

Five Relaxed Days in Manali: Temples, Snow and Café Culture

Manali, Himachal Pradesh — The Valley of the Gods

A moderately paced Manali trip built around gentle walking, one adventure-hub day and a high-altitude excursion, with sit-down Himachali and café meals throughout. It suits a mid-range family that wants snow-country views and culture without steep treks or rushed mornings.

Suits: Mid-range families with older children, grandparents who can manage short stone steps, and groups wanting a food-and-culture-led hill station holiday

What it costs, per person

Stay: Rs 10,400 · Food: Rs 3,600 · Local transport: Rs 2,150 · Tickets: Rs 50 · **Total: Rs 16,200**

Day 1 · Arrival and settling into Manali

Arrival, orientation, Mall Road evening

13:00 Airport pickup and transfer to Manali

Pre-book a taxi at Bhuntar Airport rather than relying on app cabs, which are unreliable in the hills. The drive winds along the Beas river and takes about two hours depending on traffic near Kullu.

Bhuntar Airport to Manali · 120 min · Rs 425

With family: Mountain curves can cause motion sickness in children and elderly members; keep ginger candies or motion-sickness tablets handy.

15:30 Hotel check-in and rest

Check into the resort near the Log Huts area, close to Hadimba Temple, and rest after the transfer before heading out for the evening.

Snow Valley Resorts, Log Huts Area · 60 min · Rs 0 · Included in the airport taxi drop, no separate hop

17:00 Evening stroll on Mall Road

Walk the flat, pedestrian-friendly stretch of Mall Road for shawls, dry fruit and woollens, and to get a feel for the town before the fuller sightseeing days begin.

Mall Road · 90 min · Rs 0 · 10-minute taxi from the hotel, approx 100 INR shared

With family: Flat and easy for grandparents, but can get crowded on weekend evenings; hold small children's hands in the market crush.

Where to eat

Lunch: Roadside Himachali thali — Dhaba on the Kullu-Manali highway (Rs 300)

Dinner: Himachali thali with rajma and sidu — Local dhaba near Mall Road (Rs 400)

Where to stay

Snow Valley Resorts, Log Huts Area, near Hadimba Temple — Rs 2,600 a night. Mid-range mountain-facing rooms within walking distance of Hadimba Temple, a good base for the whole trip

Save a little: If the budget is tight, Hotel Mount View on Mall Road (approx 1000 INR/night) is a workable no-frills alternative, though it trades the mountain views for market-side convenience.

Day total, per person: Rs 3,725

Day 2 · Hadimba Temple and the cafés of Old Manali

Temple architecture, Tibetan-influenced café culture

09:30 Hadimba Devi Temple visit

Walk to this 500-year-old pagoda-style wooden temple set in a cedar forest, dedicated to Hidimba from the Mahabharata. There is no entry fee, and the forest setting alone makes it worth an unhurried look.

Hadimba Devi Temple, Dhungri Forest · 60 min · Rs 0 · 10-minute walk from Snow Valley Resorts, free

With family: Short uphill cobbled path from the parking area; the wooden steps can be slippery, so elderly members should take it slowly.

11:00 Old Manali café lane and small shops

Cross the river into Old Manali, known for its wood-fired pizzas, momos and backpacker shops, a legacy of the town's Tibetan-refugee and long-running backpacker history.

Old Manali · 90 min · Rs 0 · Taxi or shared cab, 15 minutes, approx 150 INR round trip per person shared

With family: Lanes are narrow and can feel congested with pedestrians and bikes; the strip gets loud and drink-heavy after dark, so plan to be back before evening if travelling with young children.

12:30 Manu Temple visit

A short stop at the wooden temple dedicated to the sage Manu, believed to be humanity's progenitor in Hindu tradition. No entry fee, but modest dress covering knees and shoulders is expected.

Manu Temple, Old Manali · 30 min · Rs 0 · 5-minute walk within Old Manali

With family: Quiet and quick; easy for all ages including grandparents.

17:00 Leisure time and optional Mall Road browsing

Return to the main town for a relaxed evening, with time for more shopping or simply resting at the hotel after a walking-heavy day.

Mall Road / hotel · 90 min · Rs 0 · Taxi back to Manali, 15 minutes, already covered in the earlier round trip fare

Where to eat

Breakfast: Hotel breakfast — Snow Valley Resorts (Rs 150)

Lunch: Wood-fired pizza or momos — Café in Old Manali (Rs 350)

Dinner: Simple Himachali or North Indian thali — Local dhaba near Mall Road (Rs 300)

Where to stay

Snow Valley Resorts, Log Huts Area, near Hadimba Temple — Rs 2,600 a night. Same base as Day 1, saving on repacking and keeping the walk to Hadimba short

Save a little: Skip paid photo booths or costume rentals near Hadimba Temple; the free forest setting is the real draw.

Day total, per person: Rs 3,550

Day 3 · Vashisht's springs and a short waterfall walk

Hot springs, ancient temple, gentle trekking

09:30 Vashisht Temple and Hot Springs

Visit the roughly 4,000-year-old temple dedicated to the sage Vashisht, and the sulphur hot spring baths beside it, which have separate sections for men and women. No entry fee for either.

Vashisht village · 90 min · Rs 0 · Taxi or local bus, 15 minutes, approx 100 INR round trip per person shared

With family: The lane up to the temple has steep stone steps; carry a change of clothes if using the baths, and go slow with anyone unsteady on their feet.

11:15 Jogini Waterfall walk

A moderately steep 4-km walk from Vashisht to the waterfall, popular as a taste of trekking without a full-day commitment. Wear sturdy shoes rather than sandals.

Jogini Waterfall trailhead, near Vashisht · 150 min · Rs 0 · 15-minute walk from Vashisht village to the trailhead

With family: The path can be slippery when wet and is not stroller- or wheelchair-friendly; better suited to families with older children than toddlers or frail elderly members.

15:30 Free afternoon or Vashisht market browsing

Unwind after the walk with time for small shops selling woollens and local crafts, or simply rest before heading back to the hotel.

Vashisht village · 60 min · Rs 0

Where to eat

Breakfast: Hotel breakfast — Snow Valley Resorts (Rs 150)

Lunch: Dham-style thali with rajma, madra and sidu — Local dhaba in Vashisht (Rs 300)

Dinner: North Indian or Himachali dinner — Restaurant near Mall Road (Rs 350)

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Where to stay

Snow Valley Resorts, Log Huts Area, near Hadimba Temple — Rs 2,600 a night. Continuing at the same base keeps logistics simple ahead of the longer excursion day

Save a little: The hot spring baths are free; skip any tout offering a 'private bath' upgrade, which is an unnecessary add-on.

Day total, per person: Rs 3,550

Day 4 • Beyond Rohtang: Atal Tunnel and Sissu

High-altitude day trip, snow and Lahaul views

08:00 Depart for Atal Tunnel and Sissu

Hire a taxi for the full day through the local taxi union stand, checking the fixed fare chart rather than negotiating. Agree the exact stops (tunnel, Sissu) and total price before starting, since this is quoted per vehicle.

Manali to Atal Tunnel · 90 min · Rs 800

With family: Carry warm layers even if Manali town feels mild; the tunnel and Sissu sit above 3,000 metres and the thin air and cold can affect elderly members or anyone with a heart or breathing condition.

09:30 Drive through Atal Tunnel and photo stop

The 9-km tunnel cuts what used to be a hazardous multi-hour crossing to about ten minutes; most families pause briefly at the north portal for photos before continuing to Sissu.

Atal Tunnel, north portal · 30 min · Rs 0 · Included in the day's taxi hire

With family: No entry fee; open 24 hours, but visit in daylight for the views and to avoid the cold after dark.

10:15 Sissu village and waterfall

Sissu has reliable snow in winter even when Manali town has none, plus a pretty waterfall and short walking lanes through the village.

Sissu, Lahaul · 180 min · Rs 0 · 20-minute drive from the tunnel exit

With family: Pace this slowly for elderly members and small children given the altitude; sturdy warm shoes help on any snow or wet ground.

Where to eat

Breakfast: Hotel breakfast — Snow Valley Resorts (Rs 150)

Lunch: Simple hot meal, Maggi or thukpa — Local eatery in Sissu (Rs 350)

Dinner: Comfort meal after the long drive — Restaurant near Mall Road (Rs 300)

Where to stay

Snow Valley Resorts, Log Huts Area, near Hadimba Temple — Rs 2,600 a night. Return base for the night after the long excursion day

Save a little: Skip unaffiliated drivers or gear-rental touts hanging around the tunnel and Sissu; stick to the taxi union vehicle already booked for the day.

Day total, per person: Rs 4,200

Day 5 • Naggar Castle and departure

Heritage architecture and travel day

09:00 Naggar Castle visit

A 15th-century Kathkooni stone-and-wood castle, quieter than the sights inside Manali town, with a courtyard temple worth a look for anyone interested in Himachali architecture.

Naggar Castle, Naggar · 90 min · Rs 50 · Taxi, 40 minutes, approx 200 INR round trip per person shared

With family: A few uneven steps inside but generally manageable for most elderly visitors; confirm the entry fee locally as it varies slightly by source.

11:00 Return drive and last Mall Road shopping

Head back into Manali for any last souvenir shopping on Mall Road before packing up.

Mall Road · 60 min · Rs 0 · Taxi back to Manali, 40 minutes, included in the round trip fare above

15:00 Transfer to Bhuntar Airport

Arrange the return taxi in advance through the hotel or taxi union stand for the roughly two-hour drive to Bhuntar Airport.

Manali to Bhuntar Airport · 120 min · Rs 425

With family: Allow buffer time for traffic near Kullu, especially in peak season.

Where to eat

Breakfast: Hotel breakfast before checkout — Snow Valley Resorts (Rs 150)

Lunch: Quick sit-down meal before departure — Restaurant near Mall Road (Rs 350)

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Where to stay

Checked out - no stay tonight, Manali — Rs 0 a night. Trip concludes today; luggage can be kept at the hotel reception for a late-morning checkout before the airport transfer

Save a little: Combine the Naggar Castle taxi and the airport transfer into one negotiated package with the taxi union if timings allow, rather than booking two separate trips.

Day total, per person: Rs 1,175

Pack for this trip

- Layered warm clothing even in the milder months, since Vashisht, Sissu and the tunnel area are noticeably colder than Manali town
 - Sturdy closed shoes for the Jogini Waterfall walk and the stone steps at Hadimba and Vashisht temples
 - A change of clothes or swimwear if using the Vashisht hot spring baths
 - Basic motion-sickness remedies for the winding mountain roads
 - Sunscreen and sunglasses for daytime altitude glare, even in cool weather
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Stay safe

- Rohtang Pass requires an online permit (approx 550 INR per car) with capped daily numbers; this itinerary uses the Atal Tunnel and Sissu instead, which is open year-round and needs no permit
 - Avoid travelling in July-September when monsoon landslides commonly block the highways around Manali
 - The stone steps at Hadimba Temple and Vashisht can be slippery after rain or in winter; elderly members should take them slowly
 - Beyond the Atal Tunnel, thin air and cold can affect anyone with a heart or breathing condition; pace the Sissu stop accordingly
 - Agree taxi fares and stops in full before starting any day trip, since day-trip taxis are quoted per vehicle and unaffiliated drivers at Solang or Rohtang tend to overcharge
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Local courtesies

- Cover knees and shoulders when visiting Manu Temple and other temples in the region
 - Hindi is the most useful language for bargaining and directions; English works well in cafés and hotels but less so with bus staff or in outlying villages
 - Check the taxi union's fixed fare chart at the main stand rather than trying to negotiate it down
 - Ask in advance about onion-garlic-free preparation if travelling with Jain family members, since few places are formally certified
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If it rains

- Spend extra time in the covered shop arcades and cafés along Old Manali's lanes rather than the outdoor Jogini walk
- Postpone the Atal Tunnel and Sissu day if visibility is poor, since the drive itself becomes riskier in rain or fog
- Vashisht's hot spring baths remain enjoyable even in light rain, since they are partly indoor
- Use the extra indoor time for a longer, unhurried café meal or shopping session on Mall Road under its covered stretches