

HAMPTA PASS TREK

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1: Drive from Delhi to Mandi via Chandigarh (430 Kms,9 to 10 hrs), Overnight stay in hotel at Mandi

We will meet up in Delhi and after the perfunctory round of introductions, proceed along the National Highways 1 and 21 passing through Panipat, Kurukshetra, Ambala and Chandigarh before reaching the town of Mandi that lies along the banks of the River Beas where we will be halting for the night.

Day 2: Drive from Mandi to Jagatsukh,Manali(105 Kms, 2.5 to 3 hrs), Trek from Jagatsukh¹⁹⁵⁰ mtrs to Sauroto³⁰⁴⁰ mtrs(12 Kms,4 hrs),Overnight Camping

The road from Mandi parallels the Beas river, passing the towns of Barnala, Bhuntar and nagger before making the final ascent to Jagatsukh.

From Jagatsukh, we will begin our trek, ascending via the trail above the main market that leads through the conifer forests with views of the Upper Kullu Valley and the Hanuman Tibba peak in the distance. After climbing along the trail for about 200 metres, we pass the Boidara village and after approximately 15-20 minutes of further climbing, we come across a small temple, where we can have a quick visit and experience the traditional architecture of the temples in Himachal.

The trail continues climbing gradually from here till we reach some Gujjar huts, beyond which we will ascend steeply upto the ridge behind. The trail weaves around the mountain slopes to finally lead us to a fairly extensive Gujjar settlement that is at 3040 meters. This is the village of Sauroto where we will be camping for the night.

Day 3: Trek from Sauroto to another campsite (Camp-2)²⁹⁰⁰ mtrs enroute to Chikha³⁰⁰⁰ mtrs(9 Kms,3.5 hrs), Overnight Camping

From Sauroto we will begin our day by continuing to ascend along the coniferous forest of the Upper Kullu valley, continuing to appreciate the fantastic vista of the snow clad mountains. The trail cuts across a beautiful open meadow, till we come to a short but steep ascent. From atop the ascent here we can see a river flowing down into the Prini village far below, that is part of the usual Hampta pass route. In the post monsoon season, the meadow is carpeted with a variety of beautiful flowers.

We will now descend sharply along the undergrowth, followed by a steep ascent yet again through a dense oak forest. Finally we cross through and come to another clearing that is also called "Sauroto" (which literally means a large meadow).We will be camping here for the night.

Day 4: Trek from Camp-2 to Chikha(12 Kms,4 to 5 hrs), Overnight Camping

We leave camp early in the morning, since we might need to cross the Hampta River by wading through it if the wooden bridge is not in place. From camp, the trail will lead us high above the Hampta gorge and the Sythen village that can be seen far below. Follow the grazing trails along here that skirt the Jabri Nullah (2850 metres) which is the halfway point of our trek today.

We will continue along the true left bank of the Hampta River for a couple of kms until we come across a wooden bridge to cross over to the other side. If the bridge has collapsed or is missing, we will have to travel further upstream till we come across a point where we will be able to cross the river.

After the river crossing, the trail continues to ascend gradually till we finally come to a clearing alongside a stream that branches off the main river with silver birch trees on the periphery. This is our campsite for the day in Chikha.

Day 5: Trek from Chikha to Balu Ka Ghera^{3540 mtrs} (9 Kms, 3 to 3.5 hrs), Overnight Camping

Balu ka Ghera is the base of the Hampta Pass and the trek till there will take between 3 to 3.5 hours. First we will have to cross the stream just above our campsite by hopping across boulders or wading through it. We join the trail beyond it that leads into a narrow canyon like gorge with fantastic weathered rock faces coming down steeply from the high ridges above. We will continue on the steep ascent through it for about an hour, until we finally exit out of it to a point from where the thick wooded slopes of Hampta valley will be visible. The trail now winds through beautiful high altitude meadows that blaze with a rush of color, thanks to the wildflowers and the dainty blue poppy flowers that bloom during and post monsoon (best viewed in July and August).

We finally come to the edge of the meadows into a clearing near a stream from where the mighty peaks stare out just beyond the Hampta Pass that we will be climbing tomorrow. This is the campsite of Balu ka Ghera where we will camp overnight. This campsite is also popular with the shepherds who camp here on their way to the high grasslands of Lahaul, early in the summer, waiting for the snow to melt.

Day 6: Trek from Balu Ka Ghera to Siagoru^{3830 mtrs} via Hampta Pass^{4270 mtrs}(15 Kms,7 to 8 hrs), Overnight Camping

From Balu ka Ghera, we will begin ascending in the morning along our left (the true right of the valley) through boulders defined by rock cairns. After about an hour, we come across a broad plain interspersed green patches, from where, on a clear day, the views are fantastic, extending all the way to Hanuman Tibba.

We will cross the stream that flows through the plain and reach a meadow that marks the base of Hampta Pass. The pass is usually covered perennially in snow and the ascent up to the narrow ridge along a gully will be tough and could be slippery.

After a bit of careful effort, we finally reach the top of Hampta Pass and the reward of the effort lies all around you. A fantastic panorama ranging from Mt. Indrasan to Mt. Deo Tibba to the many peaks of the Lahaul and the Mulkilli range awaits you here. It is awe-inspiring to see the huge mass of hanging glaciers that crown a number of peaks and are clearly visible from our vantage point.

After feasting on this incredible sight for a while, we will have to begin our descent to Siagoru along the barren slopes that greet us on the Lahaul side. Initially the descent is extremely steep and owing to the packed snow, it can be quite treacherous. Please proceed carefully through the snow field till the descent eases out to a gentle slope. It will ease out after about a kilometer and will take us down via a number of switchbacks, to the meadow of Siagoru which will be our camp for the night, facing the moonlike barren mountain slopes.

Siagoru literally means "a cold place" and this becomes very obvious as the evening wears on, bringing with it stinging cold winds whistling through the narrow pass. It is advised to keep yourself warm and make sure you are well covered to prevent getting chilled to the bone!

Day 7: Trek from Siagoru to Chhatru^{3360 mtrs}(9 Kms,3 to 3.5 hrs),Drive from Chhatru to Mandi via Rohtang Pass and Manali(189 kms,6 to 7 hrs),Overnight stay in hotel at Mandi

Our final day of trekking will begin with a stream crossing through chilled glacial water. (This stream comes down all the way from the Indrasan glacier and as all glacial streams do, widens as it gets warmer) We will continue along the true right of the valley, carefully through the slippery scree and boulder strewn trail until we come to a grassy outcropping from where we can get clear views of the road leading up to the Chandra valley to Batal and Kunzum La.

From here on, there is another steep descent which leads to a bridge over the Indrasan river and leading onwards for about 10 minutes along the true left bank of the Chandra river which is the fastest flowing and turbulent rivers of the region making it extremely dangerous. A short while of walking along the bank finally brings us to Chhatru where we are greeted by the sight of a number of small

dhabas where we can finally stop and relax. This is where our trek ends, so enjoy the spectacular peaks of the Lahaul range and the onrushing Chandra river, before getting into our vehicle for the long drive up to the Rohtang pass and from there on down to Mandi via Manali.

A few trekkers opt for an additional day from Chhatru, driving upto the beautiful Chandratal lake nestled high up in the mountains in the direction of Batal/Kunzumla. Please inform in advance if you would like to do it; we will arrange the trip for you accordingly.

Day 8: Drive from Mandi to New Delhi(430 Kms,9 to 10 hrs)

From Mandi, the drive to Delhi is via Chandigarh and is largely along fairly decent roads except for the sections just after Mandi where the brittle rockfaces cause landslides during the monsoon season. It will take us about 9-10 hours to finally reach Delhi, bringing our memorable trip to a close.

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