frozen.



Life in Spiti provides everything the soul needs to thrive.

From the fragrance of the mountains to the flow of clear springs. The rhythmic chants of the monks, the whirl of the wind across the river valley. The golden rays of the morning sun and the gentle warmth of the crimson orb at the end of the day.

In Spiti you'll learn that there is more than one path into the future – a path based on the co-evolution between humans and earth. At first the outsider will see the hars life, but give yourself time and you'll see the rare kind of purity the people live by.





Day 1- Chandigarh - Narkanda

Driving time -6hrs

Distance -175kms

You'll meet our driver in Chandigarh who would drive you up to Narkanda. Your day begins with a gradual ascend through the Shivalik range driving through pine forest to spend the night at the charming Tethey's resort where a bonfire awaits you.

As we ease you into the adventure that awaits, allow yourself to take in the smells and sights of the mountains. The drive close to Narkanda is along dense deodar forests and apple orchards.

A night at 2700mts will acclimatize you well before the higher Himalayas and on route you can enjoy a lunch in one of the many Dhabas. Your driver will know the best one.

We recommend you fly into Chandigarh before noon to make the most of the property and so that you can walk around the forest in the area as well.



Day 2-Narkanda - Sangla

Driving time -6hrs

Distance -165kms



The day starts with a drive on the Indo-Tibetan highway through the Shimla hills covered with Pine and Deodhar trees. As you enter Kinnaur with its jaw dropping mountain and valley scenery, a distinctive cultural change and mix emerges from Hindu to Tibetan Buddhist. Proud and friendly, Kinnauris can be recognized by their short cylindrical cap. This is a land of ridge-villages with slate-roofed temples and apple orchards separated by gorges and snowcapped peaks.



You can spend the evening visiting the Kamru fort known for its tower-like wooden structure. According to a folklore there are about 33 crore gods and goddesses residing in the fort. You can also opt for a stroll around some of the other villages in Sangla or make a day trip to Chitkul.

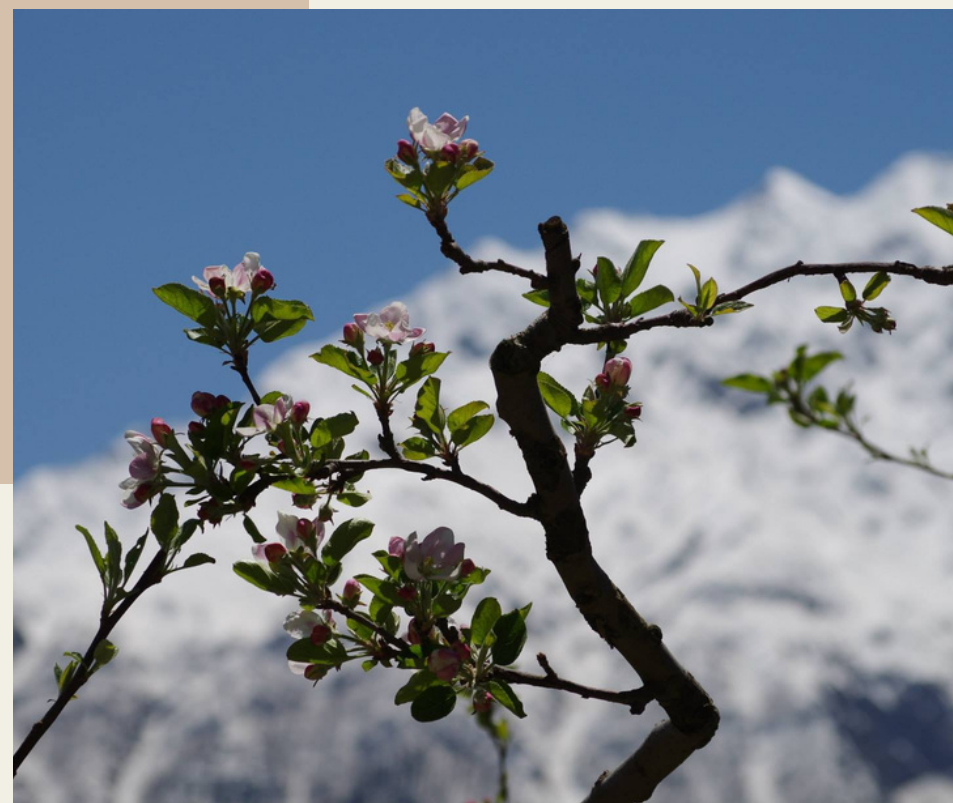
Day 3 - Sangla - Kanam - Nako

Driving time -6hrs

Distance -155kms



The change in landscape, architecture, clothing and religion is even starker today. Coniferous forest gives way to desolate mountains. While the Kinnauri hat remains, you'll see women wear jewelry using turquoise. Slate roofs give way to flat Tibetan roofs and Dhabas sell momos. Short of Nako you will cross the confluence of the Satluj (with its source at Mansoravar lake) and Spiti river before starting a steep climb. En route you will spend time at the rarely visited Kanam monastery where the first translation of Buddhist philosophy into an European language took place by a Hungarian monk. Part of the western Tibet or Guge Empire, Nako means 'the place from where one starts a pilgrimage'. Dating back to the 11th century, Nako monastery is one of the most important gompas in the region and was built during the second propagation of Buddhism in Tibet.



Day 4- Nako - Gyu - Tabo

Driving time -3hrs

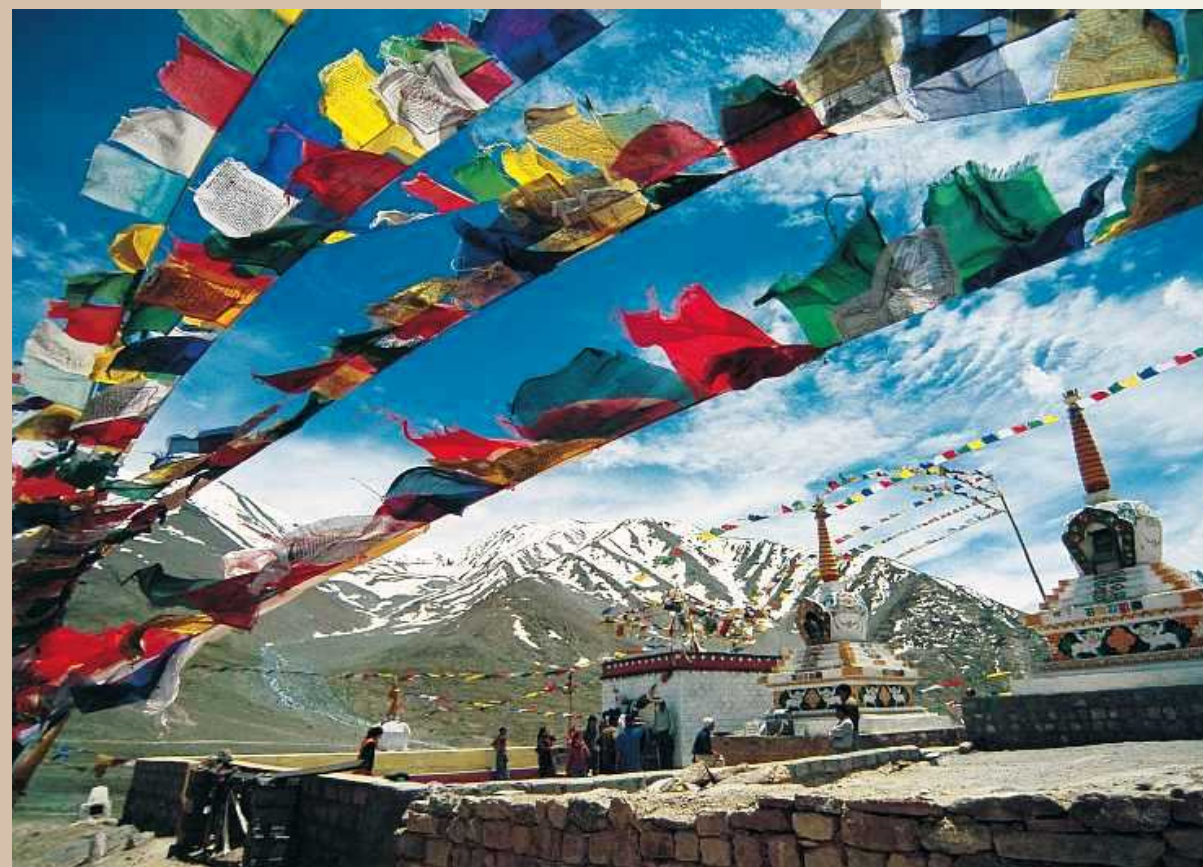
Distance -75kms



As you make your way from Nako to Gyu you head deeper into Trans Himalayan range. This isolated settlement is famous for its 500yr old mummified monk. The nails, teeth and hair of the mummy appear as if of a living person.

Recent research papers suggest that the monk underwent self-mummification, a ritual undertaken by highly devoted spiritual masters who would starve themselves to death to reach the highest form of enlightenment.

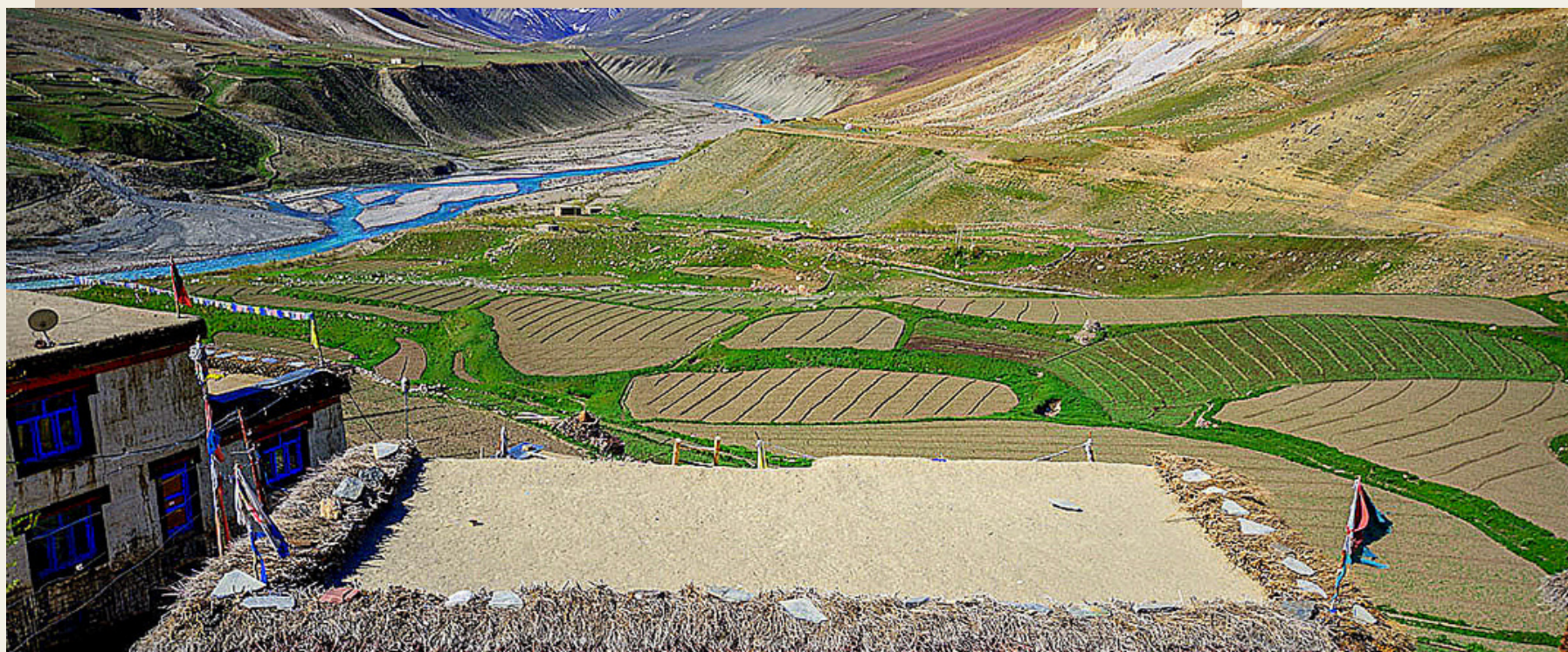
Whilst driving next to the turquoise-grey ribbon of the Spiti river from Gyu you'll be passing scattered villages throughout this serrated moonscape until you reach Tabo monastery. Built in 996AD, Tabo is regarded as the oldest continuously operating Buddhist enclaves in the Himalayas. Built on a Bon temple, the monastery is one of the highlights of Spiti with unique architecture and a plethora of wall paintings and mud statues.



Day 5 - Tabo - Dhankar - Lalung - Sagnam

Driving time -3hrs

Distance -50kms



Dhankar is less than an hour from Tabo where the highlight is a 1200 years old crag-top temple and fort, creating one of the most spectacular sights in Spiti. This was the former capital of the Spiti kings.

The drive from Dhankar to Lalung is along a ridge with beautiful views of the confluence of Pin and Spiti river. Built during the second propagation of Buddhism in the 11th century, this outwardly modest monastery is actually an antique gem. The main chapel has interior walls lavished on three sides with an extraordinary array of colorful mud plaster sculptures.

For the night you'll head to Sagnam to be with the incredible Soni and Karma. Soni left her job to serve the elders in their valley. 'This is my kora', Karma will tell you. Their homestay where you will stay now supports the old age home.

They will teach you how to make Spitian food and won't take no for an answer when they try to overfeed you.



Day 6 - Sagnam - Mud - Kaza
Driving time - 3hrs
Distance -55kms

The day starts with a short hike towards the Pin valley national park from Mud. Depending on your luck you could sight some raptors, mountain goats, fox, weasels and even signs of a snow leopard. On your way to Kaza you can visit the Kungri nunnery. Unlike monks, most nuns become one out of choice and not compulsion. The devotion and dedication to which they practice the dharma will help you understand the role Buddhism plays in the lives of Spitians. On arrival in Kaza you will be welcomed by Simba and Karan at Deyzor, your home for the next two nights. As much an ethnographic museum as it is a Hotel, you will find a collection of artifacts from Spiti gathered to showcase the culture and history of the region.





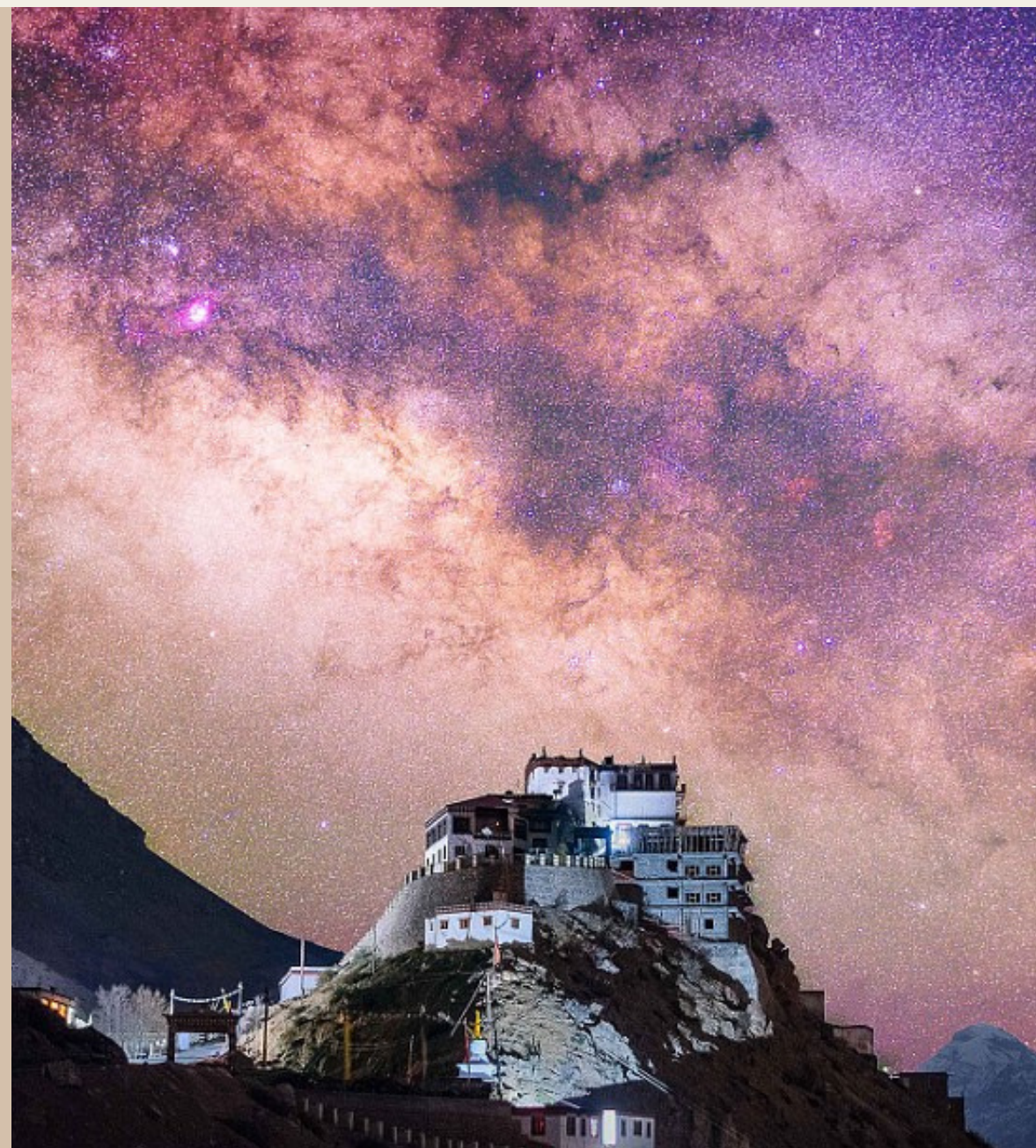
Day 7 - Kaza - Demul - Komic - Hikkim -Langza - Kaza

Driving time - 4hrs 30min

Distance - 70kms

The day starts with a drive from Demul to Komic. For anyone interested in geology the views of different strata tilted at all conceivable angles tell us the story of the land we live on. The stunning drive leads you to one of the highest inhabited places in the world at 4600mts. The views are breathtaking and Komic also has a monastery from the 13th century.

Fancy sending your loved ones a postcard from the world's highest post office? A short drive from Komic to Hikkim will allow you to do so. Lunch will be organized at a homestay at Langza and you can also try your hand at digging for marine fossils some of them being over 100million year old.



Day 8 - Kaza - Ki - Tashi gang - Kaza
Driving time -3hrs
Distance - 60kms

The day however starts with a visit to Ki monastery. Covering a conical hillock with whitewashed monastic buildings, Ki gompa is one of the most photographed sights of Himachal and houses nearly 300 monks. Also making it the largest in the area. In the upper library, is the bed that was used by the Dalai Lama during his visits in 1960 and 2000.

From Ki you head to Tashi gang, a hamlet of 30. An hour trek from Tashi gang is a meditation cave with carvings which is still in use. The trek to the cave is easy and you'll probably have the company of a Griffon hovering above you. Views while heading to Tashi gang around Gete are amongst the most stunning in the area and you will see for yourself that the giant rock mountains around could not have been carved by any mortal hand but only by the force of wind and water over millennia

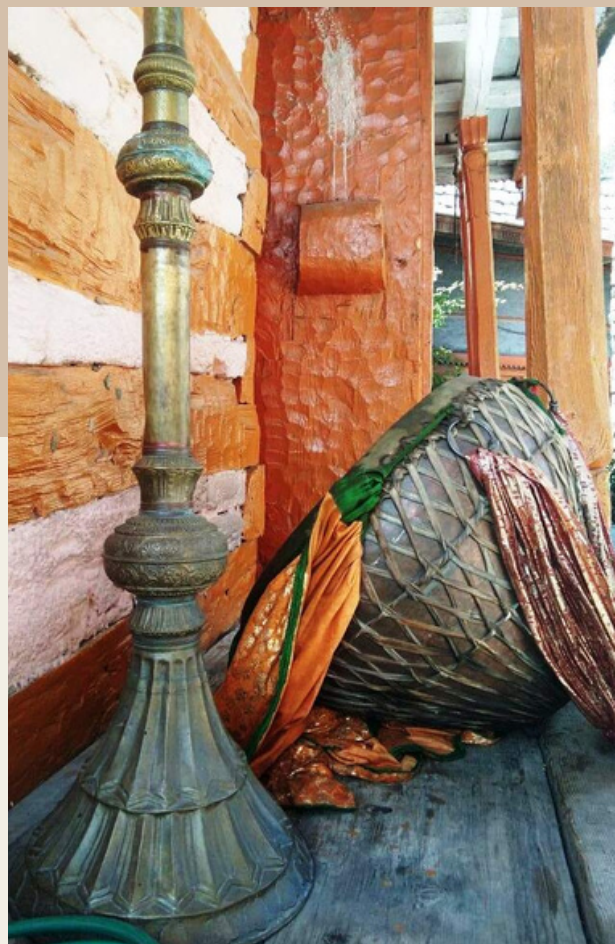


Day 9 - Kaza - Kalpa
Driving time -7hrs
Distance -220kms



On the last day of the trip and you can reflect on everything you saw and experienced while travelling. As you exist this spectacular landscape with jagged peaks, arid mountains, fluttering prayer flags and whitewashed stupas, you can excuse yourself for feeling overwhelmed.

From Kaza you make your way to Kalpa, with the Sutlej River below dashing through deep gorges. The winding mountain road is bordered by chilgoza forests and your evening can be spent walking around the charming village of Kalpa admiring the Apple blossoms. If that does not do it for you then the stunning views of the Kinner-Kailash ranges will sure do.





Day 10 - Kalpa-Chandigarh
Driving time - 9hrs
Distance - 335kms

Its a long drive back to the heat of the plains but if you wish to make your drive on the last day more interesting then we recommend a stop at the Bhimakali temple in Sarahan.



Day 1- Chandigarh - Narkanda

Driving time -6/7hrs, Distance -175kms, Accommodation at - Tethy's

Day 2- Narkanda - Sangla

Driving time -5hrs 30min, Distance -165kms, Accommodation at - Kinner camps

Day 4 Sangla - Kanam - Nako

Driving time -6hrs, Distance -155kms, Accommodation at - Kinner camps

Day 5- Nako - Gyu - Tabo

Driving time -3hrs, Distance -75kms, Accommodation at - Maitreya Regency

Day 6 - Tabo - Dhankar - Lalung - Sagnam

Driving time -3hrs, Distance -50kms, Accommodation at - Soni and Karma Homestay

Day 7- Sagnam - Mud - Kaza

Driving time -3hrs, Distance -55kms, Accommodation at - Hotel Deyzor

Day 8- Kaza - Demul - Komic - Hikkim - Langza - Kaza

Driving time -4hrs 30min, Distance -70kms, Accommodation at - Hotel Deyzor

Day 9- Kaza - Ki - Gete - Tashi gang - Kaza

Driving time -3hrs, Distance -60kms, Accommodation at - Hotel Deyzor

Day 10 - Kaza - Kalpa

Driving time -7hrs, Distance -220kms, Accommodation at - Grand Shambala

Day 11 - Kalpa - Chandigarh

Driving time - 9hrs, Distance - 335kms