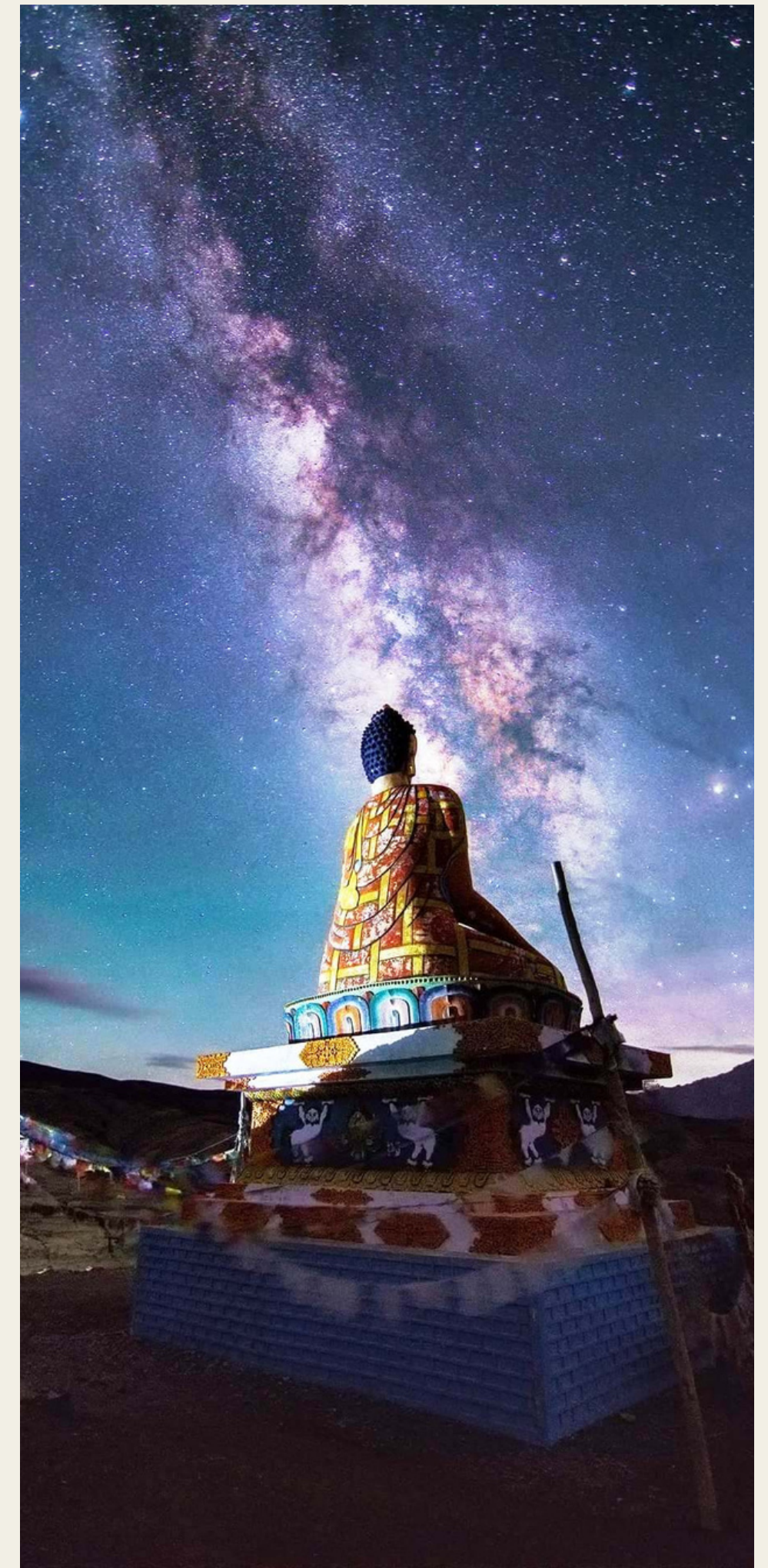




Spitian delights

Spiti offers fabulous monasteries, breathtaking high-altitude walks, awe inspiring views of the world's highest mountains, endemic wildlife and some of the most likeable people you will ever meet.

To experience all of this you need time. This itinerary includes the highlights of the valley. You'll get to enjoy Spitian hospitality while staying in homestays, treks to high altitude lake, visit nunneries and monasteries and stay at the finest hotels on the way.



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 hard life, but give yourself time and you'll see the rare kind of purity the people live by.





Day 1- Chandigarh - Shimla

Driving time -3hrs

Distance -105kms

Himachal's capital and one of India's most popular hill stations, Shimla has a few secrets beyond the dwindling relics of its previous incarnation as the summer capital of British India. With plenty of forest walks to choose from or a pleasant stroll on the Mall road. With its relaxed atmosphere, green river valleys and vistas over distant mountain ranges, Shimla is the ideal place to ready yourself for the adventure that lies ahead. Madhavi is your host at the quaint Sunnymead heritage cottage for the first night. Situated on the edge of an Oak and Rhododendron Forest, the estate is surrounded by floral gardens, with stunning mountain views.





Day 2- Shimla - Kanam - Pooh

Driving time -9hrs

Distance -310kms

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.

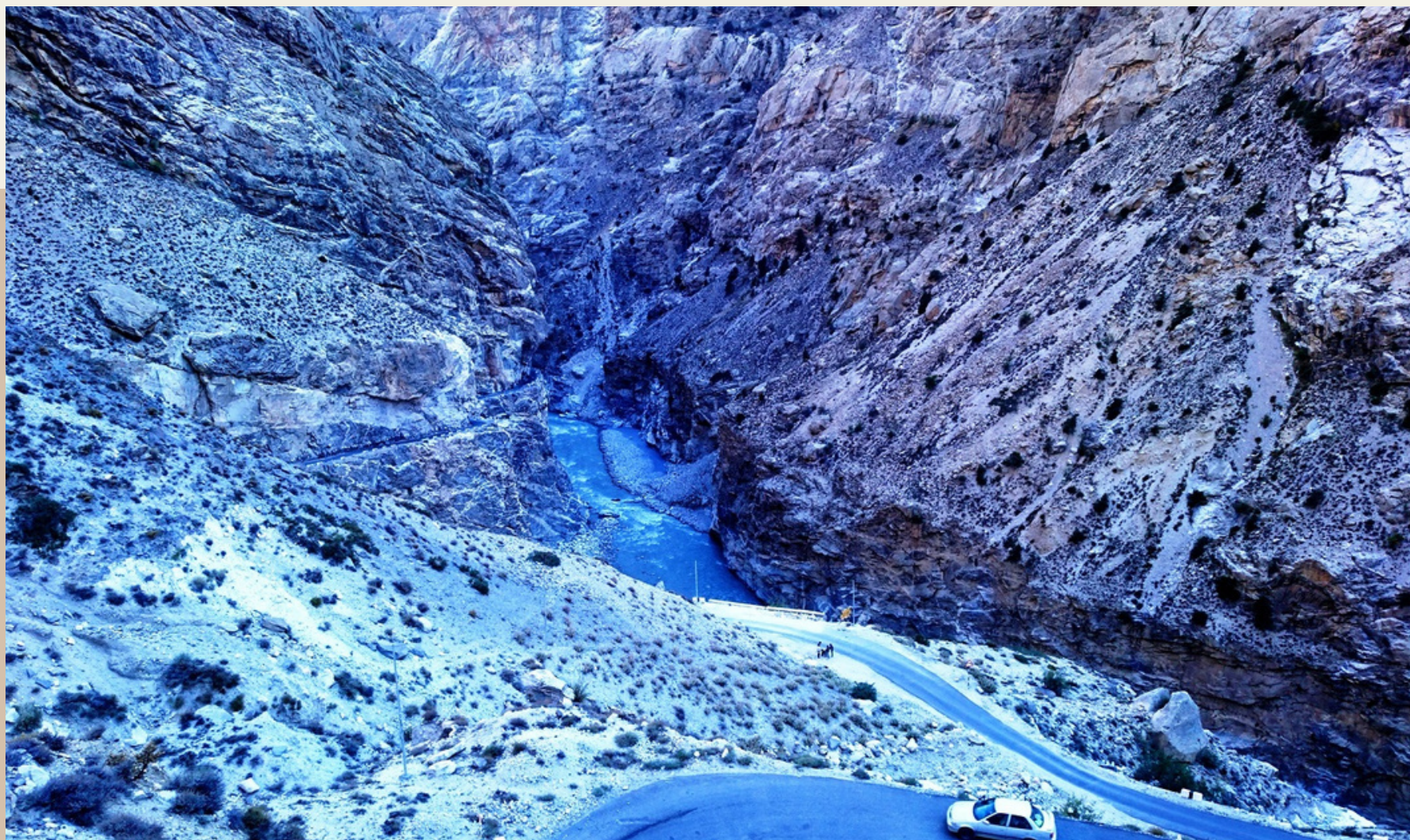


En route you will spend time at the rarely visited Kanam monastery where the first translation of Buddhist philosophy into a European language took place. From there you make your way to Pooh which has served as a gateway to the Buddhist heritage of the Himalayas. Part of the western Tibet or Guge Empire, at Pooh your host will be Tenzin Negi. His house has one of the more important temples of the village and you can also visit the cave of lama Govind, the mountain Yogi who has been meditating in different caves in Kinnaur for the last two decades.

Day 3 - Pooh - Nako - Gyu -Tabo

Driving time -5hrs

Distance -110kms



Nako is a short drive from Pooh where you'll be taken for a walk around the village with a local guide. Built around a lake with narrow streets, stone and mud-brick houses, the setting is magical. After Nako you'll head to Gyu to see the mummy of a 15th-century Buddhist monk. Recent research papers suggest that the monk underwent self-mummification. A ritual undertaken by highly devoted and able spiritual masters who would starve themselves to death very slowly in order to reach the highest form of enlightenment.

From Gyu passing scattered villages in this serrated moonscape while driving next to the turquoise-grey ribbon of the Spiti river you would reach Tabo monastery. Built in 996AD, Tabo is regarded as the oldest continuously operating Buddhist enclave in the Himalayas. Built on a Bon temple, the monastery is one of the highlights of Spiti with a plethora of wall paintings



Day 4-Tabo -Mane
Driving time -45min
Distance -25kms



Lobzang's homestay at Mane will be your home for the next 2 nights. Before reaching her you'll halt for a short stop to explore 1500 year old rock carvings showcasing Buddhist and pre Buddhist symbols on rocks. At Lobzang's you can try your hand at making Arak (local brew), weaving, tending to animals or any other daily activities. In their haste to tick off a tourist list, many forget that its the people that make the experience, not monuments. With Lobzang you'll realise this yourself Her resourcefulness and creativity is hard not to admire. You can spend a part of the second day with her collecting wild teas and herbs and if the time of the year permits, you can help her harvest either indigenous barley and black peas, or the sweetest green peas you have ever tasted. While Spiti may be a harsh place with long winters, nature compensates adequately and a day in the fields of Mane is sure to be rejuvenating.

Day 5 - Mane - Mane lake - Mane



On your second day at Mane you'll spend the afternoon with the inspiring women from the self help group Lobzang is associated with. These women crochet handicrafts, weave and you can get a lesson with them too. Lobzang's house is built using the traditional rammed earth technique and she will take you through the benefits of such a construction in this high altitude desert. You'll visit other traditional houses as well and experience for yourself the benefits and differences in living in either of them. If there is a traditional house being built you'll get a chance to participate in it.

You can also opt for a three hour trek that takes you to Mane lake situated at the base of the Manerang glacier. If you're lucky you may come across the Bharal (Blue sheep) which is a mix between a goat and a sheep, the Tibetan fox and also the Stone Martyn. This area is full of Partridges, Vultures and Eagles



Day 6 - Mane - Dhankar - Lalung - Sagnam

Driving time -3hrs

Distance -60kms



Dhankar is less than an hour from Mane where the highlight is a 1200 year 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 the Pin and Spiti rivers. 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. Similarly Karma when referring to her dedication to their work will tell you 'This is my kora'. Their homestay where you will stay supports their work at the old age home. With them you can learn how to make Spitian food and they will not take no for an answer when they offer you second and third helpings.





Day 7 - Sagnam - Kungri - Sagnam

Driving time - 30min

Distance - 15kms

The day starts with a short hike towards the Pin valley national park with your hosts. Depending on your luck you could sight some raptors, mountain goats, fox, weasels and even signs of a snow leopard. A few locals from Sagnam have summer houses and fields close to the national park which will make an ideal setting for lunch.

Karma's sister is a nun at the Kungri nunnery and in the evening you can spend time interacting with the nuns there. Unlike monks, most nuns become one out of choice and not compulsion. The devotion and dedication to which they practice their dharma will help you understand the role Buddhism plays in the lives of Spitians.

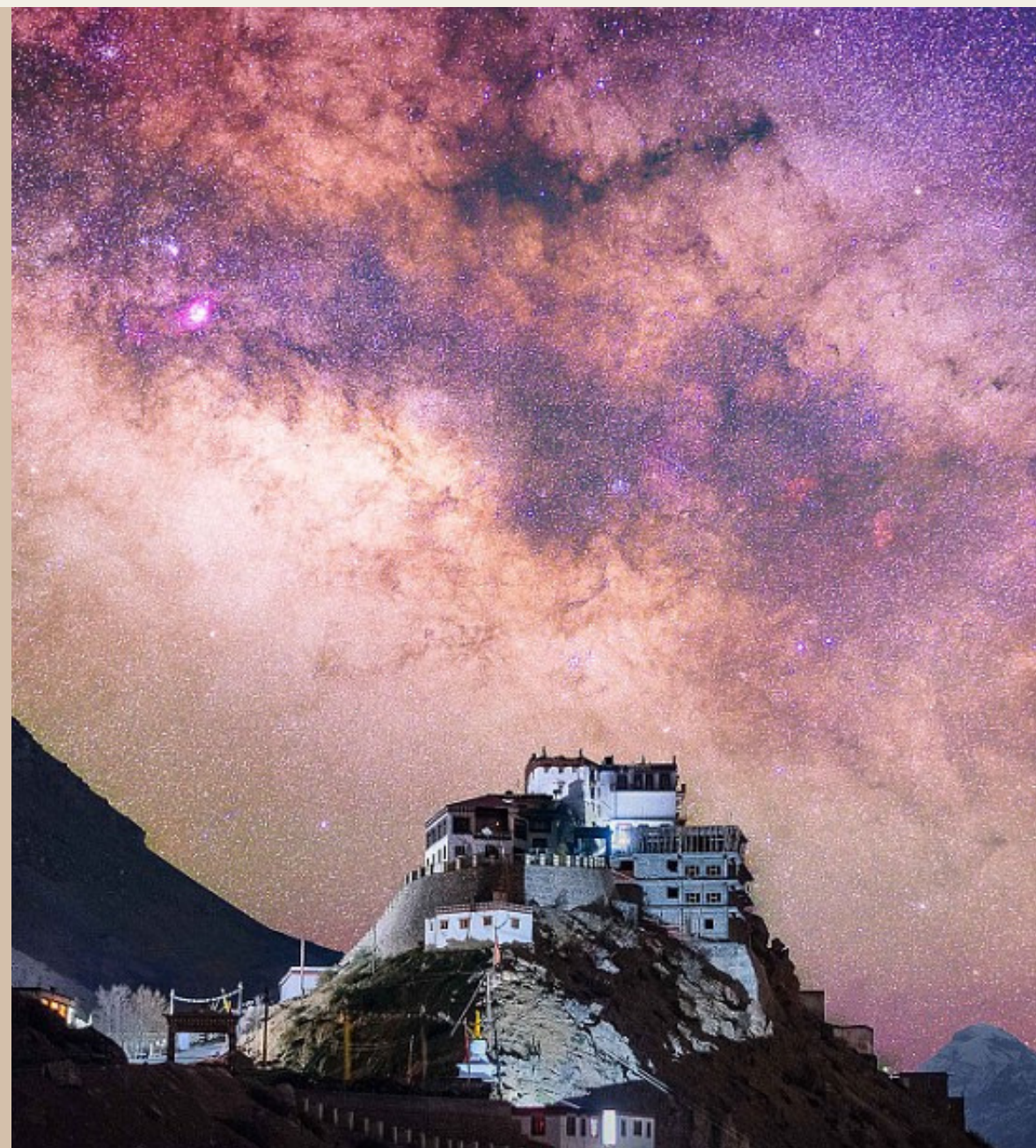
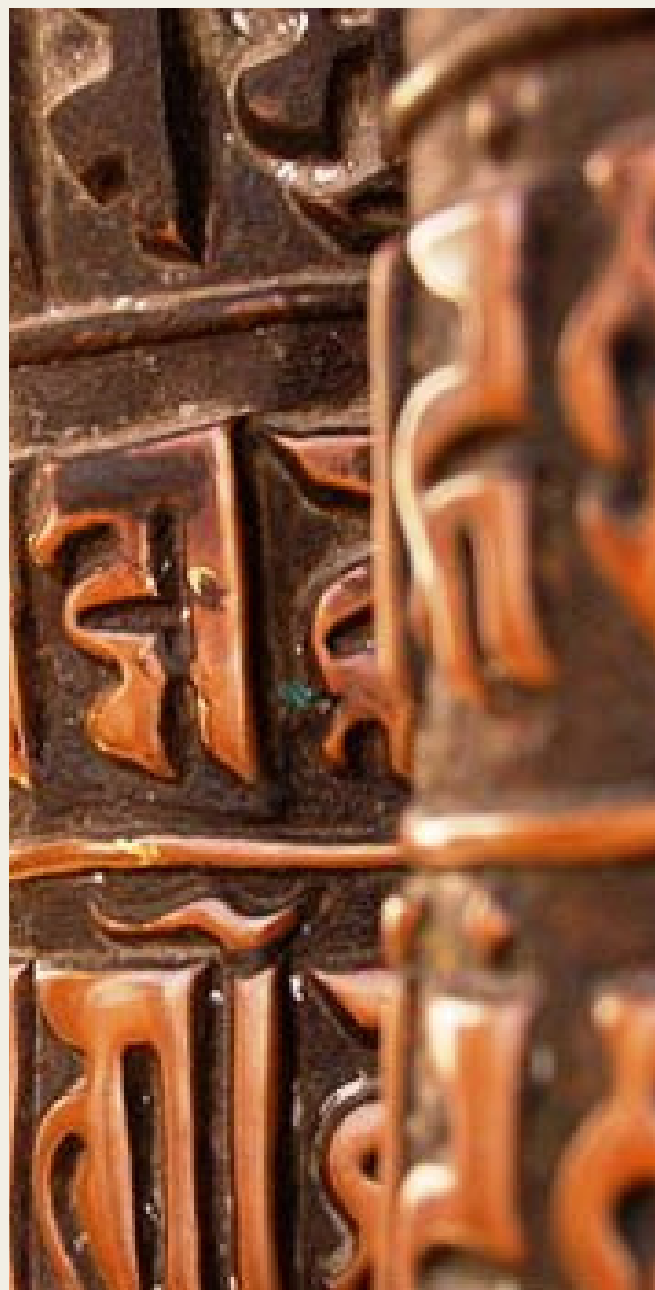
Day 8 - Sagnam - Komic- Langza - Kaza

Driving time - 3hrs

Distance -90kms



The day starts with a drive 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. Fancy sending your loved ones a postcard from the world's highest post office? A short stop at Hikkim on route to Komic will give you a chance to do so. Lunch will be organized at a homestay in Langza and you can try your hand at digging for marine fossils, some of them being over 100million year old. Considered one of the most fossil rich areas in the world, the fossils of marine animals and plants are from a time when Spiti was submerged under the Tethys Sea. You will be welcomed by Simba and Karan at Deyzor in Kaza, your home for the next two nights. At our hotel you will find carefully picked pieces from Spiti which gives the guest a feel of the region's culture and history.



Day 9 - Kaza - Ki - Tashi gang - Kaza
Driving time -3hrs
Distance -65kms

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 of Buddhist deities. The trek to the cave is easy and you'll probably have the company of a Griffon hovering above. Views while heading to Tashi gang (around Gete) are amongst the most stunning in the area and you will experience for yourself that these 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 10 - Kaza - Chandertal lake
Driving time -5hrs
Distance -100kms

A fitting place to end your trip, the Chandertal lake presents mirror-perfect reflections of the surrounding white-top peaks.

Before reaching the lake you will drive past the soaring 4551mts Kunzum Pass with the Spiti River as your near constant companion, although sometimes way below in precipitous gorges.

Though you may not see one but this is Snow Leopard territory. The lake is also a nesting sight for migratory birds and you may also sight the Snowcock, Kestrel, Golden Eagle, Marmot and the Red Fox. A walk around the lake is sure to get you breathless, but it's well worth the effort.





Day 11 - Chandertal lake - Manali

Driving time -7hrs

Distance -140kms

Maybe its the simplicity or honesty with which Spitians live their life that makes them unique. Maybe its because they are more connected to themselves or the land they live on. Or perhaps you have discovered another reason. Whatever that may be, your time here living amongst some of the most gracious people is sure to be special.

Such is the energy of the place that you'll feel strangely content.

Maybe it is the architectural

perfection of the mountains that lord their beauty over this high altitude wilderness.

Spiti represents measureless freedom. It is a place to connect with nature and here you see that if you let indigenous people live as they have for thousands of years, then we have more to learn from them than them from us.

Day 1- Chandigarh - Shimla
Driving time -3hrs, Distance -110kms, Accommodation at - Sunnymead homestay

Day 2- Shimla - Kanam - Pooh
Driving time -9hrs, Distance -310kms, Accommodation at - Om guest house

Day 3 - Pooh - Nako - Gyu - Tabo
Driving time -5hrs, Distance -110kms, Accommodation at - Maitreya guest house

Day 4 Tabo - Mane
Driving time -45min, Distance -25kms, Accommodation at - Lobzang homestay

Day 5- Mane
Accommodation at - Lobzang homestay

Day 6 - Mane - Dhankar - Lalung - Sagnam
Driving time -3hrs, Distance -60kms, Accommodation at - Soni & Karma homestay

Day 7- Sagnam - Kungri - Sagnam
Driving time -30min, Distance -15kms, Accommodation at - Soni & Karma homestay

Day 8- Sagnam - Komic - Hikkim - Langza - Kaza
Driving time -3hrs, Distance -90kms, Accommodation at - Hotel Deyzor

Day 9- Kaza - Ki - Tashi gang - Kaza
Driving time -3hrs, Distance -65kms, Accommodation at - Hotel Deyzor

Day 10- Kaza - Chandertal lake
Driving time -5hrs, Distance -100kms, Accommodation at - Parasol campsite

Day 11- Chandertal lake - Manali
Driving time -7hrs, Distance -140kms, Accommodation at - Johnsons lodge

Day 12- Manali - Chandigarh
Driving time -8/9hrs, Distance -310kms