



Jamyang Foundation



Himalayas

TRAVEL TIPS

KINNARU, SPITI AND ZANGSKAR

We welcome volunteer teachers at our programs in Kinnaur, Spiti, and Zanskar! The journey is arduous, but the mountains are magical.

Travel to Spiti

The road from Delhi to Spiti takes 3 days on a bumpy bus. If the Rothang pass is open (after July), it is easiest to take the bus to Manali, then travel from there. The bus to Spiti leaves Manali bus station about 5 AM and takes all day to get to our monastery in Pangmo village. Take water, juice, and snacks. If the Rothang pass is not open, take a train or bus to Shimla. There you need to apply for an innerline permit at the district office or through a travel agent. Bring 7 passport photos and a photocopy of your passport and Indian visa to speed things up. The bus to Spiti is very cheap. It takes you to Rekhong Peo or Tabri the first day, and to Tabo or Kaza the second day, or hopefully all the way to Sherab Choling Institute in Morang village. Just six km. away is Yanagchen Choling Monastery in Pangmo village. The trip by jeep from Shimla to Morang or Pangmo is much faster and more comfortable (\$150-200). Tea and soft drinks are available along the way, but food is dicey (i.e., risky or not available), so bring snacks. Temperatures range from scorching (in Delhi) to freezing (in Spiti).

Travel to Zangskar

The first step of the journey from Delhi to Zangskar is to get to Leh, capital of Ladakh. The easiest way is by air (1 hour each way, \$120 roundtrip). Tickets need to be booked well in advance. If the Rothang pass is open (after July), you can go by deluxe bus from Manali to Leh (2-3 days). In Leh, you will find comfortable accommodations and restaurants.

To get from Leh to Zangskar, first take a bus to Kargil (\$2-3). In Kargil, the Sechen Hotel is clean, with hot showers (about \$10). Book a seat on the bus to Padum as soon as you arrive. With luck, you can leave the next morning. Jeeps are more comfortable, but expensive (\$100-150). Take water and snacks. Rest up at a hotel in Padum and then set off for Karsha or Zangla. Khacho Drubling Nunnery in Karsha is a 3-hour walk across the river. Changchub Choling Nunnery is in Zangla, a 6 or 8-hour walk up the valley. Sometimes jeeps or buses are available. Pishu Monastery is a 2-hour walk across the river from Zangla. "Jomo Gonpa" means "nunnery."

Here are some suggestions to help you pack. A good rule of thumb is not to bring anything you would mind losing.

Clothes

Go with the layered look, due to constant changes in temperature, but always keep covered up (i.e., no shorts or singlets/tank tops). Clothes should be loose fitting and non-revealing. Indian clothes (salwaar kameez) or long skirts are good for women, due to a lack of restroom facilities. Warm jacket, 2 sweaters, long johns, comfortable walking shoes and/or sandals, rubber slippers for the shower, warm socks, warm hat, and underwear.

Sleeping Gear

Warm sleeping bag and a sleeping sheet (if you want to keep the bag clean). If you plan to attend teachings or will be sleeping out on the bus ride to Leh, you may want to bring a sleeping mat and/or sitting cushion.

Equipment:

Torch/flashlight, batteries, water bottle, iodine tablets (if you want to drink cold water), notebook, pen, towel, money belt, passport photographs. Optional: day pack, extra prescription glasses, camera and film, FM radio with headphones (for listening to teachings), tape recorder (if you plan any interviews or listen to music).

Pharmaceuticals/Cosmetics:

Sunscreen, chapstick, shampoo, enough toilet paper/tissues for your stay, babywipes or hand sanitizer, deoderant (out of compassion for sentient beings), toothbrush (ditto), toothpaste, and any other personal items. Vitamins, acidophilus, medicines for colds, stomach upset (Tums, Peptobismo), a broad spectrum antibiotic (for bronchitis or diahhrea), eye drops, bandaids, sulpha or antibiotic ointment, high altitude medicine (diomoxin), and any prescription drugs you take. Pharmaceuticals be purchased cheaply in Delhi, Manali, or Simla, if you forget something.

Teaching Materials

If you are staying a long time, bring some good books. If you have made arrangements to volunteer teaching English to the nuns, you may wish to bring teaching aids: English books, social studies books, erasable white board pens, colored pencils, and picture books.

Food

Simple vegetarian food (rice, dahl, noodles, tea) is provided for volunteers at our programs. Bring any extra food items you may want, such as tea bags (herbal or otherwise), coffee, nuts, dry fruit, granola, muesli, etc. Snack foods, chocolate bars, instant coffee, and milk powder are available in Delhi, Manali, and Simla.

Miscellaneous:

Phone calls and faxes are possible from Delhi, Simla, Manali, and (sometimes) Leh. Communications other than post are not possible from Spiti and Zaskar. Post is slow and not very reliable. If you stay in private homes along the way, it is courteous to offer Rs.100/day as a donation. Give this discreetly to the hostess upon departure and say it is for the kids (bacha). Be sensitive to local cultures. Loud talking or laughing, physical contact, and imposing on people's hospitality are not appropriate. Be mindful of your body language with members of the opposite sex and avoid communications that may be misinterpreted. In Indian society it is generally considered improper for women to talk with men other than members of their own family. Tibetans are more relaxed.