

NORTH INDIA · COMPLETE TRAVEL GUIDE

Himachal

Snow, pine forests and toy trains — the classic Gujarati family hill holiday.

BEST MONTHS	FROM AHMEDABAD	IDEAL DURATION	VEG & JAIN FOOD	GOOD FOR
March to June for snow-adjacent pleasant weather; December to February for actual snow	Direct flight Ahmedabad → Chandigarh (limited days), or Ahmedabad → Delhi (2 h) then Volvo/car to Shimla or Manali	6–8 nights	Easy — Gujarati thalis on Shimla and Manali Mall Roads, Jain meals available on request in most hotels	Families, senior parents (mild altitude only), children seeing snow for the first time

Himachal Pradesh is the destination most Gujarati families picture when they think of a hill vacation: colonial Shimla with its Mall Road and toy train, the snow points around Kufri and Solang, and Manali's mix of orchards, temples and the drive up to the Atal Tunnel. It is a bigger trip than Kerala or Goa — more flying or a long overnight drive, and the Chandigarh–Manali leg alone is 8–9 hours — but it is also the easiest way to show children and grandparents real snow without going abroad.

For Ahmedabad travellers the route runs through Chandigarh or Delhi. Direct flights from Ahmedabad to Chandigarh exist on a few days a week; otherwise it is Ahmedabad–Delhi by air followed by a Volvo bus or private car. Gujarati and Jain thalis are easy to find on Shimla's Mall Road and Manali's Mall Road, and most hotels in both towns are used to pure-veg groups from Gujarat and Rajasthan.

What to see

Shimla Mall Road and Ridge

The colonial heart of Shimla — Christ Church, the Ridge maidan, and a pedestrian Mall Road lined with cafes and Gujarati-run restaurants.

Kalka–Shimla toy train

The UNESCO narrow-gauge line through 100+ tunnels; ride at least the short Shimla–Kufri or Shimla–Barog stretch for the views.

Kufri

16 km from Shimla, a snow point in winter with yak rides and sledging; a pony-ride and viewpoint stop the rest of the year.

Atal Tunnel and Sissu

The world's longest highway tunnel above 10,000 ft; drive through to Sissu village in Lahaul for snow views without needing a Rohtang permit.

Vashisht hot springs and temple

3 km from Manali, natural sulphur hot-water baths beside an old stone temple — a favourite stop for seniors.

Solang Valley

Manali's adventure hub — paragliding, ropeway, zorbing and snow activities depending on season, 14 km from Manali town.

Hadimba Temple

A 16th-century wooden temple in a cedar forest in Old Manali, dedicated to Hadimba from the Mahabharata — a quiet, cool walk even in peak summer.

Dharamshala–McLeodganj

The Dalai Lama's residence-in-exile, Tibetan markets and monasteries, and views of the Dhauladhar range — a calmer, cooler add-on to the Shimla–Manali circuit.

Getting there from Ahmedabad

Fly: Ahmedabad–Chandigarh has limited direct flights (2–3 days a week, seasonal); the more reliable option is Ahmedabad–Delhi (about 2 hours, multiple daily flights) followed by a Volvo bus or private car onward to Shimla (7–8 hours) or Manali (12–14 hours) from Delhi.

Volvo/bus: Overnight AC Volvo buses run from Delhi's ISBT Kashmiri Gate to Shimla and Manali; comfortable for adults but a long, winding overnight ride, less ideal for very young children or seniors with back trouble.

Train: Ahmedabad to Chandigarh or Kalka by train takes 24–28 hours (via Delhi, with a change); most families prefer flying to Delhi and connecting by road instead. The Kalka–Shimla toy train itself is only for the last short scenic stretch, not for the Ahmedabad connection.

Within Himachal: private car with driver is standard. Roads are hill roads throughout — narrow, winding, average speeds of 30–40 km/h — so a 250 km Shimla–Manali drive genuinely takes 7–8 hours.

Getting around. A private car with driver (Innova or Tempo Traveller depending on group size) is used for the entire circuit, since public transport in the hills is not practical with luggage and elders. Within Shimla town, the Mall Road and Ridge are pedestrian-only, so cars park below and it's a short walk or lift up; within Manali, local taxis or your own vehicle cover Old Manali, Vashisht and Solang.

When to go

SEASON	MONTHS	WHAT TO EXPECT
Winter/Snow	December – February	Snowfall likely in Shimla, Kufri, Manali and Solang; temperatures 0 to 10°C in the day, sub-zero at night. Roads can close briefly after heavy snow. Best for families wanting to see actual snow, but pack heavy woollens and confirm road status before travel.
Peak	March – June	Pleasant 15–25°C in Shimla and Manali, snow still visible at Solang and near the Atal Tunnel into May. Gujarat's summer-holiday crowd fills hotels;

SEASON	MONTHS	WHAT TO EXPECT
		book 6–8 weeks ahead for April–June.
Monsoon	July – September	Heavy rain, landslide risk on the Shimla and Manali highways, occasional road closures. Lowest prices but we generally advise against this window for first-time family trips.
Autumn	October – November	Clear skies, cool and dry, 10–20°C days. Good visibility for mountain views and fewer crowds than summer; a slightly underrated season.

Permits, rules and packing

No permits are needed for Shimla, Kufri, Manali, Solang or the Dharamshala–McLeodganj circuit. Rohtang Pass itself requires an online permit with a daily vehicle quota and is closed to private vehicles on alternate days by odd-even rule, plus it shuts completely in winter; because of this most itineraries now skip Rohtang and instead go through the Atal Tunnel to Sissu, which needs no permit and is open through most of the year (occasional closure only after very heavy snow).

What to pack

- Heavy woollens, thermal wear and gloves for Dec–Feb; a warm jacket is needed even in Mar–Jun evenings
- Waterproof, closed walking shoes — Solang and Sissu can be slushy with melting snow
- Sunscreen and sunglasses — UV is strong at altitude even in cold weather
- Basic medicines and any personal prescriptions; the nearest big hospital is in Chandigarh or Delhi
- Power bank and warm gloves that still allow phone use for photos
- Motion-sickness tablets for the winding Shimla–Manali and Manali–Dharamshala roads
- A photocopy of ID (Aadhaar/PAN) for every traveller for hotel check-in

Veg and Jain food

- Shimla's Mall Road has several Gujarati and pure-veg restaurants near Scandal Point and lower Mall Road; ask your driver, they know the current favourites.
- Manali Mall Road and the area near Model Town have dedicated Gujarati thali restaurants that cater specifically to groups from Gujarat in season.
- Jain thalis (no onion, garlic, root vegetables) are available on request at most 3★/4★ hotels in Shimla and Manali if you inform them at booking — we confirm this in writing.
- Try Himachali dham (a festive vegetarian thali) and siddu (steamed bread) if the group is open to trying local food alongside the usual Gujarati options.

What it costs

Indicative per-person costs on twin sharing for a 6–8 night Himachal trip including flights or bus connections from Ahmedabad via Delhi/Chandigarh, private car, hotels, breakfast and dinner. Actual quotes depend on dates, hotel choice and group size.

VALUE

₹28,000 – 36,000

3★ hotels, Delhi–Volvo connection instead of Chandigarh flight, economy Ahmedabad–Delhi fares booked early

COMFORT

₹38,000 – 52,000

4★ hotels, Ahmedabad–Chandigarh flight where available or flexible Delhi connection, private vehicle throughout

PREMIUM

₹55,000 – 80,000

4★/5★ hotels (Wildflower Hall-tier options in Shimla, resort properties in Manali), flexible flights, Solang/Atal Tunnel excursions with all activities included

Where the money goes

- Solang Valley activities: ropeway ₹500–800, paragliding ₹1,800–3,000, zorbing/ATV ₹300–1,500 per activity, snow scooter (winter) ₹600–1,000 for a short ride — these add up fast for a family of five.
- Atal Tunnel/Sissu or Rohtang taxi: a shared or private taxi from Manali runs ₹2,500–4,000 for the vehicle (not per person) for a half-day round trip; private cars are often restricted beyond certain points near Rohtang itself.
- Kalka–Shimla toy train: a joy-ride seat (Shimla–Barog or Shimla–Kufri stretch) runs ₹300–500 per person in second class, more for chair car/vistadome, and needs advance booking in peak season.
- Volvo/flight fares: Delhi–Manali overnight Volvo is ₹1,200–2,000 per seat one-way; Ahmedabad–Delhi flights run ₹4,000–8,000 return booked early, higher for the limited Ahmedabad–Chandigarh direct flights.

Travelling with parents and children

- The Shimla–Manali drive (250 km, 7–8 hours) is the longest single day of most itineraries; start by 7 am and split it with a proper lunch stop at Mandi rather than pushing through.
- Altitude in Shimla (2,200 m) and Manali (2,050 m) is mild and rarely a problem for seniors; Solang (2,560 m) and points near the Atal Tunnel (over 3,000 m) can leave some people breathless — take it slow and carry water.
- Snow-point activities (sledging, snow scooters) are priced per ride and per person and are not included in package costs — set a per-family budget beforehand so children don't feel restricted on the spot.
- Hotel rooms in both Shimla and Manali rarely fit more than three comfortably; families of five need two rooms — say so at quote time.
- Carry cash in smaller denominations for Kufri, Solang and Sissu — card and UPI acceptance drops away from the main towns, though it has improved a lot since 2023.
- December–January trips should carry a real winter jacket, not just a shawl — indoor heating in budget hotels can be limited, and road closures after heavy snow can add a day to your plans, so keep one

buffer day if travelling in peak winter.

Questions families ask us

When will we actually see snow?

For guaranteed snow on the ground in Shimla, Kufri and Manali town itself, travel December to February. March to May usually still has snow at higher points like Solang and near the Atal Tunnel even when the towns themselves are green. June onwards, snow is only at the very highest points, if at all.

Should we go to Rohtang Pass or the Atal Tunnel?

Almost all our itineraries now use the Atal Tunnel to Sissu instead of Rohtang Pass. Rohtang needs an online permit, has a daily vehicle quota, an odd-even rule for private cars, and shuts for winter — it's an extra layer of planning for a similar snow view. The Atal Tunnel route to Sissu needs no permit, is open most of the year, and gives comparable views with far less hassle.

Is the altitude a problem for senior parents?

Generally no. Shimla and Manali sit at altitudes similar to many hill stations and most seniors adjust within a day. The higher points — Solang, Atal Tunnel, Sissu — are a few hours' excursion, not an overnight stay, so breathlessness or mild headache usually passes once you're back down. We do recommend a slower pace and no over-scheduling for anyone with heart or breathing conditions.

Is the Chandigarh–Manali drive really 8–9 hours?

Yes, and that's without major delays. It's about 310 km but almost entirely hill road after Bilaspur, with average speeds of 30–40 km/h. We recommend routing via Shimla (breaking the journey into two shorter legs) rather than doing Chandigarh to Manali in one very long day.

Is Jain food available in Himachal?

Yes, in Shimla and Manali specifically — most 3★/4★ hotels there can prepare a Jain thali (no onion, garlic or root vegetables) if told at the time of booking, and we always confirm this in writing. Options thin out in smaller towns like Sissu or Kufri, so we plan Jain meals around your Shimla/Manali hotel stays.

Can we add Kasol or Spiti to this trip?

Only as an extension, not within these itineraries. Kasol is about 3 hours from Manali and can be a day trip or one extra night for younger, more adventurous groups. Spiti is a different kind of trip altogether — high-altitude, long unpaved stretches, and really needs its own 5–6 day plan; we don't recommend combining it with a family Shimla–Manali circuit.

Classic Himachal

The standard Gujarati family circuit: two nights in Shimla for the colonial hill-station experience, three in Manali for snow points and valley drives, with the Chandigarh nights used for arrival and departure.

6 nights / 7 days Route: **Chandigarh – Shimla 2N – Manali 3N – Chandigarh 1N**

From **₹34,000** per person, indicative

Day

1

CHANDIGARH → SHIMLA

Arrive and climb to the hills

Fly Ahmedabad–Chandigarh (direct on select days) or land the previous evening. Drive to Shimla (115 km, about 4 hours via Kalka on NH5). Check in, evening walk on the Ridge and Mall Road. Sector 17 in Chandigarh is worth an hour if your flight lands early.

Stay: **Shimla** · Meals: **Dinner**

Day

2

SHIMLA

Toy train and Kufri

Morning ride on the Kalka–Shimla toy train from Shimla to Kufri or Barog and back (book the joy-ride ticket in advance in season). Afternoon at Kufri — yak or pony rides, and the Himalayan Nature Park if time allows. Evening free on Mall Road; several Gujarati thali options here.

Stay: **Shimla** · Meals: **Breakfast, Dinner**

Day

3

SHIMLA → MANALI

Into the Kullu valley

Long scenic drive to Manali (250 km, 7–8 hours) via Mandi, following the Beas river for the last stretch. Start by 7 am with a breakfast and lunch stop en route. Check in by evening; Manali sits at 2,050 m so evenings are cool even in summer.

Stay: **Manali** · Meals: **Breakfast, Dinner**

Day

4

MANALI

Solang Valley

Full day at Solang Valley (14 km, 40 minutes) for the ropeway, and paragliding or zorbing for those who want it; snow activities run December–March, ATV and ropeway run most of the year. Return via Old Manali for the Hadimba Temple walk in the cedar forest. Evening at Vashisht hot springs.

Stay: **Manali** · Meals: **Breakfast, Dinner**

Day
5

MANALI

Atal Tunnel and Sissu

Drive to the Atal Tunnel (25 km, 1 hour) and through it to Sissu village in Lahaul (another 6 km past the tunnel) for snow-capped views and the Sissu waterfall — no Rohtang permit is needed for this route. Return to Manali by early afternoon; free time on Manali Mall Road for shopping (shawls, dry fruit, Himachali caps).

Stay: **Manali** · Meals: **Breakfast, Dinner**

Day
6

MANALI → CHANDIGARH

Return drive

Early start (by 6:30 am) for the 7–8 hour drive back to Chandigarh, with breakfast and lunch stops. Evening free in Chandigarh; Rock Garden or Sukhna Lake if daylight permits.

Stay: **Chandigarh** · Meals: **Breakfast, Dinner**

Day
7

CHANDIGARH → AHMEDABAD

Fly home

Chandigarh airport is about 20 minutes from most hotels. Morning flight recommended given limited direct-flight days; otherwise connect via Delhi.

Stay: — · Meals: **Breakfast**

Included

- + Return Ahmedabad–Chandigarh flights (or Delhi connection)
- + 6 nights in inspected 3★/4★ hotels
- + Private AC vehicle (Innova/Tempo Traveller) for the whole circuit
- + Daily breakfast and veg dinner
- + Toy train joy-ride ticket and Atal Tunnel/Sissu excursion
- + Airport pickup and drop

Not included

- Lunches on drive days
- Solang activities (paragliding, ropeway, zorbing charged separately)
- Travel insurance
- GST 5%

STANDARD

₹34,000–40,000

Per person, twin sharing

PREMIUM

₹52,000–65,000

Per person, twin sharing

Per person on twin sharing, indicative for 2026, including flights at normal fares. Winter break (late Dec) and May–June run 25–35% higher.

Relaxed Himachal

A senior-friendly pace with only three hotel changes across eight nights, and an easier last leg through Dharamshala–McLeodganj instead of a rushed return drive.

8 nights / 9 days Route: **Shimla 2N – Manali 3N – Dharamshala 2N – Amritsar/Chandigarh 1N**

From **₹42,000** per person, indicative

Day

1

CHANDIGARH → SHIMLA

Arrive and settle in

Fly or drive in to Chandigarh, then a gentle 4-hour drive to Shimla. Check in and rest; short evening walk on the Ridge, keeping the pace easy for the first day.

Stay: **Shimla** · Meals: **Dinner**

Day

2

SHIMLA

Toy train and Kufri

Toy train ride Shimla–Barog and back in the morning (seated, low walking). Afternoon at Kufri by car, with a short pony ride for those who want it; others can wait at the viewpoint cafe. Evening on Mall Road.

Stay: **Shimla** · Meals: **Breakfast, Dinner**

Day

3

SHIMLA

A slower third day

Optional half-day at Chadwick Falls or Jakhu Temple (ropeway available, so no steep climb needed) for those who want it; others rest at the hotel. This buffer day means the Shimla–Manali drive the next day can start without fatigue.

Stay: **Shimla** · Meals: **Breakfast, Dinner**

Day

4

SHIMLA → MANALI

Into the Kullu valley

Depart by 8 am for Manali (250 km, 7–8 hours) via Mandi with two comfortable breaks. This is the longest drive of the trip; carry motion-sickness tablets for the winding stretch after Mandi.

Stay: **Manali** · Meals: **Breakfast, Dinner**

Day
5

MANALI

Solang and Old Manali

Morning at Solang Valley — ropeway car for a seated view, activities optional. Afternoon at Hadimba Temple and Old Manali cafes, an easy flat walk. Evening at Vashisht hot springs, good for seniors' joints after the long drive.

Stay: **Manali** · Meals: **Breakfast, Dinner**

Day
6

MANALI

Atal Tunnel and Sissu

Drive through the Atal Tunnel to Sissu and back (half day), returning by early afternoon. Rest of the day free on Manali Mall Road for shopping and a relaxed lunch.

Stay: **Manali** · Meals: **Breakfast, Dinner**

Day
7

MANALI → DHARAMSHALA

To McLeodganj

Drive to Dharamshala (215 km, 6–7 hours via Palampur). Check into McLeodganj by evening; short walk to the main Tibetan market if energy permits.

Stay: **Dharamshala** · Meals: **Breakfast, Dinner**

Day
8

DHARAMSHALA

Monasteries and Dhauladhar views

Morning visit to the Dalai Lama Temple Complex (Tsuglagkhang) and Namgyal Monastery, then Bhagsu Waterfall (short, mostly flat walk) or a quiet stop at Dal Lake. Afternoon free; evening flight-eve packing.

Stay: **Dharamshala** · Meals: **Breakfast, Dinner**

Day
9

DHARAMSHALA → AMRITSAR/CHANDIGARH → AHMEDABAD

Return leg

Drive to Amritsar (200 km, 5 hours, allowing a Golden Temple visit before an evening flight) or to Chandigarh (250 km, 6 hours) depending on your booked flight out. Fly to Ahmedabad via Delhi if a direct Chandigarh flight isn't available that day.

Stay: — · Meals: **Breakfast**

Included

- + Return Ahmedabad flights via Chandigarh or Delhi
- + 8 nights in 3★/4★ hotels
- + Private AC vehicle throughout, senior-friendly pacing
- + Daily breakfast and veg dinner
- + Toy train ticket and Atal Tunnel/Sissu excursion
- + Airport/station pickup and drop

Not included

- Lunches on drive days
- Solang activities and any optional Golden Temple guide
- Travel insurance
- GST 5%

STANDARD

PREMIUM

₹42,000–50,000

Per person, twin sharing

₹62,000–78,000

Per person, twin sharing

Per person on twin sharing, indicative for 2026. The extra buffer day in Shimla and easier Dharamshala finish suit families with elders or young children.

Manali Short Break

A long-weekend version for those short on time: skip Shimla, fly or take an overnight Volvo to Manali, and spend three full days there before heading back.

4 nights / 5 days Route: **Chandigarh/Delhi – Manali (Manali-focused)**

From **₹22,000** per person, indicative

Day

1

DELHI/CHANDIGARH → MANALI

Overnight in, or fly and drive

Two ways to start: fly Ahmedabad–Delhi and take an overnight AC Volvo from Delhi ISBT (about 12–14 hours, arriving Manali by morning), or fly Ahmedabad–Chandigarh and drive to Manali same day (7–8 hours). The Volvo option saves a hotel night but is tiring for seniors; the Chandigarh-flight option is gentler.

Stay: **Manali (or overnight bus)** · Meals: **Dinner (if driven in) / none (if on overnight bus)**

Day

2

MANALI

Solang Valley and Old Manali

Check in, rest a couple of hours if you arrived overnight. Late morning to Solang Valley for the ropeway and activities. Afternoon at Hadimba Temple and Old Manali cafes. Evening on Manali Mall Road.

Stay: **Manali** · Meals: **Breakfast, Dinner**

Day

3

MANALI

Atal Tunnel and Sissu

Full day trip through the Atal Tunnel to Sissu village, with photo stops for snow-capped peaks along the way; no Rohtang permit needed for this route. Return via Vashisht hot springs in the evening.

Stay: **Manali** · Meals: **Breakfast, Dinner**

Day

4

MANALI

Free day / Naggar or Kullu

Optional half-day excursion to Naggar Castle or Kullu's Raghunath Temple and shawl-weaving units, or a relaxed day with no fixed plan for shopping and rest. Begin the return journey by early evening for an overnight Volvo, or stay one more night if flying from Chandigarh next morning.

Stay: **Manali or overnight bus** · Meals: **Breakfast, Dinner**

Day
5

MANALI → CHANDIGARH/DELHI → AHMEDABAD

Return home

Drive to Chandigarh (7–8 hours) for a flight to Ahmedabad, or complete the overnight Volvo to Delhi and fly out from there. Build in a buffer — Manali–Chandigarh traffic can add an hour in peak season.

Stay: — · Meals: **Breakfast**

Included

- + Ahmedabad–Chandigarh/Delhi flights (Volvo bus extra, quoted separately if chosen)
- + 3–4 nights in a 3★/4★ Manali hotel
- + Private AC vehicle for all Manali sightseeing
- + Daily breakfast and veg dinner
- + Atal Tunnel/Sissu excursion

Not included

- Overnight Volvo fare if chosen instead of a Chandigarh flight
- Solang activity charges
- Lunches
- GST 5%

STANDARD

₹22,000–27,000

Per person, twin sharing

PREMIUM

₹34,000–44,000

Per person, twin sharing

Per person on twin sharing, indicative for 2026. The Delhi–Volvo route is ₹4,000–6,000 cheaper per person than flying via Chandigarh but adds a tiring overnight leg each way.

Want this booked properly?

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