

Jammu & Kashmir



Dal Lake

house boats moored along the banks. The **Jami Masjid** is notable for the 300-plus pillars supporting the roof,

JAMMU & KASHMIR

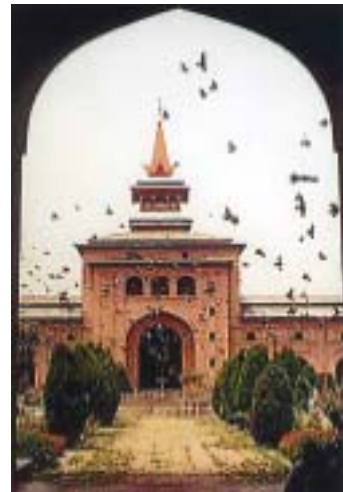
The lure of lush landscapes, the exhilaration of having seen Leh – the high-altitude desert, and the holy *darshans* of Vaishno Devi – if there is a heaven on earth, it is here, in Jammu & Kashmir. A paradise trying to regain its rightful place on the tourism map after the clouds of militancy slowly disperse. Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh are the three parts that together form the state, each so distinct from the other. Let us begin with the capital city of Srinagar...

SRINAGAR

Srinagar is a unique city, known for its lakes – the Dal, Nagin and Anchar; for its fabulous gardens – Shalimar and Nishat; for the Shankaracharya temple and for its mosques all awash in the glorious splendour of nature that was almost as if reserved for Srinagar alone. The river Jhelum also flows through a part of the city.

City Lights

The water of the **Dal Lake** is amazingly clear, with innumerable



Jami Masjid

each made of a single deodar tree trunk. The **Shankaracharya Hill** beside the Dal Lake, has a temple on top, built by Emperor Ashoka's son around 200 BC. The **Shri Pratap Singh Museum**, in Lal Mandi, has exhibits including illustrated tiles from Harwan. Open from 10:30am to 4:30pm. Closed on Mondays, and during Friday *namaz*. Admission free.

Jammu & Kashmir

The all-wooden **Hamdan Mosque** is shaped like a cube with a pyramidal roof rising to a spire. Non-Muslims are not allowed inside. **Pather Masjid**



Hamdan Mosque

was built by Empress Noorjahan in 1623 while the **Tomb of Zain-ul-Abidin** is on the east bank, between the Zaina Kadal and Ali Kadal bridges.

Gourmet's Delights

The legendary meal here called 'Wazwan', comprises mostly of non-vegetarian specialities. Round it off with green, spiced tea, *Qehwa*, served from gleaming samovars. Popular restaurants include **Tao Café, Alka Salka, Adhoo's, Mughal Darbar**, all on Residency Road. Boulevard Road has other eateries like **Lhasa** and **Sultan Bakery**.

Shopper's Paradise

Kashmir is a handicraft lover's delight. Pick up carpets, shawls, papier mache goods painted by expert craftsmen, baskets, cricket bats, walnut wood artefacts etc. Food products include saffron, walnuts, almonds, *shah zira*, Kashmiri chillies and honey. Silks and woollen embroidered shawls, can be bought from the bazaars of Srinagar which are dotted with handicraft stores and shops.

Fairs & Festivals

The major festivals that are celebrated include Id-ul-Fitr, Id-ul-Zuha, Shivratri and Diwali.

Must Do

Stay in the Houseboats! These floating homes on the Dal Lake and Nagin Lake, are poetically picturesque, and come with all modern amenities. The Dal, Srinagar's largest lake, has many of them in long rows, some facing the Boulevard while others are situated singly or in groups of two or three. The houseboats here require *shikaras* to go to and from them.



Houseboat

Excursions

Pahalgam: 95 km from Srinagar, the 'valley of shepherds' is at a height of 2130 metres. En route are interesting places like Pampore, Avantipur, Anantnag, Achabal, Kokarnag,



River Lidder, Pahalgam

Mattan and Martland. **Sonmarg:** 87 km away, this 'meadow of gold' features snowy mountains against a cerulean sky. Sonmarg is the starting



Sonmarg

point of a major trek passing several mountain lakes – Vishansar, Kishansar, Gadsar, Satsar and Gangabal. Accommodation is available in JKTDC bungalows. **Gulmarg:** 52 km away, the 'meadow of flowers' has snow-capped mountains cupping the meadow. Its natural Golf Course is one of the highest in the world and most scenic. Winter skiing is part of the winter festival (December to January). Heli



Gulmarg

skiing brings foreign visitors here in the winter. The shrine of Baba Reshi, a mystic saint can be visited on the way back from Gulmarg.

Facts at a Glance

Access: By Air: Both IA and Jet Airways fly daily from Delhi via Jammu, while IA also operates direct

flights from Delhi and Leh. Additional flights are pressed into service during the peak tourist season. **Airport:** 15 km further ahead, on the road branching out of the city, lies the **Srinagar Airport**. Snowbound in winter, the airport usually remains open from April to October. Taxi is the most convenient way to reach the city. **By Rail:** Since Srinagar is out of bounds for Indian Railways, Jammu (300 km) is the nearest railhead served by many express trains. **By Road:** Jammu and Kashmir State Road Transport Corporation (JKSRTC) services connect Srinagar with Gulmarg (48 km), Sonmarg (88 km), Pahalgam (96 km), Kargil (204 km), Jammu (290 km), Leh (434 km), Chandigarh (630 km) and Delhi (876 km). In case you are planning to drive yourself, be careful on the landslide-prone Jammu-Srinagar Highway. There are many restaurants and comfortable guesthouses along the way for a night halt. **Temperatures:** Summer: Min 12°C, Max 24°C; Winter: Min -5°C, Max 7°C. Frequent showers July through September. **Best time to visit:** April to October.

City Code: 0194

Indian Airlines: 2452358

Jet Airways: 2480801

SRTC Bus Stand: 2472880

Srinagar Taxi Owners Association: 2452527

The Director of Tourism:

2452690/91

Tourist Reception Centre: 2472449, 2473648, 2477224

Banks: J & K Bank (Boulevard), American Express (Kai Travels, on the Boulevard), SBI, Punjab National Bank (Badami Bagh), Bank of India

Jammu & Kashmir

(Boulevard Road).
Central Telegraph Office: Manhara Azad Road.
Hospitals: Rattan Rani Hospital, at Barbar Shah; Shri Maharaja Hari Singh Hospital, at Karan Nagar; and Shri Kashmir Medical Institute at Soura.

Home Away From Home

WelcomHeritage Gurkha Houseboats on Nagin Lake: 2421001 & 2425229, Grand Palace Intercontinental: 2470101, Broadway: 2459001, Centaur Lake View: 2475631, Zabarwan: 2471441, Welcome: 2479533, Tourist Reception Centre (JKTDC): 2474060, Pinegrove Hotel, on Buchwara Rd., Mazda, Asia Brown Palace, both on the Boulevard, facing Dal Lake.

JAMMU

The river Tawi flows through its foothills and the Trikuta ranges provide a scenic backdrop to this former summer capital of J&K! Partly because it is the most important railhead in the state and partly because it is the base for the holy trip to Vaishno Devi, this cradle of Dogra culture and home to many sacred, ancient shrines, Jammu is fast becoming the commercial capital of the state.

City Lights

Located about 3.5 km from Jammu, **Peer Khoh** is a cave shrine famous for its *shivalingam*. The **Ranbireshwar Temple**, dedicated to Lord Shiva, has 12 crystal *shivalingams* surrounding one central *lingam*, 7.5 feet high. The **Raghunath Temple**, dedicated to Lord Rama, forms the nucleus of a



Raghunath Temple

group of other temples. The intricate work on the temple was initiated by the founder of the kingdom of Jammu and Kashmir, Maharaja Gulab Singh in 1835 and was completed by his son, Maharaja Ranbir Singh in 1860. The 3,000-year-old **Bahu Fort** is 5 km from the city centre and the **Sheesh Mahal at Mubarak Mandi Palace** now houses the **Dogra Art Museum**.

Gourmet's Delights

Jammu offers cuisine from all over the country, though the speciality remains its own exotic Kashmiri cuisine, served in traditional **Wazwan** style. Savour this at the **TRC**, or the restaurants at **Ashok** and **Residency** hotels, **Premier's Victoria Junction** and **Raffals**, at Premnath Dora Chowk. Kailash is a good vegetarian restaurant, and so is **Amritsarian di Hatti**. **Papa di Hatti** is known for its *tandoori* non-vegetarian delights.

Shopper's Paradise

The arts and crafts of Jammu and Kashmir are very famous. The pashmina and other woollen shawls with exquisite embroidery, are available here. More importantly, Jammu is also an ideal place to buy dry fruits such as walnuts, almonds, dried apricots and dried mushrooms. The main shopping areas are **Vir Marg**,

Raghunath Bazaar and Hari Market. J & K Government Arts Emporium is on Vir Marg.
Excursions

Patnitop: 110 km away, is an ideal place for walks and picnics. Buses and taxis are available from Jammu, Katra and Udhampur. Accommodation is available in many hotels, like Asia, The Oasis Resort, Green Top, Verdaan Resorts and Green Land Parks.
Sanasar: 18 km away, has a Gulmarg-like meadow, with picnic spots around. Soft adventure activities like



Patnitop

nature trails, camping and harder ones like paragliding and basic skiing are available here.

Facts at a Glance

Access: By Air: Jammu Airport is 8 km away from the city centre. Indian Airlines and Jet Airways connect it to Delhi, Leh and Srinagar. **By Rail:** The Railway station is 5 kms away from the city centre. Jammu Tawi is an important railhead on the Northern Railway line. Express trains connect it with Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata and Amritsar. Some of the trains servicing Jammu include: Jammu Mail, Jammu Express, Shalimar Express, Sealdah Express, Jhelum Express, Madras Express and Rajdhani Express. **By Road:** Jammu

lies on NH 1A and is connected by the national highway network to all parts of the country. **Getting Around:** You can hire autorickshaws to and from any point in the city at negotiable rates. You can also hire taxis for local sightseeing from the Tourist Taxi Association, Tourist Reception Centre. **Temperatures:** Summer: Min 23.4°C, Max 43°C; Winter: Min 4.3°C, Max 26.2°C. **Best time to visit:** September to April.

- City Code:** 0191
- Indian Airlines:** 2542735
- Jet Airways:** 2574312
- Pawan Hans Helicopters:** 2435305
- Tourist Office:** 2546266, 2575380
- Railway Enquiry:** 2470314, 2470212
- J&KSRTC:** 2577475
- Taxi Union Stand:** 2533485
- Banks:** J&K Bank: 2543423, SBI: 2520155, PNB: 2544707, Punjab & Sind Bank: 2543373
- Hospitals:** Government Medical College Hospital: 2530041, SMGS Hospital: 2547635
- Chemists:** Jammu Cooperative

Travel Advice

- * Though Jammu is relatively safe, because of the tensions in the Kashmir Valley, one needs to be extra careful while travelling in and around it.
- * All foreigners entering Jammu are required to register with the Foreigners' Registration Office, Superintendent of Police (CID) at Canal Road.

Home Away From Home

Asia Jammu Tawi: 2435757, Jammu Ashok: 2543571, K.C. Residency:

2520770, Hari Niwas Palace: 2547216, Tourist Reception Centre: 2548172.

VAISHNO DEVI SHRINE

Jai Mata Di! – This simple chant becomes a resounding chorus as thousands of pilgrims make their cherished journey to Vaishno Devi, especially during Navratras. The 13 km climb for the holy *darshan* begins from the small town Katra, and the route has all modern amenities. Jammu & Kashmir's holiest shrine receives millions of visitors every year, carrying coconuts, sacred thread, gold-bordered red chunnis, dry-fruit, incense and vermilion.

Places in and around Vaishno Devi are all linked to the goddess and her legends. The **Raghunath Mandir** and the temples of **Ardhkawari**, **Bhairon Ghati** and **Garbh Joon**, en route the main temple, are all linked with incidents during the goddess' mythical fight with **Bhairon Nath**. Some of the most scenic spots around Katra



Vaishno Devi Shrine

include Deva Mai, Devi Pindian, Baba Dhansar, Chamba, Aghar Jitto, Salala Lake, Riasi and Bhim Garh Fort.

Gourmet's Delights

Country Inn, **Asia Vaishno Devi** and **Asia Shripati** have a restaurant each. There are several *dhabas* and fast-food joints too which serve *vaishnavi*

vegetarian foods. The **Shrine Board** offers food at its *bhojanalayas* at Katra at nominal rates.

Shopper's Paradise

Prasad items like red *chunnis*, coconuts, and souvenirs like postcards, lockets, rings or images of Mata Vaishno Devi should be bought from shops run by the shrine board, outside the temple. You could also buy dry fruits and nuts at reasonable rates.

Facts at a Glance

Access: By Air: The nearest airport is at Jammu, 60 km away. Indian Airlines and Jet Airways connect it to Delhi, Leh and Srinagar. **By Rail:** The nearest railhead is Jammu Tawi. Katra has a reservation counter where bookings can be made. Jammu Tawi is an important railhead on the Northern Railway line. Express trains connect it with Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata and Amritsar. Some of the trains servicing Jammu include Jammu Mail, Jammu Express, Shalimar Express, Sealdah Express, Jhelum Express, Madras Express and the Rajdhani Express. **By Road:** Jammu is on NH 1A, and is connected to all parts of the country. **Jammu to Katra:** Buses leave every 10 minutes for Katra from the General Bus Stand. Taxis are available from the airport, railway station and the Tourist Reception Centre in Jammu. **Pawan Hans** also runs regular Helicopter service from Jammu to Sanjhichat, en route to Katra and Vaishno Devi. There are services from Katra to Sanjhichat too, but their service depends on weather conditions. **Katra to Vaishno Devi:** Vaishno Devi is a 13 km trek from Katra. Ponies and palanquins are available. All the northern state

transport corporations ply special buses to Katra for the benefit of devotees. **Getting Around:** Taxis can be hired at Jammu for Katra, the journey takes about 90 minutes. Bus service is also available to Katra. **Climate:** Pleasant most of the year, winters are too cold. **Best time to visit:** March-April and September-October. During winter the trek becomes difficult because of snowfall and blocked roads.

City Code: 02423
Pawan Hans: 232340; (Jammu: 2435305), (Sanjichat: 282233)
Hospitals/Medical Centres: The Primary Health Centres in Katra, Ardhkawari and Bhawan open 24 hours and are staffed by qualified doctors. The Evening Clinic near the Katra Bus Stand opens everyday between 2 pm and 8 pm.

Home Away From Home

Country Inn & Suites: 233801, Asia Vaishno Devi: 232061, Asia Shripati: 233264. Also Jai Maa Inn, Ishwar and Tourist Bungalow (JKTDC).

LEH

Leh comprises of the Himalayas, while the Karakoram and Zaskar ranges comprise the Ladakh region. Ladakh is the highest level desert and Leh is its main city. It has its own



Leh Town

distinct culture, terrain and religion, all surrounded by incredibly beautiful vistas. Experience it to believe it.

City Lights

The **Leh Palace** is one of the major attractions here. Built in the 17th century and now deserted, it was the home of the royal family until they were exiled to Stok in the 1830s. Above the palace, at the top of the Namgyal hill, is the **Victory Tower**, built to commemorate Ladakh's victory over the Balti Kashmir armies in the early 16th century. Gompas abound in this terrain: **Namgyal Tsemo Gompa** is famous for the three-storey high Buddha image and ancient manuscripts and frescoes. **Sankar Gompa** is renowned for the impressive impression of the Buddhist deity Avalokiteshwara Padmahari or Chenresig with a thousand arms and an equal number of heads. **Shanti Stupa** is a vintage point to enjoy the wonderous views of the exotic locales of Leh. **Alchi Gompa**, on the banks of the Indus river, is one of the largest monasteries in Leh. Leh and **Choglamsar** are known for Buddhist study centres. Try the summer meditation sessions at the Mahabodhi Meditation Center on Changspa Lane.

A visit to the monasteries of Shey Thiksey and Hemis is a must. The Shey Gompa has a 30 feet high gold plated Buddha Statue, the largest in the area. Thiksey Gompa has a Maitreya Buddha. The most famous Gompa at Hemis has beautiful murals. The famous annual Tse-Chu

or Hemis festival takes place in June/July with masked Lama dancers.

Must Do

Trekking! Between July and September is a good time to take any of the memorable treks: to Markha Valley, Lamayuru to Darcha and from Sarchu to Tso Moriri Lake. White Water rafting is becoming very popular! Check with locals there or your tour operator back home when you are planning your trip.

Special Equipment Hire: Tsering Angchok at Asia Adventure: 53247, for treks and jeep safaris to Tso Moriri Lake and beyond.

Gourmet's Delights

Leh is the place for authentic *momos* and *thukpa*. For a taste of traditional Ladakhi preparations, visit a Ladakhi home, to sample local dishes like *Pakthuk* and *Skyu*, the all-in-one soup-style favourite of most Ladakhis.

Popular Eateries: Dogra Dhaba (Opposite Dreamland); German Bakery, Fort Road; Suku, Dreamland; Gesmo, Fort Road; Ibex, Fort Road; Instyle, Adjoining the German Bakery; Mona Lisa, Off Changspa Lane; Tibetan Restaurant, New Market; Wok Tibetan Kitchen, Main Bazaar; Pumpnickel German Bakery on Zangsty Road.

Shopper's Paradise

For gift items and souvenirs, check out the **Ladakh Art Place** in the old town, the **Ecology Center** and some shops behind the **Main Bazaar** road. During the Ladakh festival, a choice of local handicrafts and clothes are available.

Facts at a Glance

Access: By Air: The best way to reach Leh is by the regular Alliance Air or Jet Airways morning flights (65 mins) from Delhi, weather permitting.

By Rail: The nearest that you can reach on broad gauge is Kalka. From here, take a bus or taxi to Shimla and onward to Manali. Tata Sumos or regular buses for Leh are available from Manali. **By Road:** The two routes to Leh (open from June to October) are from Srinagar via Kargil on the Srinagar-Leh Highway (434 km) and from Manali via Sarchu and Dharchu on the Manali-Leh Highway (473 km). However, the two-day journey across spectacular mountain country, along alluring blue rivers and through passes over 13,000 ft is worth every hour.

Getting Around: Taxis are the only mode. **Temperatures:** Summer: Min 7°C, Max 25°C; Winter: Min -30°C. **Rainfall:** 50 mm. **Best time to visit:** June to August.

Travel Advice

* Tourists must take time to acclimatize to the atmosphere in the area, to prevent acute mountain sickness or AMS.

* Permits for entry to the restricted areas in and around Leh are essential.

* Individual tourists are not permitted to visit the restricted areas.

* Tourists are not allowed to stay for more than seven days even after getting permits.

* They are allowed to travel on identified tour circuits only.

City Code: 01982

Indian Airlines: 252076