

Serenade your soul, soak in the sounds of nature, nourish your mind and uplift your spirit in Palampur

Land of celestial beauty



OMRITA

There are places hidden in the folds of Himachal Pradesh where celestial beauty reigns, time slows down and every sense is awakened in celebration of the elements. A drive of about 175 kms from Chandigarh, takes you to Hamirpur located in the lower Himalayan ranges.

Undulating elevations ranging from 400 to 1100 mtrs with deep ravines, rugged hills and the mesmerizing river Beas greet you at Hamirpur — an ancient city, with a history which can be traced back to the time of Mahabharata. The town is also known for its rich traditional culture and folk music.

Ancient temples built almost 400 years ago are located around this area. Amongst the most popular ones are Nardeshwar Temple, Bilkaleshwar Temple and Murli Manohar Mandir.

A further 69 kms drive of beguiling beauty, into the mystical mountains, across criss-crossing rivers, and along incandescent waterfalls, brings you to Palampur, the bountiful land of tea gardens. The romance of tea in this area was first conceived by Dr. Jameson in 1849, when he first transported a tea bush from Almora to Palampur. The bush thrived and so did this lovely little town.

Soon the area became a favorite with the tea cultivators of the British Raj. The town is surrounded by sweet smelling pine forests and the fragrant mountain air is believed to have healing properties. The backdrop of the



Dhauladhar Mountains with their snow covered peaks seduce you into silence as you hear the bird song as if in ode to the heavens above.

The solitude frees you of the urban strum and dang, transcending you from a state of inertia to mindfulness where every glance captures more than a glimpse and we recognise the magnificence of our planet, and every thought becomes a prayer of gratitude.

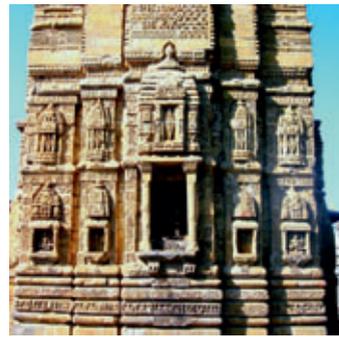
A short joyous trek through paths laden with verdant beauty brings you to the alluring Bundla chasm with a drop of over 100 meters into the Bundla stream. During the monsoons, the stream swells into a roaring river, as if in thundering applause in appreciation of the might of

Rain Gods.

A 35 kms drive from Palampur, takes you to the stunningly beautiful Bir-Billong area, a popular destination for ecotourism and adventure travel, offering paragliding, hang-gliding, trekking and camping.

Bir is considered to be the world's second best paragliding launch site. Adventurous flying enthusiasts from across the world travel to Bir each spring and autumn to partake in the thrills of paragliding over the bedazzling mountains and enrapturing tea estates.

On the South western edge of Bir lies the Tibetan colony, established in the 1960's. Many Tibetan Monasteries



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are located here representing the Nyingma, Kagyu and Sakya traditions.

Just a few kms west of Bir is Upper Bhattu, where the Sherab Ling, a sprawling Monastery and retreat complex is located. Sherab Ling serves as a coaching centre and retreat for many a committed seekers who come here to learn the art of meditation and the Buddhist philosophy.

Soak in the skies with its changing hues from azure to chardonnay and as the sun sets to rose, enjoy every idyllic moment; let every thought become a tender prayer of gratitude, etch it all in your head and heart so you can remember the stillness and simplicity when you are back to your hectic urban existence, for these memories parent us through stormy weathers and bleaker moments.

The writer is an avid traveller

Pitstop



DISCOVER A NEW YOU

Andreta — the abode of renowned artist late Sardar Shobha Singh and late playwright Norah Richards is located 13 kms from main town. It is like an escape route to the delights of the divine; you lose yourself in the mystique of the mist, the rustling foliage and balmy breezes coming in from the ranges of the Dhauladhar. And in this solitude, one with nature, you find yourself again, refreshed and re-energised, discovering a new you. Amongst all the discoveries that you make, you will revere the discovery of self the most.



SHIVA SHRINE AT BAIJNATH

The temple of Lord Shiva at Baijnath is one of the most fascinating monuments of the Kangra valley. Consisting of an *adytum* surrounded by a spire of the usual conical shape with a *mandap*, which is covered with a low pyramid shaped roof. The *lingam* is contained within the *adytum*.

PHOTOS: SHABNAM

READERS PARTICIPATION: If you are an avid traveller and would love to share your experiences, we invite you to write for Wanderlust page. The write-up should be accompanied by your photograph. Mail your entries to us at travel.age@gmail.com

On the Way

BUDDHA DELIGHT

Enjoy and explore the local markets selling handicrafts which blend contemporary aesthetics with Tibetan culture and eclectic art. Explore the nearby woods and tea estates, and interact with the culturally rich though simple hill people and get a taste of local life at the market tea stall.

