

NORTH INDIA · COMPLETE TRAVEL GUIDE

Kashmir

Snow peaks, Dal Lake and the Tulip Garden — Paradise on Earth, made easy for families with elders and children.

BEST MONTHS	FROM AHMEDABAD	IDEAL DURATION	VEG & JAIN FOOD	GOOD FOR
April (tulips) and May–June and September–October (pleasant); December–February for snow	Ahmedabad → Srinagar via Delhi, about 4–5 h total with the connection	5–7 nights	Good in Srinagar hotels; Gujarati thali available on request, Jain meals with advance notice	Families, honeymooners, senior parents (with some route planning), snow-seekers

Kashmir is the trip our clients dream about for years before they book it: Mughal gardens, a night on a houseboat on Dal Lake, the Gulmarg gondola climbing to 3,979 m, and — for those who travel between December and March — real snow, often for the first time in the family's life. The valley is compact: Srinagar, Gulmarg, Pahalgam and Sonamarg are all within a 3-hour drive of each other, so a 6–7 night trip covers all of it without exhausting anyone.

For Ahmedabad families the trip needs one connection (via Delhi), the food question is easier than people expect — Srinagar has Gujarati and Jain-friendly hotels used to groups from Gujarat — and Kashmiri Wazwan hospitality is warm even for a vegetarian table. The main thing to plan around is weather: what you'll see and wear changes completely between April and January, so we build every itinerary around the month you travel.

What to see

Dal Lake and a houseboat night

Sleep on a carved-cedar houseboat on Dal Lake, wake to a shikara vendor selling saffron and flowers, and take a sunset shikara ride past the floating gardens.

Pahalgam and the Lidder valley

Pine forests along the Lidder river; pony or on-foot outings to Betaab Valley, Aru and Chandanwari, all used as base camps for the Amarnath Yatra in season.

Gulmarg Gondola

Asia's highest cable car in two phases — Phase 1 to Kongdoori (3,088 m) and Phase 2 on to Apharwat Peak (3,979 m), with snow most of the year at the top station.

Sonamarg day trip

The 'Meadow of Gold' at 2,800 m, gateway to the Zoji La pass towards Ladakh; a short pony or vehicle ride reaches Thajiwas Glacier.

Mughal Gardens of Srinagar

Nishat Bagh, Shalimar Bagh and Chashme Shahi, terraced gardens built by the Mughal emperors on the shore of Dal Lake, especially lovely with the chinar trees in autumn.

Shankaracharya Temple

An ancient Shiva temple on a hilltop above Srinagar with a wide view over the city and Dal Lake; a short, steep climb or a car up to the security checkpoint.

Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden

Asia's largest tulip garden, over a million bulbs in bloom for about three weeks in early-to-mid April on the slopes below the Zabarwan hills — dates shift each year with the season.

Local craft workshops

Watch pashmina weaving, papier-mache painting and carpet knotting at a Srinagar emporium — good for an easy afternoon with elders.

Getting there from Ahmedabad

Fly: there is no non-stop Ahmedabad–Srinagar flight. IndiGo, Air India and Vistara connect via Delhi, with total journey time (including the layover) usually 4–6 hours depending on the connection. Book the Ahmedabad–Delhi and Delhi–Srinagar legs together where possible so a delay on the first doesn't strand you in Delhi.

Train: there is no direct broad-gauge line into the Kashmir valley yet from Ahmedabad; the nearest practical rail option is to Jammu Tawi (roughly 30–36 hours from Ahmedabad with a change) and then a road journey of 8–9 hours over the Jawahar Tunnel to Srinagar — long, and only worth it for travellers who specifically want the rail-plus-road route rather than flying.

Within Kashmir: a private car with driver covers Srinagar and Gulmarg. Some stretches around Pahalgam (Aru, Betaab Valley, Chandanwari) restrict private vehicles and require the local shared-taxi union's cars, which we arrange on the spot.

Getting around. A private AC vehicle with driver handles Srinagar, the Gulmarg road and the Sonamarg day trip. Around Pahalgam, some scenic points (Aru, Betaab Valley, Chandanwari) are reserved for the local shared-taxi/sumo union rather than outside private cars, which is standard practice and we arrange it as part of the package. Shikaras are the only way to move around Dal Lake itself; a fixed-rate shikara is included for transfers to a mid-lake houseboat.

When to go

SEASON	MONTHS	WHAT TO EXPECT
Spring / Tulip season	Early March – mid-April	Cool, 8–20°C, with the Tulip Garden blooming for about three weeks typically in the first half of April (exact dates vary each year with the weather — we confirm nearer the time). Occasional rain; carry a light jacket and a raincoat.
Summer	May – August	Pleasant in the valley, 15–28°C; the most popular season and also when the Amarnath Yatra runs (roughly late June/July to August), which brings heavy traffic and crowded hotels on the Pahalgam route — avoid this stretch or book well ahead if travelling then.

SEASON	MONTHS	WHAT TO EXPECT
Autumn	September – November	Clear skies, chinar trees turning gold and red, 5–20°C tapering to near-freezing nights by November. Our favourite season for photography and for avoiding crowds.
Winter / Snow	December – February	Heavy snow at Gulmarg and Sonamarg, occasional snow in Srinagar itself; daytime 2–8°C, nights well below freezing. Roads to Pahalgam and Sonamarg can close for a day or two after fresh snowfall, and Gulmarg's Phase 2 gondola sometimes shuts in high wind. This is the season for skiing and snow-play but needs real cold-weather clothing and flexible dates.

Permits, rules and packing

No inner-line or special permits are required to visit the Kashmir valley (Srinagar, Gulmarg, Pahalgam, Sonamarg) — this is different from Ladakh, which does require permits for some areas. Every traveller should carry original Aadhaar or another government photo ID; hotels, houseboats and airport security all check ID, and there are occasional checkpoints on the highway where ID may be asked for. Carry photocopies as backup.

What to pack

- Heavy woollens, a down or padded jacket, thermal inners for December–February; a lighter jacket suffices March–May and September–November
- Waterproof, closed-toe walking shoes with grip — cobblestones and snow are both slippery
- Woollen cap, gloves and socks for anyone visiting Gulmarg or Sonamarg in winter
- Sunglasses and sunscreen — snow glare at Gulmarg is strong even on a cloudy day
- A light raincoat or umbrella for spring showers
- Personal medication and a basic first-aid kit; Srinagar and Gulmarg have pharmacies but Pahalgam and Sonamarg have limited stock
- Power bank and warm sleepwear for the houseboat, which can be cool at night even with heaters

Veg and Jain food

- Srinagar's better hotels are used to Gujarati groups and can lay on a Gujarati thali on request; give at least a day's notice.
- Jain meals (no onion, garlic, root vegetables) are available at our recommended hotels and on the houseboat when requested at the time of booking, and we confirm this in writing.
- Kashmiri vegetarian food is worth trying: dum aloo, nadru (lotus stem) yakhni, haak (a local leafy green) and modur pulao — all pure vegetarian and part of the traditional Wazwan spread's veg side.
- Kahwa, the local saffron-and-almond spiced tea, is served everywhere and is a good welcome drink at every stop.

What it costs

Indicative per-person costs on twin sharing for a 5–7 night trip including flights from Ahmedabad via Delhi, private car, hotels/houseboat, breakfast and dinner. Actual quotes depend on travel dates, hotel category and how much of Phase 2 gondola and pony activities you add; winter and the April tulip window cost noticeably more due to flight demand.

VALUE

₹42,000 – 52,000

3★ hotels, standard houseboat, economy flights booked 6+ weeks ahead, Gondola Phase 1 only

COMFORT

₹55,000 – 75,000

4★ hotels or premium houseboat with heaters, Gondola Phase 1 and 2, flexible flight timings

PREMIUM

₹85,000 – 1,20,000

5★ properties (Vivanta Dal View, The Khyber Gulmarg, The Lidderwat Pahalgam), luxury houseboat, private vehicle throughout including restricted zones where allowed

Where the money goes

- Flights are the single biggest cost: Ahmedabad–Srinagar via Delhi return runs roughly ₹14,000–22,000 booked early, ₹28,000+ in winter or the April tulip window.
- Gulmarg Gondola: Phase 1 (to Kongdoori) is about ₹740–900 per person and Phase 2 (to Apharwat) about ₹1,000–1,200 per person, indicative 2026 fares — Phase 2 needs a separate ticket and capacity is limited, so book as early as possible.
- Shikara rides: a standard 1-hour ride is about ₹800–1,200 per boat (up to 4–5 people); longer rides and houseboat transfers are usually quoted separately or bundled into your package.
- Houseboat: ₹6,000–10,000 per room per night for a standard deluxe houseboat, ₹12,000–20,000 for premium/luxury, generally per room rather than per boat.
- Pony rides at Pahalgam (Betaab Valley, Aru) and at Gulmarg and Sonamarg: roughly ₹500–1,500 depending on distance — always agree the rate with the pony-wallah before starting, as informal negotiation is the norm.

Travelling with parents and children

- Altitude at Gulmarg's Phase 2 top station (nearly 4,000 m) can affect seniors and anyone with breathing or heart conditions; it's fine for most people for a short visit, but check with a doctor beforehand if there's a known condition, and skip Phase 2 rather than push through discomfort.
- Houseboats have a short gangplank and a step up from the shikara — manageable for most seniors with a hand to hold, but tell us about mobility needs so we choose a houseboat with easier access.
- Cold catches people off guard even outside winter — Gulmarg and Sonamarg are 15–20°C cooler than Srinagar, so carry a jacket even on a summer day trip.
- Children enjoy the gondola and snow more than temple or garden visits; if travelling outside winter, carry a change of shoes for Sonamarg's glacier-area mud.

- Kashmir hotels and houseboats generally have twin or double rooms; a family of five usually needs two rooms — tell us at quote time so pricing is accurate from the start.
- Keep Aadhaar (or other photo ID) accessible at all times, not just packed in a suitcase — it's asked for at hotel check-in, the houseboat, and occasionally at highway checkpoints.

Questions families ask us

Is Kashmir safe to visit right now?

The tourist circuit — Srinagar, Gulmarg, Pahalgam, Sonamarg — sees very heavy domestic and international tourist traffic year-round and is calm and well-organised for visitors; security presence is visible but routine. We monitor the situation continuously and would flag any specific area of concern before your travel dates rather than after booking. As with any destination, we suggest avoiding large political gatherings and following your driver and hotel's local guidance, which in practice means simply enjoying the trip as planned.

How do we book the Gulmarg Gondola Phase 2 ticket?

Phase 2 (Kongdoori to Apharwat Peak) has limited daily capacity and is the one part of the trip that can sell out, especially in peak winter and during the April–May and October holiday weeks. We book it as early as we can once your travel dates are confirmed; if it's unavailable for your exact day, Phase 1 alone to Kongdoori is still a full, scenic gondola experience with snow at the top most of the year.

Which months have snow?

Reliable snow at Gulmarg and Sonamarg runs from December to February, sometimes into early March; Srinagar itself gets occasional light snow in this window rather than a snow-covered city. If snow is the main reason for the trip, target late December to mid-February and keep your dates flexible by a few days in case of road closures after heavy snowfall.

Is Gujarati or Jain food really available in Kashmir?

Yes, though it needs more advance notice than in Kerala or Rajasthan. Our recommended Srinagar hotels are experienced with Gujarati and Jain groups and will prepare a thali or Jain meal with a day's notice; the houseboat cook can do the same when told at booking. Pahalgam and Gulmarg have fewer options, so we choose hotels there with a dependable vegetarian kitchen and confirm the meal plan in writing before you travel.

Should we visit Kashmir with young children or elderly parents?

Yes, with some route planning. The Relaxed 7-night itinerary is built for exactly this — fewer hotel changes, two full nights each in Gulmarg and Pahalgam instead of long single days, and no altitude push beyond what's comfortable. Winter trips need warmer clothing and more flexible dates for both age groups; spring and autumn are gentler if this is a first trip with elders.

How far in advance should we book?

For the April tulip season, peak winter (Christmas–New Year), or a group of 8 or more, book 2 months ahead — flights via Delhi and Srinagar hotels fill up fast in these windows. For other months, 3–4 weeks is usually enough, though the Gondola Phase 2 ticket and good houseboats are worth locking in as early as possible regardless of season.

Classic Kashmir

The complete Kashmir circuit: gardens and a houseboat night in Srinagar, a day at Gulmarg's gondola, two nights among the pines at Pahalgam, and a day trip to Sonamarg on the way back — six nights with no drive over three hours.

6 nights / 7 days

Route: **Srinagar – Gulmarg – Pahalgam – Srinagar (Dal Lake houseboat + Sonamarg day trip)**

From **₹52,000** per person, indicative

Day

1

SRINAGAR

Arrive and settle by the lake

Fly Ahmedabad–Delhi–Srinagar, landing by early afternoon. Our representative meets you at the airport (15 km from the city) and transfers you to your houseboat or hotel on Dal Lake. Afternoon shikara ride through the floating vegetable gardens and Nehru Park, watching the sunset over the Zabarwan hills. Settle in and rest after the flights.

Stay: **Houseboat on Dal Lake** · Meals: **Dinner**

Day

2

SRINAGAR

Mughal Gardens and the old city

Morning visit to Nishat Bagh, Shalimar Bagh and Chashme Shahi — the three great Mughal terraced gardens, each about 20–30 minutes apart. If travelling in early-to-mid April, this is the day to add the Tulip Garden, best visited before 10 am. Afternoon at Shankaracharya Temple for the view, then a craft-emporium visit for pashmina and papier-mache. Evening free on the houseboat.

Stay: **Houseboat on Dal Lake** · Meals: **Breakfast, Dinner**

Day

3

SRINAGAR → GULMARG

The gondola day

Drive to Gulmarg (56 km, about 1.5–2 hours). Take the Phase 1 gondola to Kongdoori (3,088 m) and, snow and weather permitting, Phase 2 up to Apharwat Peak (3,979 m) — book Phase 2 tickets in advance as they sell out and are capacity-controlled. In winter this is a full snow-play and skiing day; in summer it is cool, green meadows with the same views minus the snow at the base. Return to Srinagar by evening, or overnight in Gulmarg if the season calls for it.

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

Day
4

SRINAGAR → PAHALGAM

Into the pines

Drive to Pahalgam (90 km, about 2.5–3 hours) via Awantipora, with a stop at the Avantiswami temple ruins if time allows. Check in and take an easy walk along the Lidder river in the afternoon. Pahalgam sits at 2,130 m in a pine valley and is noticeably cooler and quieter than Srinagar.

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

Day
5

PAHALGAM

Betaab Valley and Aru

Full day of local sightseeing by shared taxi (private cars are restricted on some stretches): Betaab Valley, Aru Valley and, road conditions permitting, Chandanwari — the base point for the Amarnath Yatra. Pony rides are available at each stop for those who want them; agree the rate before mounting. Return to Pahalgam by evening for a relaxed dinner.

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

Day
6

PAHALGAM → SRINAGAR (VIA SONAMARG)

Sonamarg and back to Srinagar

Drive back towards Srinagar, detouring to Sonamarg (about 3 hours from Pahalgam via Srinagar's ring road). Short pony or shared-vehicle ride to Thajiwas Glacier viewpoint, weather permitting — this road can close after fresh snow. Continue to Srinagar for a last evening; those who prefer can shop for saffron, dry fruit and carpets at a fixed-price emporium.

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

Day
7

SRINAGAR → AHMEDABAD

Fly home

Transfer to Srinagar airport for your flight via Delhi; allow 3 hours before departure as security screening at Srinagar airport is thorough and can be slow. Keep boarding passes and ID handy — checks are frequent right up to the gate.

Stay: — · Meals: **Breakfast**

Included

- + Return Ahmedabad–Srinagar flights via Delhi
- + 6 nights: 1 on houseboat, 3 in Srinagar hotels, 2 in Pahalgam hotel
- + Private AC vehicle for Srinagar and Gulmarg legs; shared taxi for restricted Pahalgam sightseeing zones
- + Daily breakfast and veg dinner
- + Gondola Phase 1 ticket at Gulmarg
- + Airport pickup and drop

Not included

- Lunches
- Gondola Phase 2 ticket (subject to availability, booked on the day or in advance where possible)
- Pony and sledge rides
- Travel insurance and GST 5%

STANDARD

₹52,000–62,000

Per person, twin sharing

PREMIUM

₹78,000–1,05,000

Per person, twin sharing

Per person on twin sharing, indicative, including flights via Delhi at normal fares. Winter (Dec–Feb) and the April tulip season run 15–25% higher due to demand and flight prices.

Relaxed Kashmir

Fewer hotel changes and a slower pace, built for families with senior parents: two full nights each in Gulmarg and Pahalgam instead of rushed day trips, and three nights in Srinagar bracketing the trip.

7 nights / 8 days Route: **Srinagar – Gulmarg – Srinagar – Pahalgam – Srinagar**

From **₹58,000** per person, indicative

Day

1

SRINAGAR

Arrive and settle by the lake

Fly Ahmedabad–Delhi–Srinagar. Transfer to your houseboat on Dal Lake, a gentle first day with an evening shikara ride only. No sightseeing planned — this gives elders and children a full day to recover from travel.

Stay: **Houseboat on Dal Lake** · Meals: **Dinner**

Day

2

SRINAGAR

Mughal Gardens at an easy pace

Late-morning start to Nishat Bagh and Shalimar Bagh, with plenty of bench stops and no rush between the two. April travellers add the Tulip Garden here, ideally before 10 am when it is coolest. Afternoon free on the houseboat or a short craft-emporium visit for those who want it.

Stay: **Houseboat on Dal Lake** · Meals: **Breakfast, Dinner**

Day

3

SRINAGAR → GULMARG

Up to the meadows

Drive to Gulmarg (56 km, under 2 hours) and check into a hotel there rather than a same-day return — this avoids a long single day for older travellers. Afternoon at leisure in the meadow; those who want the gondola can go today if the queue is short, otherwise it waits for tomorrow.

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

Day

4

GULMARG

Gondola day, no rush

A full day at Gulmarg with no drive attached. Phase 1 gondola to Kongdoori in the morning while the weather is clearest, Phase 2 to Apharwat Peak for those comfortable with the altitude and cold (book ahead where possible). Others can stay at Kongdoori or in the meadow itself — there is plenty to see without going higher. Return to the hotel for an early dinner.

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

Day
5

GULMARG → SRINAGAR → PAHALGAM

Back through Srinagar to Pahalgam

Drive back to Srinagar and on to Pahalgam (total about 3.5–4 hours with a lunch break in Srinagar). Check in by late afternoon and take a short, level walk along the Lidder river — no climbing required.

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

Day
6

PAHALGAM

Betaab Valley at leisure

A single easy outing today: Betaab Valley by shared taxi, with time to sit by the river and a picnic-style lunch box we arrange. Aru and Chandanwari are optional add-ons only for those who want a longer day; most families are content to rest at the hotel in the afternoon.

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

Day
7

PAHALGAM → SRINAGAR

Return to Srinagar

Unhurried drive back to Srinagar (90 km, about 2.5 hours) with a stop at the Awantipora temple ruins. Afternoon free for last-minute shopping — saffron, dry fruit, pashmina — at a fixed-price government emporium. Farewell dinner at the hotel.

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

Day
8

SRINAGAR → AHMEDABAD

Fly home

Transfer to Srinagar airport 3 hours before your flight via Delhi. Security screening is in multiple stages, so keep documents accessible.

Stay: — · Meals: **Breakfast**

Included

- + Return Ahmedabad–Srinagar flights via Delhi
- + 7 nights: 2 on houseboat, 1 in Srinagar, 2 in Gulmarg, 2 in Pahalgam
- + Private AC vehicle for Srinagar and Gulmarg; shared taxi for restricted Pahalgam zones
- + Daily breakfast and veg dinner
- + Gondola Phase 1 ticket at Gulmarg
- + Airport pickup and drop, and a packed picnic lunch on the Betaab Valley day

Not included

- Other lunches
- Gondola Phase 2 ticket
- Pony rides
- Travel insurance and GST 5%

STANDARD

₹58,000–68,000

Per person, twin sharing

PREMIUM

₹85,000–1,15,000

Per person, twin sharing

Per person on twin sharing, indicative, including flights via Delhi. Extra nights in Gulmarg and Pahalgam push this above the Classic itinerary; winter and tulip-season dates run higher still.

Kashmir Short Break

A compact long-weekend version for couples or working families: gardens, one gondola day at Gulmarg and a houseboat night, skipping Pahalgam and Sonamarg to keep travel time down.

3 nights / 4 days Route: **Srinagar – Gulmarg – Srinagar (Dal Lake houseboat)**

From **₹36,000** per person, indicative

Day

1

SRINAGAR

Arrive and shikara ride

Fly Ahmedabad–Delhi–Srinagar, landing by early afternoon. Transfer to your houseboat on Dal Lake. Evening shikara ride through the floating gardens and past Nehru Park as the sun sets.

Stay: **Houseboat on Dal Lake** · Meals: **Dinner**

Day

2

SRINAGAR → GULMARG

Gondola day

Early start to Gulmarg (56 km, about 1.5–2 hours) to beat the queue at the cable car. Phase 1 gondola to Kongdoori, Phase 2 to Apharwat Peak where booked and weather permits. Return to Srinagar by early evening.

Stay: **Houseboat on Dal Lake** · Meals: **Breakfast, Dinner**

Day

3

SRINAGAR

Mughal Gardens and the old city

Morning at Nishat Bagh and Shalimar Bagh (add the Tulip Garden if travelling in early-to-mid April). Afternoon at Shankaracharya Temple for the view over the lake, then a craft-emporium stop for pashmina and papier-mache before a farewell dinner on the houseboat.

Stay: **Houseboat on Dal Lake** · Meals: **Breakfast, Dinner**

Day

4

SRINAGAR

Free morning, fly home

A free morning for the market at Lal Chowk or a last shikara ride, depending on your flight time. Transfer to the airport 3 hours before departure via Delhi.

Stay: — · Meals: **Breakfast**

Included

- + Return Ahmedabad–Srinagar flights via Delhi
- + 3 nights on a Dal Lake houseboat
- + Private AC vehicle for the Gulmarg day and Srinagar sightseeing
- + Daily breakfast and veg dinner
- + Gondola Phase 1 ticket at Gulmarg

Not included

- Lunches
- Gondola Phase 2 ticket
- Shikara ride beyond the included evening rides
- Travel insurance and GST 5%

+ Airport pickup and drop

STANDARD

₹36,000–42,000

Per person, twin sharing

PREMIUM

₹52,000–68,000

Per person, twin sharing

Per person on twin sharing, indicative, including flights via Delhi. Best value in the shoulder months (May–June, September); winter dates cost more due to flight demand even though the trip is shorter.

Want this booked properly?

Send this PDF to us on WhatsApp with your dates and the number of travellers. Hotel names and a firm price within 24 hours.

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