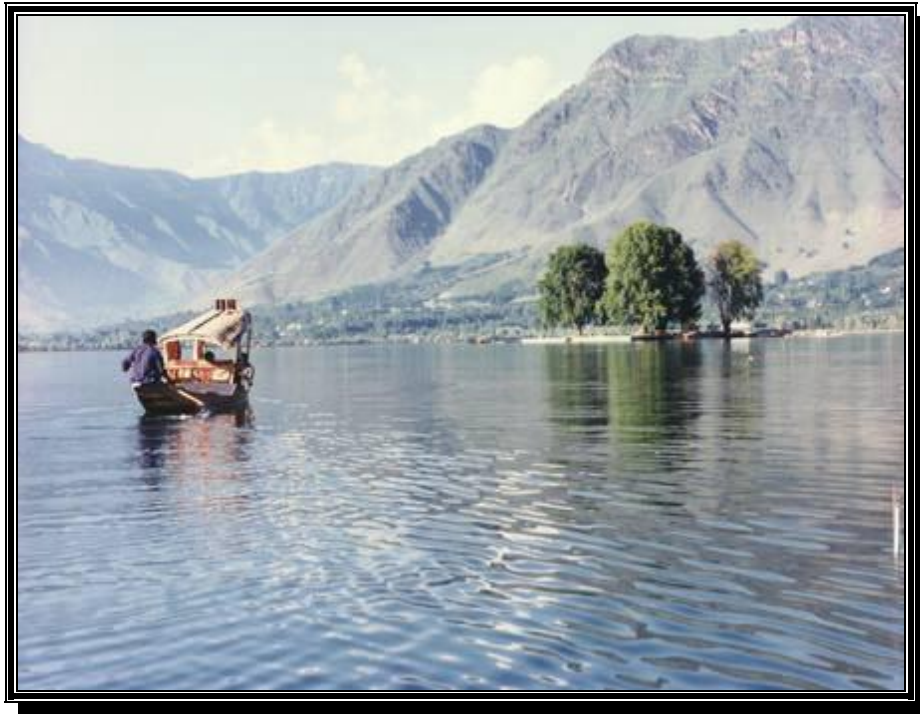


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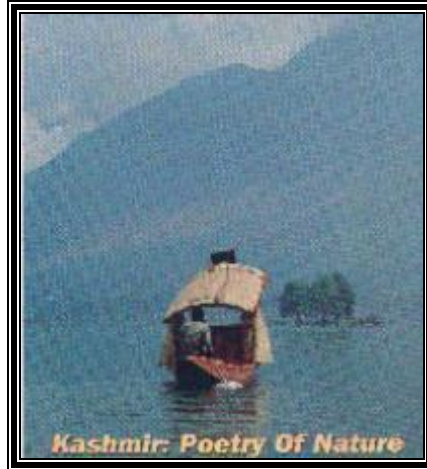
Poetry of Nature



Acknowledgments



Kashmir: Poetry of Nature



First Edition, *August 2002*

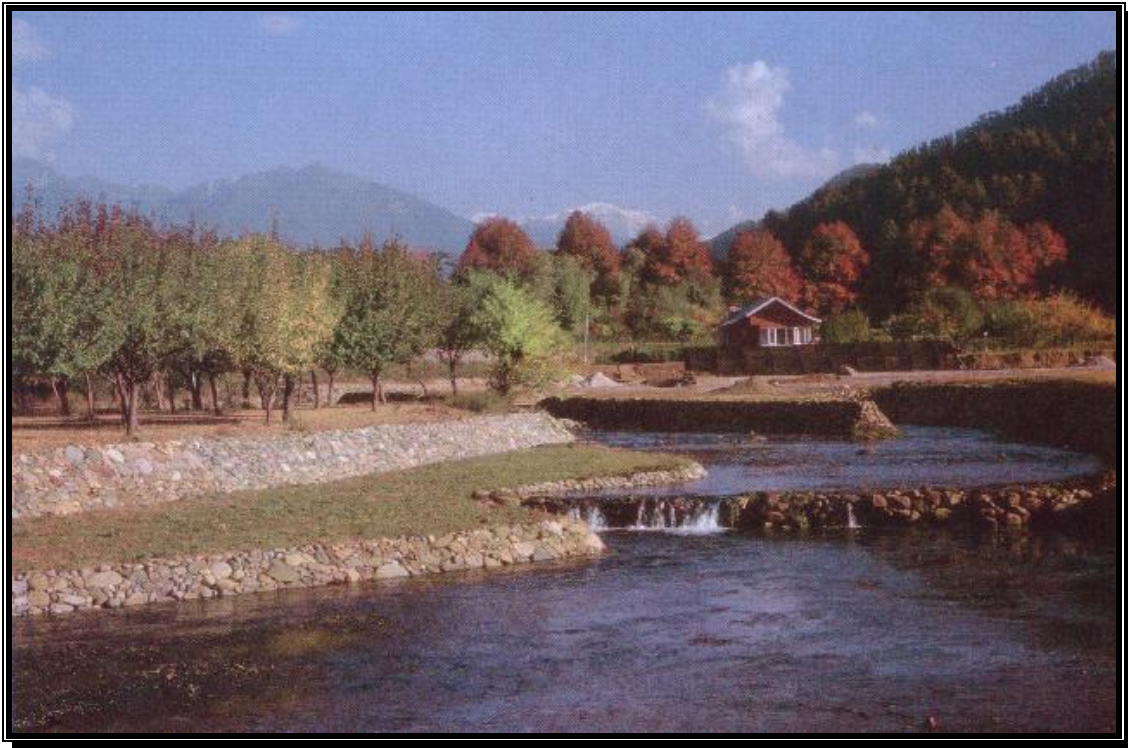
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1 Introduction

Set like a jewelled crown on the map of India, Kashmir is a many-faceted diamond, changing its character with the seasons always extravagantly beautiful. Three Himalayan ranges - *Karakoram*, *Zaskar* and *Pir Panjal* - snow-capped, majestic, frame the landscape from northwest to northeast. They are the birthplace of great rivers which flow down into the valleys below, forested with wild orchards and lily laden lakes.

It is not enough to say that Kashmir is beautiful. Kashmir has captured within its territories the quintessence of all the elements that poetry demands of nature. Awesome grandeur, serenity, a wild profusion of color. The Mughals, who celebrated beauty, planted their symmetrical gardens and added a further dimension to the valleys of Kashmir. They also left behind a heritage of exquisite artisanship among the people, making the handicrafts of the land prized gifts the world over.



A medley of nature's topography and colors.

A land where myriad holiday ideas take shape. In winter, when snow carpets the mountains, skiing, tobogganing, sled-riding are popular sports. In spring and summer, the honey-dewed orchards, rippling lakes and blue skies beckon every soul to sample the many delights the mountains and valleys have to offer. Golf at 3000 meters above the sea, water-skiing sailing and angling for prized rainbow trout. Or simply drift into dreams down the willow fringed alleys of lakes in gorgeous houseboats. The possibilities are endless.

Unspoilt by the ravages of progress, 96 kms east of Srinagar, nestled on the banks of the river *Lidder* lies the quaint village of **Pahalgam**. The serious angler's delight, even amateurs manage a fair catch of rainbow trout from the rushing streams with bustling schools of fish. The large brown bear is a natural inhabitant of the thick pine and fir forests that cover the mountainside. Pahalgam offers a golf course at 2400 meters above sea level and is well equipped as a base for trekkers. Camping equipment, ponies and porters are readily available. Kolahoi glacier is the popular destination via Aru, a charming meadow. Pilgrims bound for Amarnath stop at Pahalgam, their first point of worship.



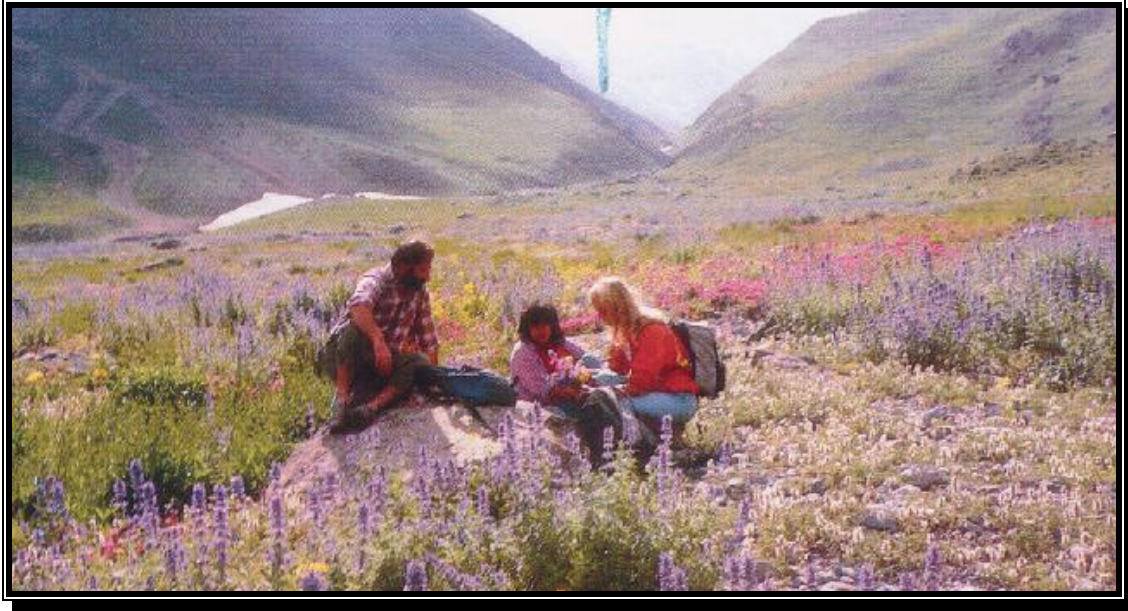
Entrancing Sonamarg's green pastures.

India's finest ski resort, **Gulmarg**, 53 kms from Srinagar, is known as *the meadow of flowers*. It also has the distinction of offering the highest natural golf course in the world at 2890 meters. Mid-December to March, Gulmarg becomes an exciting winter sports resort. Skiing, tobogganing, ski- bobbing, are some of the activities offered here, with instruction and equipment facilities. The resort has one T-bar lift, a chair lift and three modern ski-lifts.



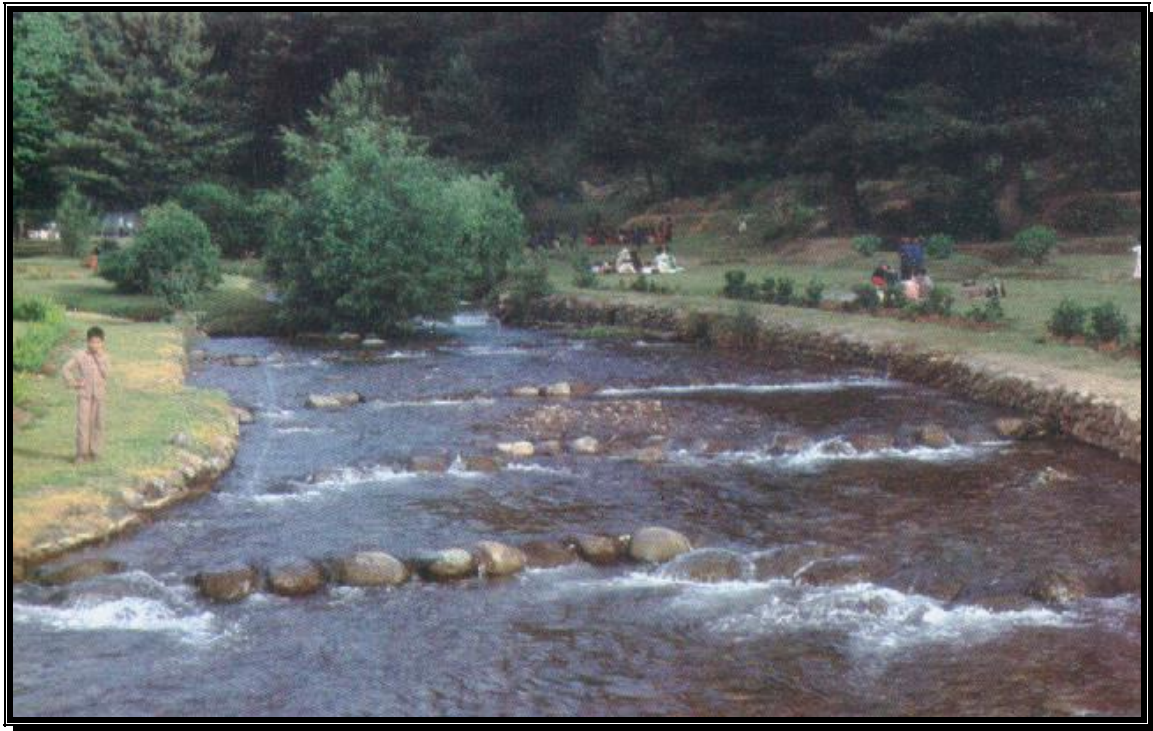
Gulmarg's winter sports panorama.

Gateway to Ladakh, at an altitude of 2470 meters with brilliant forests of sycamore and alpine flowers, silver birch, fir and pine, **Sonamarg** is a golden meadow of enthralling beauty. Three lakes *Krishnasar*, *Vishensar* and *Gangabal* can be viewed from the snow-covered *Nichinai pass*. 20 kms east of Sonamarg is the *Zojila pass* at 3540 meters which leads into the Ladakh plateau.



Trekkers rest near Gadsar.

In the heart of the Bhringi valley, 70 kms away, is **Kokernag** with its famous springs flowing at an altitude of 2000 meters said to possess miraculous curative powers. The remains of a pavilion and baths built by the Moghuls can be seen at **Verinag**, 80 kms away from Srinagar. The river *Jhelum* has its source here.



Kokernag, Kashmir.

The **Dachigam** wildlife sanctuary, with the Himalayan black and brown bear, musk deer and the Kashmiri stag *hangul* is worth a visit. Then there is **Burzahom** with the remains of a settlement dating

back to 2,500 BC. **Chrar-e-Sharif**, the shrine of the patron saint of Kashmir, Sheikh Nooruddin. **Daksum**, famous for its trout fishing, at the far end of the densely forested Bhringi valley.



Burzahom.

About 56 kms away from Srinagar, to the south, is Avantipur. Famous for its sulphur springs and Moghul summer palaces, Anantnag is also nearby. On the way to Pahalgam is Martand with a 7th century Vishnu temple built by king Lalitaditya Muktapid. Martand is also famous for its hot springs with curative powers. A Surya temple built by Lalitaditya lies in ruins 3 kms away, revealing a definite Roman influence with Bengali Pala architecture.

2 Srinagar

Srinagar is at once a collection of images: a son et lumiere that tells the story of the love of the Mughal emperors for this paradise vale; deep green rice fields and river bridges, of gardens in bloom and lakes rimmed by houseboats; at once summer capital of the state, business centre and holiday resort. It lies 900 kms north of Delhi.



A Shikara in the Dal lake, Srinagar.

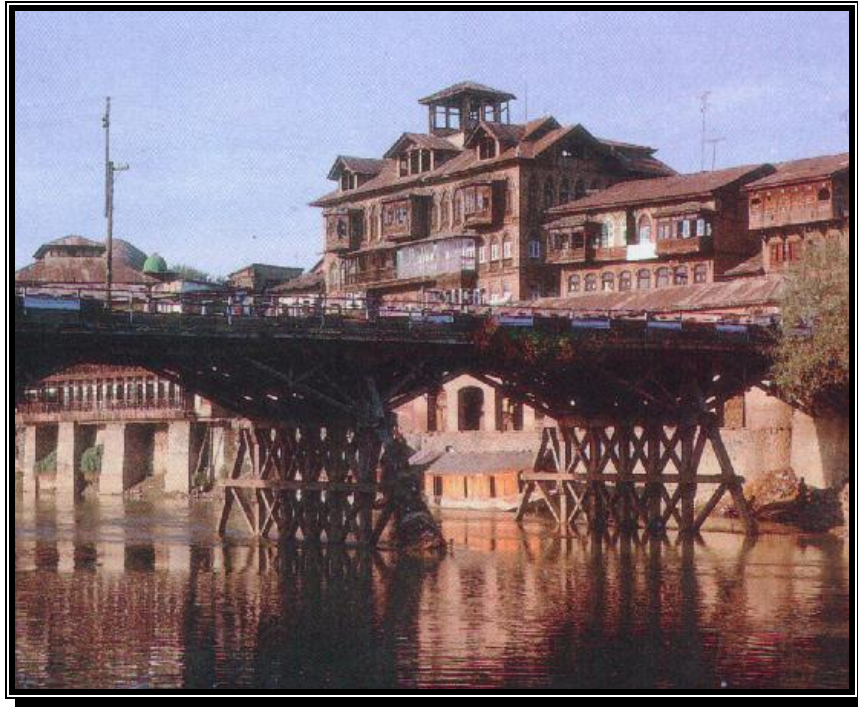
Circular residential pits around Srinagar date the settlement back to 4,000 years. Recorded history suggests the origin of Srinagar in the 3rd century B.C. under the domain of Emperor Ashok.

History has shaped the development of Srinagar, but it was the lakes and the river that have always remained at the center of all activity. Initially laid out to the north-eastern bank of the river **Jhelum**, Srinagar soon spread across to the opposite bank, the two sides linked by cantilevered bridges. Some of these bridges still retain their builders' names, as Zaina Kadal, named after an enlightened benevolent Afghan monarch.

The river Jhelum and the **Dal** and **Nagin lakes** dominate Srinagar and its life and activities. Here, lush wild gardens of lotus and waterlily flower amidst bustling lanes. By the lakeside spread the gardens of the Mughals in patterned beauty. And the people move with a tranquillity borne of a history laden pulse of activity. If legends are to be believed, the Kashmir valley was once a lake as large as a sea, and here lived an abominable demon who was killed, after most of the lake had been drained, with the collective help of Brahma's grandson, Kashyap, and the goddess Parvati. She it was who finally stilled the demon by dropping upon him a mountain, and thereby crushing him to death.

On the western shore of the Dal, opposite **Nishat Bagh**, stands **Hazratbal**, a monument which houses a holy relic of the Prophet. A great festival is held here annually. The oldest and largest of mosques of Kashmir are also in Srinagar. **Shah Hamdan Masjid**, a wooden structure with fine papier mache workmanship on its walls and ceilings, is the oldest, with five facets, each of which has five arches, signifying the daily five prayers offered to Allah. **Jamia Masjid**, another wooden mosque in Indo-Saracenic is the largest, built in 1400 by Sultan Sikander.

In the heart of the city, rises the 304 meters high **Shankaracharya Hill**. It offers a panoramic view of the city, the valley and the *Pir Panjal range*. On the northeastern side is **Hari Parbat**, another sacred mount which has a fortification built by Emperor Akbar in 1592, surrounded by fragrant almond orchards. A Durga temple stands nearby at **Chakreshwari**. Then there are the **Pather Masjid** built in 1620 by the Empress Noor Jehan, the **Madani Masjid** built by Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin, the poet- musician-ruler of Kashmir, the single greatest influence on the artistic heritage of the land.



One of the bridges that span the Jhelum in the old city.

No destination is quite so romantic, no setting as enchanting as Srinagar. More or less in the center of Kashmir, at an altitude of 1,730 meters above sea level, Srinagar's allure changes with the passing of each season. Srinagar is as much imagination as it is fact, for every season offers new vistas to this city of great antiquity. Spring breathes life again into a frozen world, and the air is heady with the



Spring in Srinagar

fragrance of a million flowers that blossom on trees, shrubs and creepers. Summer heightens the effect, and autumn is poignant in its colours of warm introspection. Winter brings with it snow, sometimes the

Dal Lake freezes, and beneath a leaden sky, roasted chestnuts turn the atmosphere aromatic with the promise of warmth and comfort.

Spring, which extends roughly from March to early May, is when a million blossoms carpet the ground. The weather during this time can be gloriously pleasant at 23 deg. C chilly and windy at 6 deg. C. This is the season when Srinagar experiences its rains, but showers are brief.

Summer extends from May until the end of August. In higher altitudes night temperatures drop slightly. Srinagar at this time experiences day temperatures of between 21 deg. C and 30 deg. C. At this time, the whole valley is a mosaic of varying shades of green rice fields, meadows, trees and Srinagar with its lakes and waterways is a haven after the scorching heat of the plains.

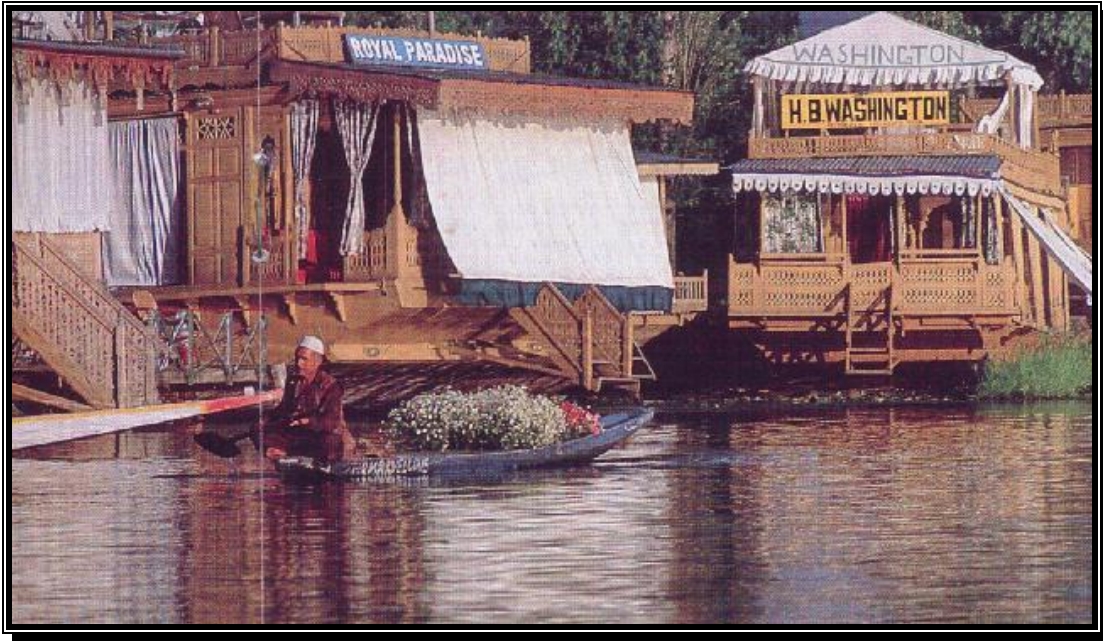


Summer in Srinagar



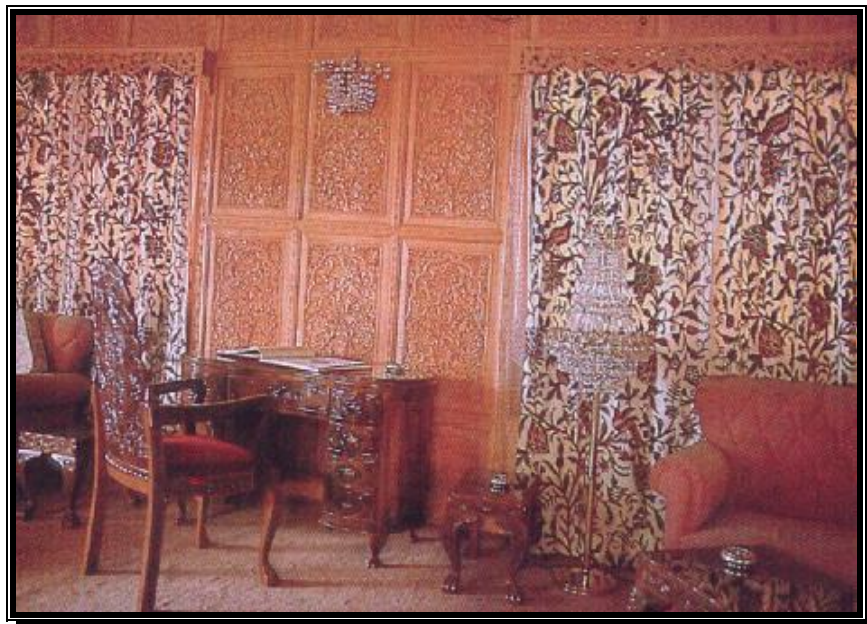
Autumn in Srinagar

The onset of autumn, perhaps Kashmir's loveliest season, is towards September, when green turns to gold and then to russet and red. The highest day temperatures in September are around 23 deg. C and night temperatures dip to 10 deg. C by about October, lower by November when heavy woollens are essential.



Houseboats line the lake's banks.

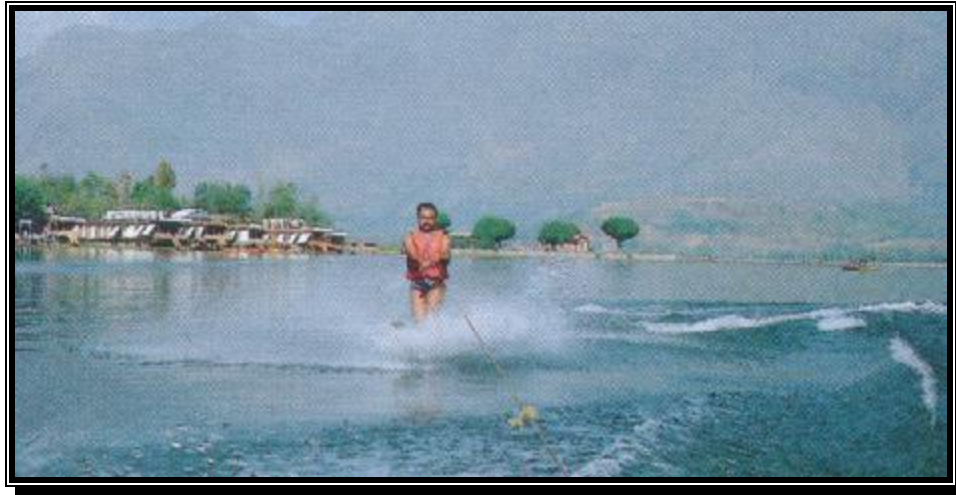
December through to the beginning of March is yet another mood of Srinagar. Bare snow covered landscapes being watched from beside the warmth of a fire is a joy that cannot be described to anyone who has not experienced it. Some houseboats and hotels remain open throughout winter these are either centrally heated or heated with *bukharis*, a typical Kashmiri stove kept alight with embers of wood, marvellously effective in the winter.



In the luxurious living room of a houseboat.

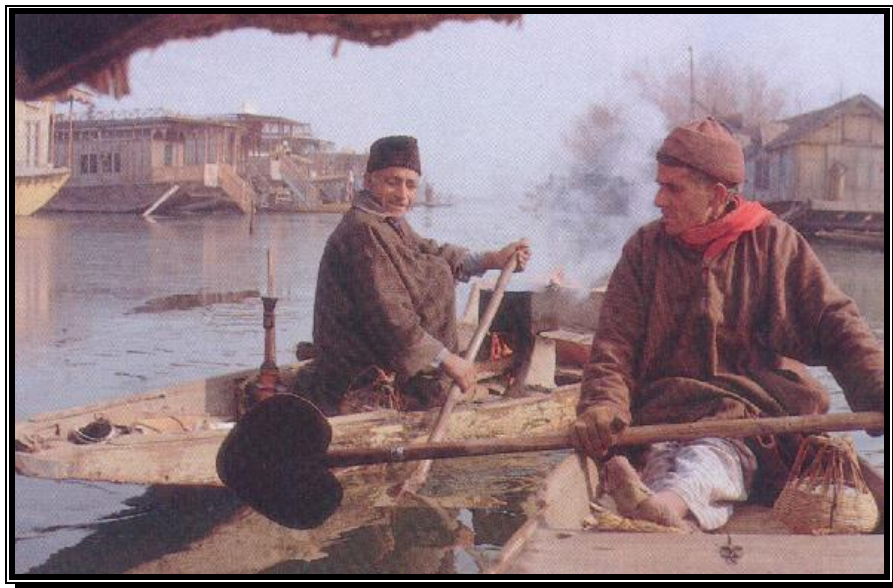
3 Kashmir Region

Dal Lake: Srinagar's chief distinction is the great body of water, the Dal Lake, which forms its focal point. The Dal has, within its area, two enormous sheet-like expanses of water - *Lokutdal* and *Boddal*, the rest of its surface being broken up alternatively by man-made strips of land inhabited by whole colonies of people and vegetation. Thus the lake is not a flat, unbroken mass of water, but a labyrinth of waterways, awash with a lifestyle not encountered elsewhere in the world. The Dal is Srinagar's major life-support system with its wide variety of marine life: fish, lotus roots, plants and floating gardens. The hospitable boat people of Kashmir trace their descent from Noah. Entire families live on boats, accepting a way of life that was bequeathed to them by their ancestors and clinging stubbornly to their traditional culture.



Water skiing in the Dal lake, Srinagar.

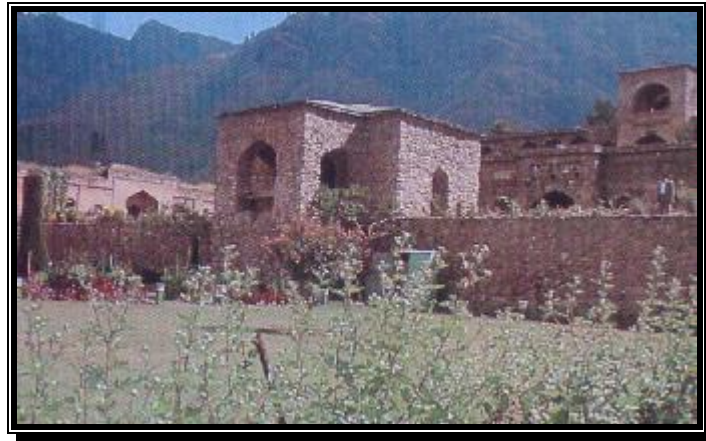
Leading from the Dal is the smaller **Nagin Lake**. Here too, the waters are edged by trees of willow and poplar whose reflection is mirrored in the lake. 'Bathing boats' here, as well as on the Dal, hire out water-skis and motor launches. The waters of the lakes are pleasantly cool from mid-May to mid-September.



The boat people of Kashmir oar across Dal lake on a winter morning

Shikaras can be hired from any of the steps called *ghats* leading to the lake. *Shikaras* are a refreshingly novel way of seeing Srinagar by day; and at twilight, the gentle soothing motion of the boat as it glides along the water is unbelievably romantic.

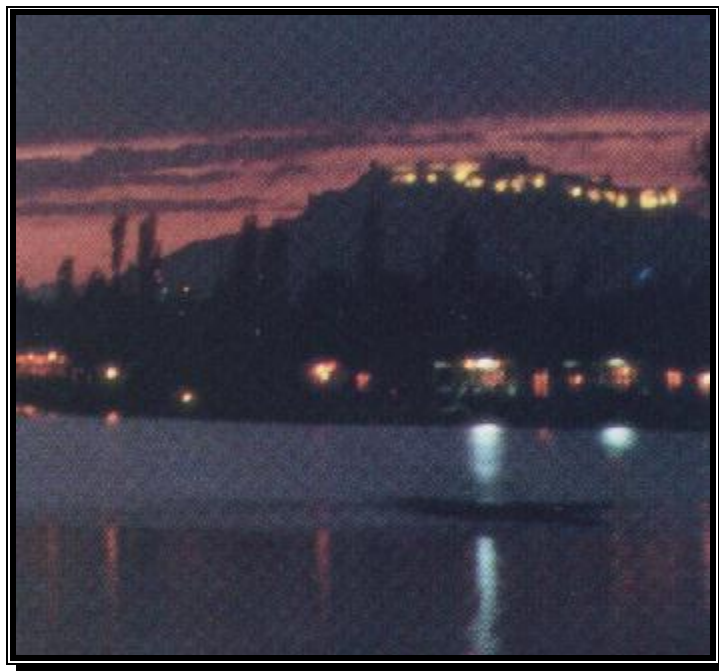
Mughal Gardens and Pari Mahal: Terraced lawns, cascading fountains, paint-box bright flower beds with the panorama of the Dal in front of them the three Mughal Gardens of *Cheshmashahi*, *Nishat* and *Shalimar* are the Mughal emperors' concept of paradise and are today very popular places for picnics. *Pari Mahal*, once the royal observatory, also has a charmingly laid out garden and is a five minute drive from Cheshmashahi.



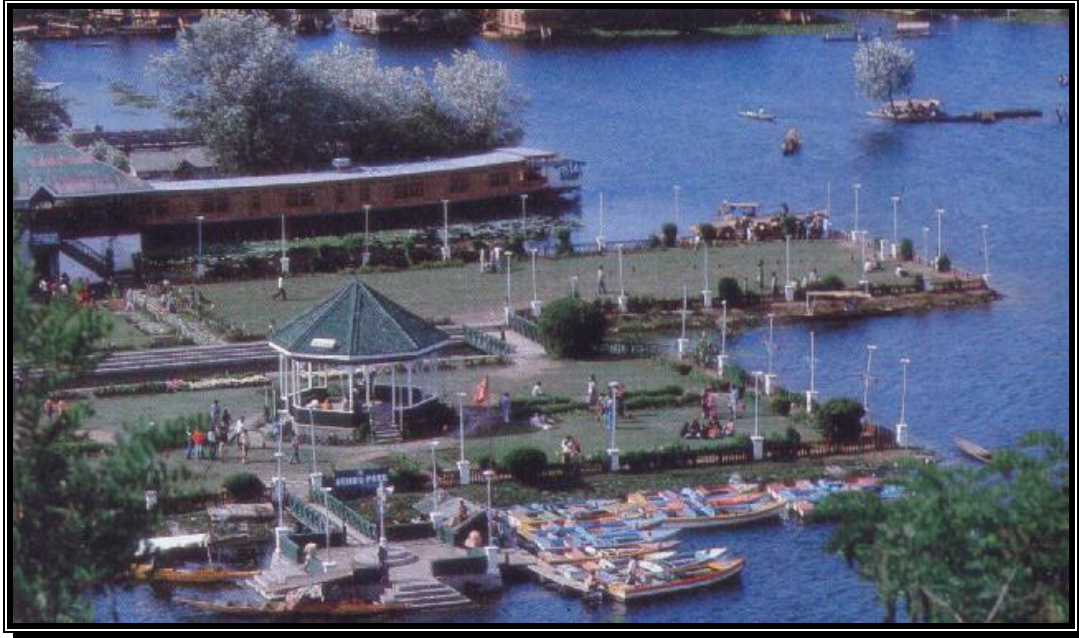
Pari Mahal is surrounded by gardens.

Every evening in the summer a sound and light show at Shalimar Gardens recreates the era of Emperor Jehangir's court in Kashmir. Timings vary slightly, but the first show is soon after dark and there are two shows in Urdu and English.

Hari Parbat Fort: To the west of the Dal lies the Hari Parbat Hill, sacred to the Goddess *Sharika* in whose honour a temple has been consecrated on the western slopes of the hill. Further up, on the crest of the hill is **Hari Parhat** Fort which dates to the 18th century.

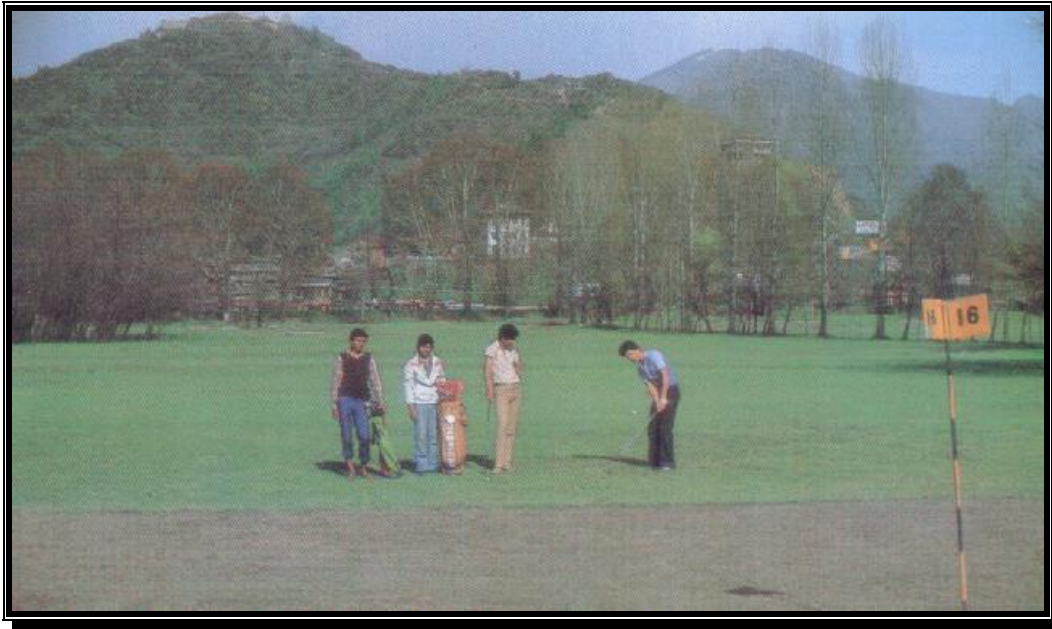


Hari Parbat is illuminated at night.



Nehru Park in the Dal lake, Srinagar

Shri Pratap Singh Museum at *Lal Mandi*, on the banks of the river Jhelum, ahead of *Raj Bagh*, is a treasure trove of Kashmiri culture.



Golf Club in Srinagar. The Shankracharya hill is in the background.

Shankaracharya Temple: The antiquity of Shankaracharya temple is akin to that of Vaishno Devi in Jammu. The temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva, has legends dating back to 200 BC. Built to overlook the valley, situated atop the Hill it has the devout climb the hill with offerings in their hands, a motorable road has been built leading to the TV Tower on the hill.

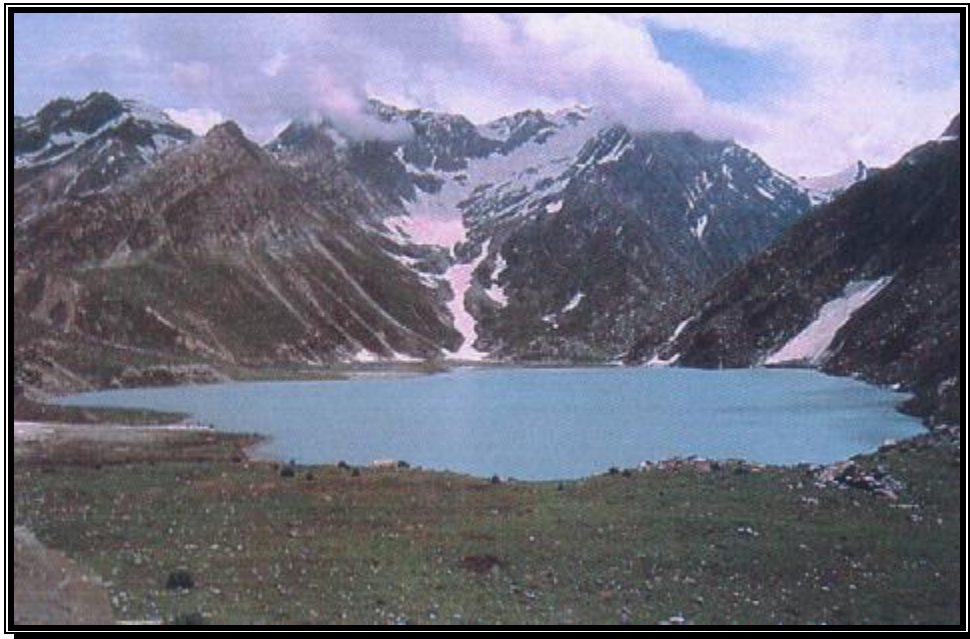


Shankracharya Temple, Srinagar

The sacred temple is situated to the south east of Srinagar. However, neither the hill nor the temple retain their pre-historic names, Gopadari and Jyeshtheswara respectively. The temple is built on a high octagonal plinth approached by a flight of steps.

Amarnath: History records that the first pilgrimage to Amarnath was undertaken in 1000 BC, though little else is known of the antiquity of Amarnath. Located 141 km from Srinagar, of which 45 km from Pahalgam has to be trekked, Amarnath is believed to be the holiest of Hindu shrines.

The Amarnath yatra is undertaken in July-August (Shravan) and thousands of devotees walk, some on ponyback, to pay obeisance at the cave where an ice-lingam, that of Shiva, waxes and wanes with the moon. By its side are two other ice lingams, those of Parvati, and their son, Ganesha.



Sheshnag Lake, enroute to Amarnath

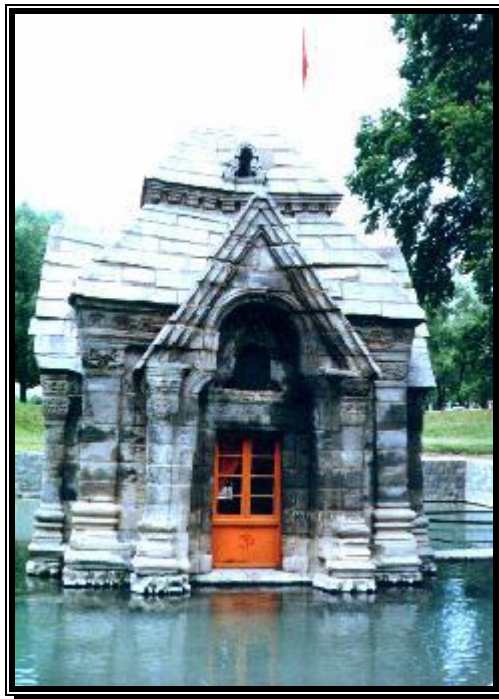
Khir Bhawani: Goddess Ragnya Devi is worshipped here, symbolised by a sacred spring at Tula Mula village, 27 km from Srinagar. In the centre of the spring is a small marble temple and the Hindu inhabitants of Srinagar fast and converge at the spot on the eighth day of the full moon in the month of May when legend has it, the goddess changes the color of the waters.



The shrine of Khir Bhawani.

Mamal: Opposite the Rest House at Pahalgam, on the right bank of river Lidder is a small temple, now in ruins, dedicated to Lord Shiva. The temple had an eight square feet interior with a porch supported by two fluted columns, one of which has now weathered away. In fact, the suprastructure is no longer there and even the ceiling no longer exists. Inside the sanctum is a Shiva lingam.

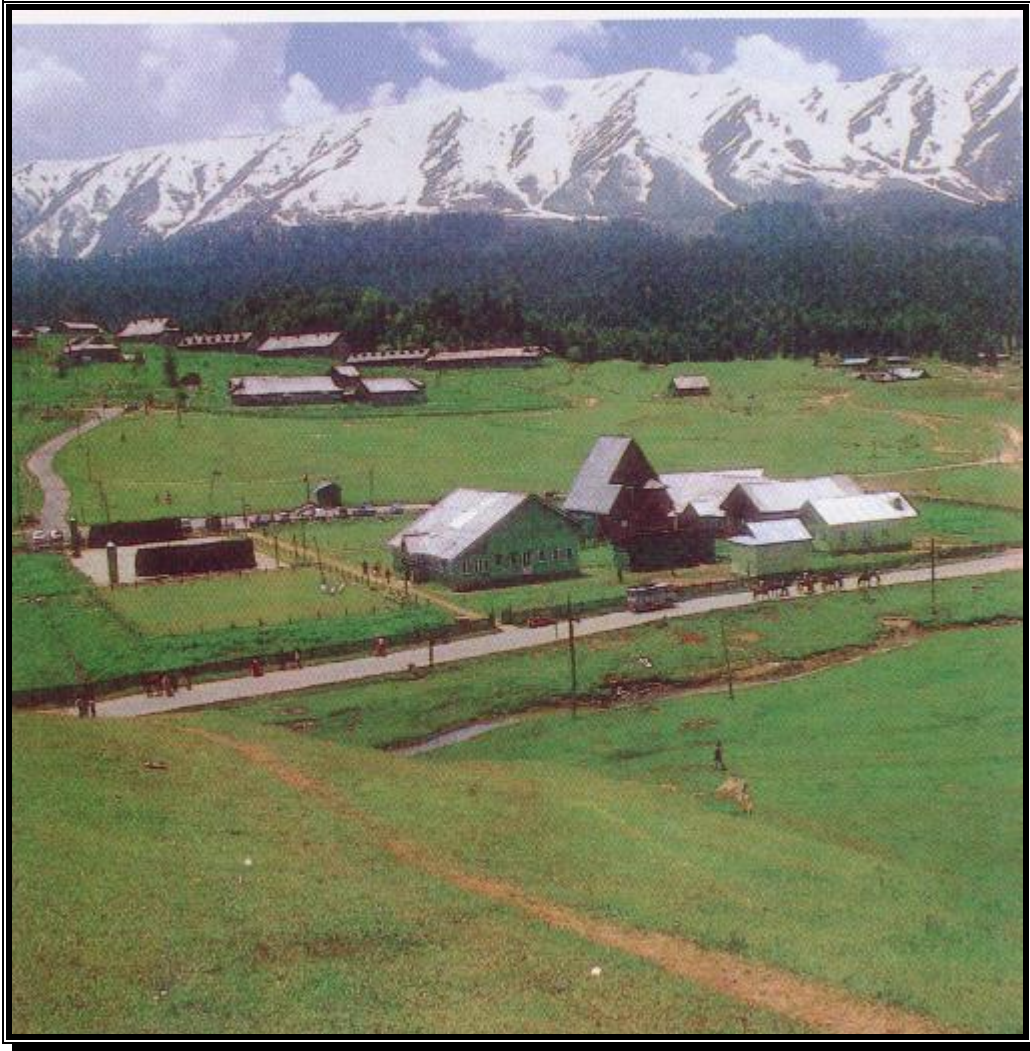
Pandrethan: A village by this name is a bare three miles above Srinagar. It has a well-preserved temple behind the willow grove on the left hand side of the cart road. The ceiling of the shrine is rated as the best example of carving on stone in the entire valley. Though ascribed to Vishnu or Shiva, the seven square feet 'depression' in the centre carries no deity, only carved 'yakshas'.



Pandrethan is one of the few temples in Kashmir with roof intact. Although miniature in size, it is ornate with structural symmetry (10th century).

4 Kashmir's Resorts

Gulmarg: Rightly called the 'meadow of flowers', Gulmarg 51 km south west of Srinagar and 2,653 meters above sea level, is famed for its 18 hole golf course: the highest in the world. A beautiful saucer-shaped valley girdled with poplars, trails lead out of here in several directions and are popular with those enjoying pony-rides.



The enchanting panorama of Gulmarg.

Other places of interest in the valley are *Alpather* lake with its deep turquoise waters; *Ningal Nullah*, a charming picnic spot by the side of a stream, 10 km from Gulmarg; *Lienmarg*, a lovely camping site in a natural clearing; *Ferozpur Nullah*, another picnic spot; and *Baba Reshi*, the shrine of a saint that is a popular pilgrimage.

Pahalgam: Pahalgam is the perfect retreat for here, in a sleepy village surrounded by meadows and fields, there is a tranquil timelessness that calls for no activity. This quiet resort is only disturbed with the annual descent of the thousands of pilgrims in July-August en route to the holy shrine of Amarnath, a three-day trek from here. Pahalgam skirts *Lidder* river, replete with trout. A number of treks in this region also begin from Pahalgam, as the 35 km trail traverses through pinewoods to the spectacular *Kolahoi Glacier*.



Playing golf at Pahalgam.

Sonamarg: 80 km from Srinagar, enroute to *Ladakh*, 3,000 metres above sea level, Sonamarg is dramatic in its breathtaking beauty. Surrounded by mountains, with a hill spur running the length of the settlement, Sonamarg has many excellent sites for camping, and is the base to exciting mountaineering expeditions to the high altitude lakes of *Vishansar*, *Kishansar*, *Gadsar*, *Rehmansar*, *Gangabal*, *Nund Kol* and *Satsuran*.

The steep Sonamarg slope is covered in a dense forestation of fir and birch. Across the opposite slope is a natural garden of wild flowers, and close at hand, the *Thajiwas glacier*.

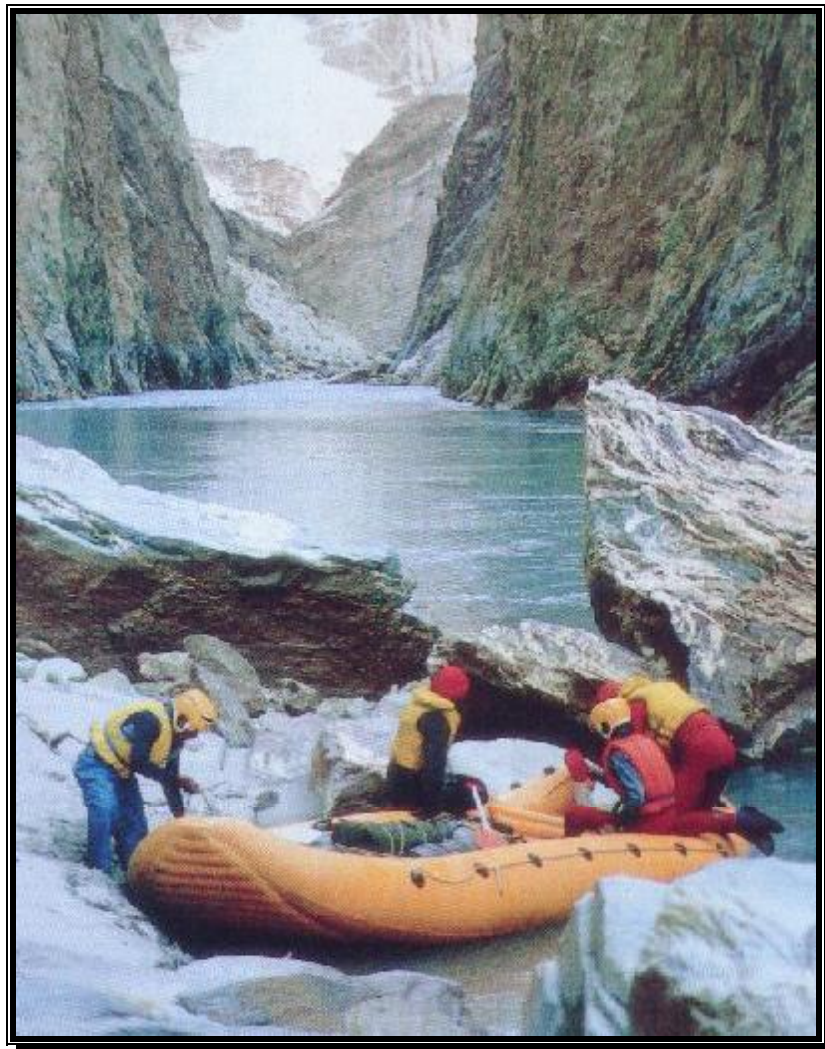


The quiet environs of Aharbal.

Avantipur: The township, 18 km from Srinagar, was founded by Avantivarman who reigned from 855 to 883 AD. The site has two temples. The larger one, *Siva-Avantisvara*, is marked by massive walls some half a mile beneath the town on the outskirts of village Jaubror. The subsidiary shrines are to the rear corner of the courtyard. But the complex has, over the years, lost its grandeur and has been reduced to ruins, though it is still visited by the devout. Half a mile up is *Avantisvami-Vishnu*, a better preserved temple.

6 km east of Achhabal is **Kokernag**, a stream said to contain digestive waters. Across the wall that encloses the spring are five temples. And **Verinag**, 78 km from the capital city, is believed to be the source of the river *Jhelum*. Gardens surround Verinag, and the water source (with waters so clear you can see the fish swimming) is enclosed in an octagonal basin ordered, in 1620, by Jehangir.

Several mountain ranges run through the state of Jammu and Kashmir - among them *Pir Panjal*, *Great Himalayas*, *Zaskar*, *Ladakh*, *Karakoram*. Off Sonamarg are the lesser peaks - *Kolahoi* (5,425 m) and *Harmukh* (5,148 m).



Preparing to run rapids in Zaskar.

5 Gardens and Parks in Kashmir

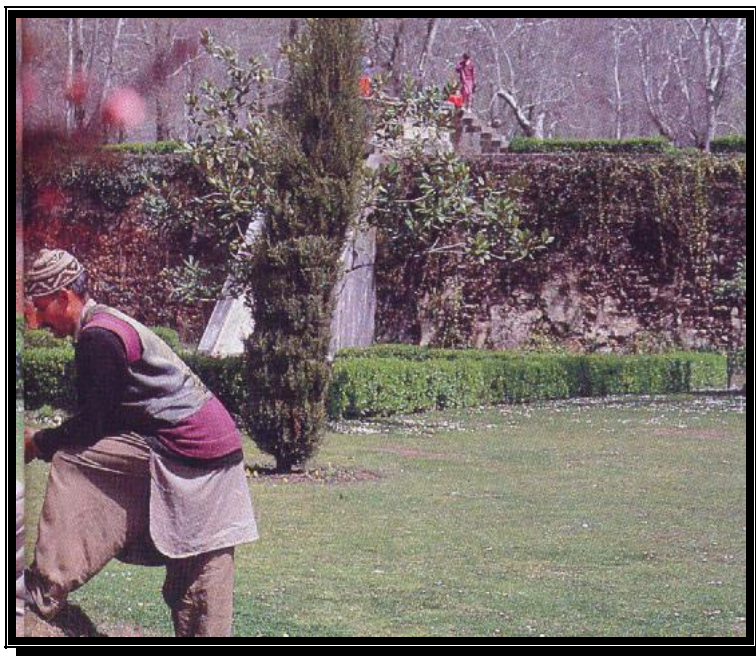
Srinagar is justly famed for its Mughal Gardens, vast acres of hillsides, terraced with waterbodies and rimmed with flowering shrubs and trees, laid in formal quadrangles by the Mughal emperors whose love for the valley is legendary.

Shalimar Gardens are the piece de resistance of Srinagar's many gardens and parks. This royal garden was laid out four hundred years ago by the Mughal Emperor Jehangir for his wife.



Shalimar Garden, Srinagar.

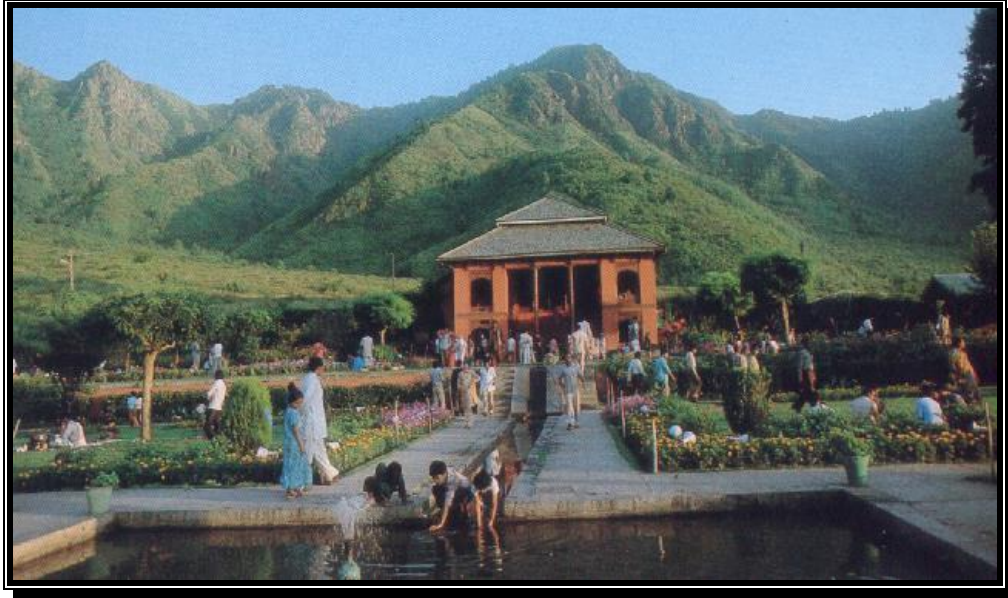
Nishat Bagh, though smaller than Shalimar, is more intensely beautiful. Descending in tiers to the



Nishat Garden, Srinagar.

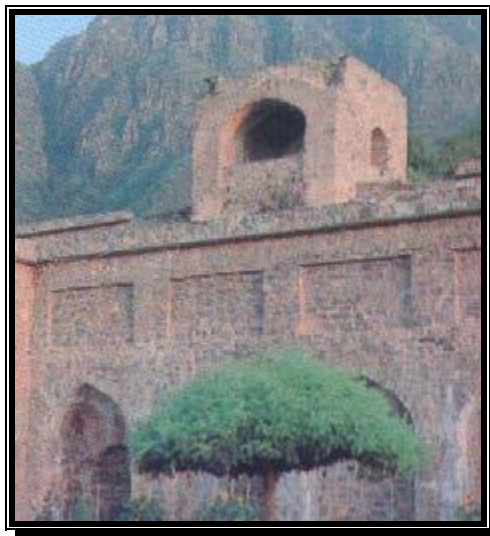
Dal's edge, Nishat is well known for its stately chinar (plane) trees, imported to Kashmir from distant Persia by the Mughals. Many of the giant chinar trees have been planted by the Mughals.

Shah Jehan is reputed, also, to have laid out the gardens of **Chashma Shahi**, so named because of a mountain spring that waters it.



Chashma Shahi, Srinagar.

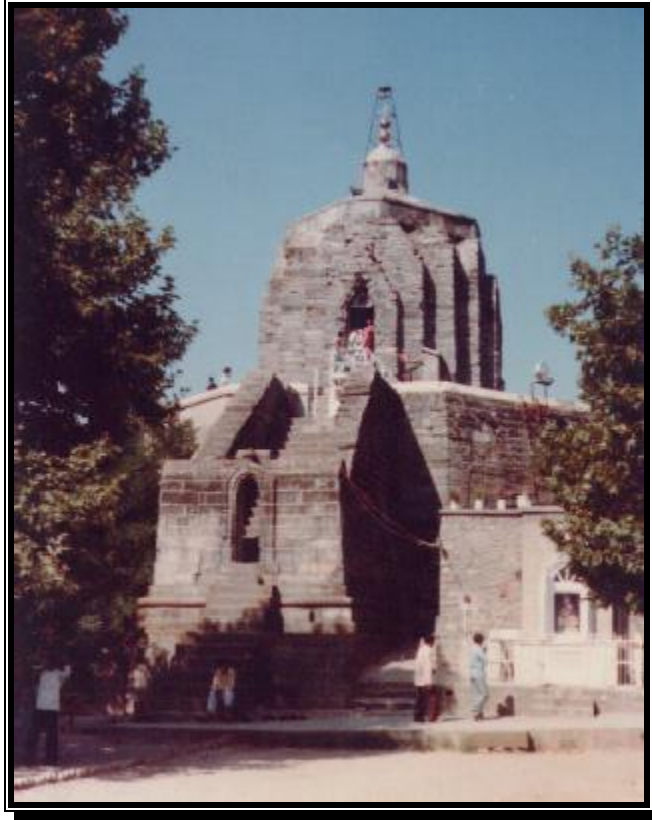
Pari Mahal is as much a monument as garden. This was initially a garden built by Dara Shiko for his Sufi teacher, Mulla Shah. Once punctuated with several springs that have since dried up, the Pari Mahal gardens are now the pride of the state. Pari Mahal is illuminated at night, and can be seen, located on the spur of a hill, from most places in Srinagar.



Pari Mahal, Srinagar.

6 Places of Worship in Kashmir

Shankaracharya Temple: The antiquity of Shankaracharya temple is akin to that of Vaishno Devi in Jammu. The temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva, has legends dating back to 200 BC. Built to overlook the valley, situated atop the Hill it has the devout climb the hill with offerings in their hands, a motorable road has been built leading to the TV Tower on the hill.



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Hari Parbat at night.

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Hari Parbat Fort: To the west of the Dal lies the Hari Parbat Hill, sacred to the Goddess *Sharika* in whose honour a temple has been consecrated on the western slopes of the hill. Further up, on the crest of the hill is **Hari Parhat** Fort which dates to the 18th century.



The Chakreshawri temple, Hari Parbat.

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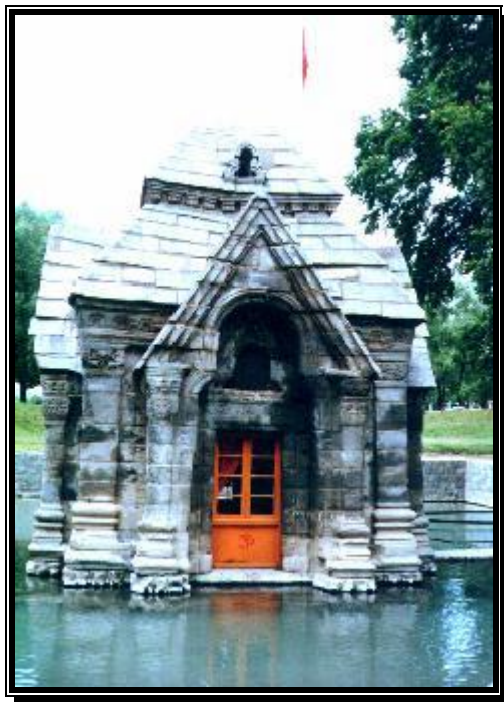
The Khir Bhawani temple, Tulla Mulla.

Mamal: Opposite the Rest House at Pahalgam, on the right bank of river Lidder is a small temple, now in ruins, dedicated to Lord Shiva. The temple had an eight square feet interior with a porch supported by two fluted columns, one of which has now weathered away. In fact, the suprastructure is no longer there and even the ceiling no longer exists. Inside the sanctum is a Shiva lingam.

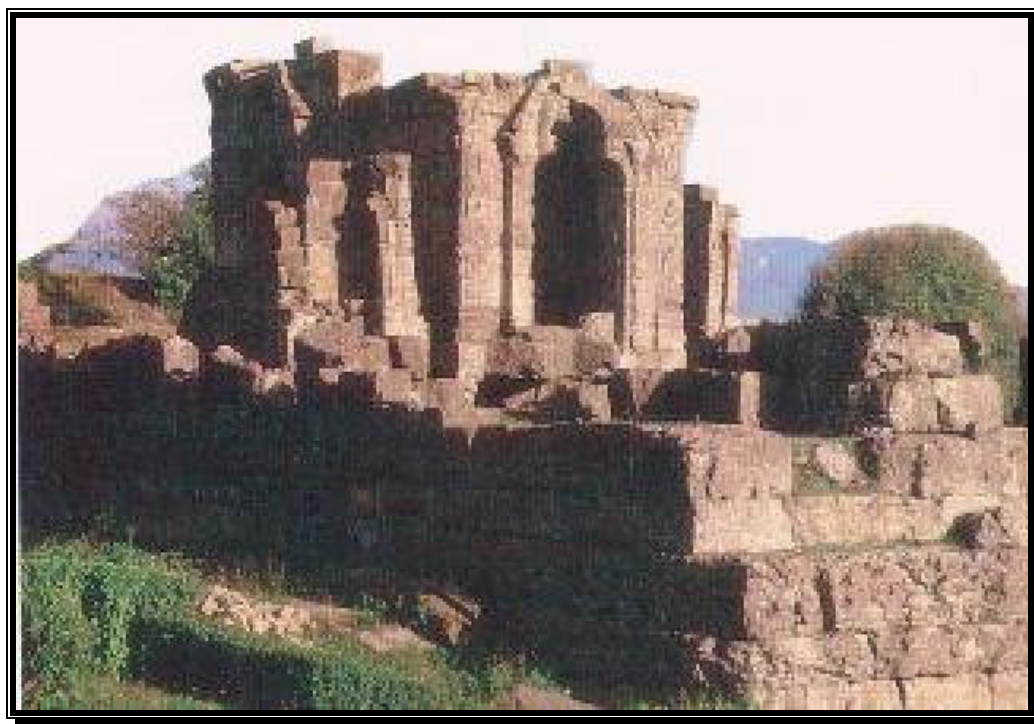
Pandrethan: A village by this name is a bare three miles above Srinagar. It has a well-preserved temple behind the willow grove on the left hand side of the cart road. The ceiling of the shrine is rated as the best example of carving on stone in the entire valley. Though ascribed to Vishnu or Shiva, the seven square feet 'depression' in the centre carries no deity, only carved 'yakshas'.

Martand: It is located on the top of a plateau, a bare five miles from the town of **Anantnag**. The temple is dedicated to Surya, the Hindu Sun God. It is a medieval temple with a courtyard, colonnaded and with the shrine in the centre. It has 84 - a sacred Hindu digit - columns and affords a commanding view of the valley.

Only 64 km from Srinagar is **Achhabal**, the abode of peace, a powerful stream embellished, in the 17th century, by Shah Jehan with gardens and baths. The spring waters run into three channels over terraces where chinar trees stand vigil. Short of Achhabal is Anantnag, 54 km, the infinite spring



Pandrethan is one of the few temples in Kashmir with roof intact. Although miniature in size, it is ornate with structural symmetry (10th century).

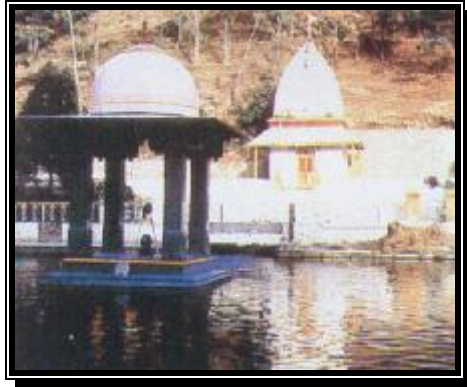


The ruins of Avantipur.

surrounded by a flower garden, linked with Hindu mythological god Indra. At Mattan, 61.5 km from Srinagar, are famous temples where sacred ceremonies are held to propitiate the dead.

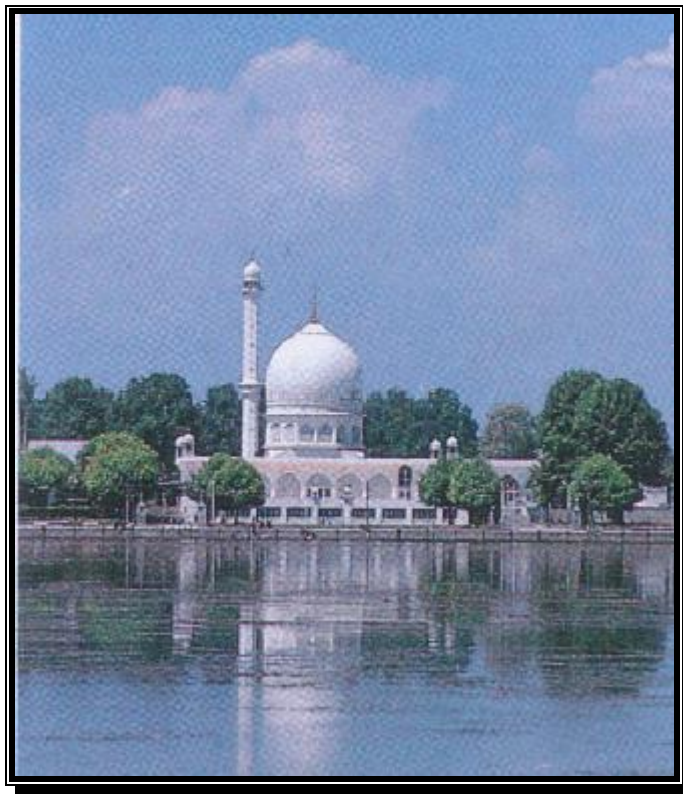
Chatti Padshahi, one of the most important Sikh gurdwaras in Kashmir is situated just outside the southern gate of the fort.

Makhdoom Sahib: It a shrine on the southern side of the Hari Parbhat hill, is visited not only by Muslims but by people of all faiths.



At the temple of Mattan

Hazratbal Mosque: It is located in a village of the same name on the banks of the Dal, its pristine white marble elegance is reflected in the waters of the lake. Hazratbal's special significance is derived from the fact that it contains a hair of the Prophet Muhammad. This is displayed to the public on religious occasions, usually accompanied by fairs with streetside stalls.

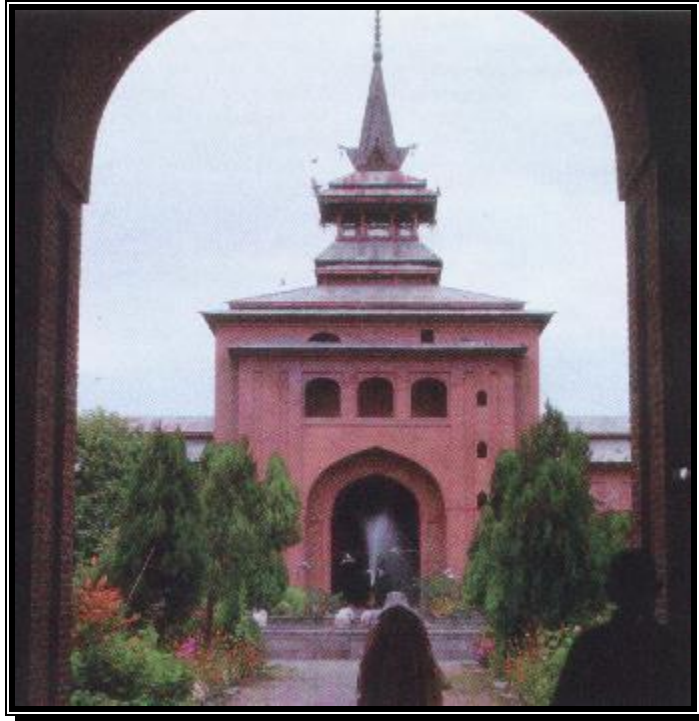


Pristinely elegant Hazratbal mosque.

Khanoah of Shah Hamadan: The Khanoah stands between the third and fourth bridges on river Jhelum which flows through the city of Srinagar. To the north west corner of the complex is the tomb of Shah Hamadan.

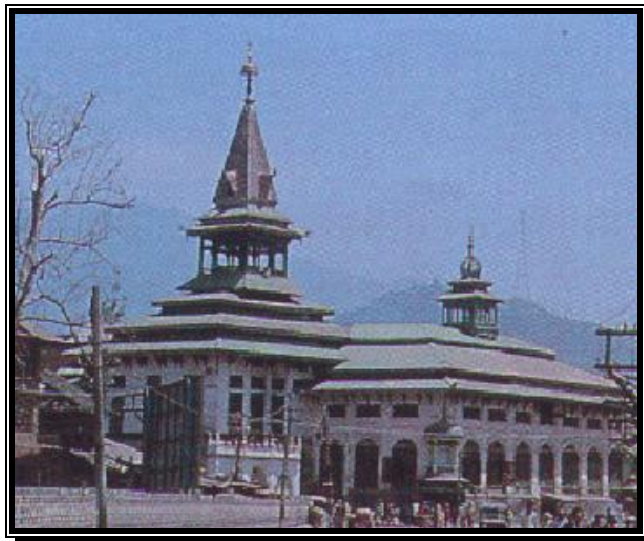
The mosque of Shah Hamadan is a pagoda-like structure built entirely of wood. Only the faithful may enter its precincts, others having to satisfy themselves With a look through the door. The interiors are intricately carved and flamboyantly painted and decorated with large chandeliers.

Jama Masjid: It is said that Sikandar But-Shikon laid the foundation of the Jama Masjid in 1398 AD and completed it in 1402. He ruled from 1390-91 to 1414 AD while his son, Zain-ul-Abidin, improved it aesthetically. It was re-built after a fire ravaged it in 1479 AD. In 1620, during Emperor Jehangir's reign, yet another fire destroyed it. In 1674, a third conflagration razed it down and it was left to Emperor Aurangzeb to rebuild it. Its principal features are the four minars and eight wooden columns as supports.



The simple beauty of Jama Masjid.

Chrar-e-Sharief was a Shrine holy to both Muslims and Hindus. It was burnt down by the Islamic militants in 1995 at the behest of Pakistan. Sheikh Nooruddin, after all, was arguably the greatest mystic-saint of Kashmir.



Chrar-e-Sherief.

Nothing could better exemplify the composite culture of Kashmir than the life of Sheikh Naruddin himself. The Sheikh was born as Nund Reshi or Sahazanand in 1377 AD. His ancestors came from Kishtwar and had migrated to the Valley. His father, Salar Sanz, a pious man, came under the spiritual influence of Sufi Saint. Yasman Reshi who arranged his marriage to Sadra Maji. For three days, the infant Nund is said to have refused to be breast-fed. The third day, the Yogini, Lal Ded (a very well known saint) entered the house and put the child's mouth to her own breast. While leaving, she is said to have called the infant her spiritual heir.

While personifying the Hindu-Muslim culture of the Valley, Nund, later named Naruddin, 'the light of faith', fully believed in the immanence and transcendence of God, hoped for a society based on moral values and preached against indulgence. All his life he wore a coarse pheran. Within two days of his death in 1438 at Charar, nine lakh people are said to have gathered at the Shrine, including the King, Sultan Zainul Abdin.

He preached against communal hatred and wrote: "We belong to the same parents. Then why this difference? Let Hindus and Muslims together worship God alone. We came to this world like partners. We should have shared our joys and sorrows together."

7 Handicrafts

7.1 Carpets

A carpet is a life-long investment it may well be the single most expensive purchase during your trip to Kashmir. Kashmiri carpets are world renowned for two things they are hand made, never machine made. And they are always knotted, never tufted. It is extremely instructive to watch a carpet being made your dealer can probably arrange this for you.



An example of Kashmiri embroidery.

Stretched tightly on a frame is the warp of a carpet. The weft threads are passed through, the 'talim' or design and color specifications are then worked out on this: a strand of yarn is looped through the warp and weft, knotted and then cut. The yarn used normally is silk, wool or silk and wool. Woollen carpets always have a cotton base (warp & weft), silk usually has a cotton base. Sometimes however, the base is also silk in which case you will see that the fringe is silk; the cost increases proportionately. Occasionally, carpets are made on a cotton base, mainly of woollen pile with silk yarn used as highlights on certain motifs.

When the dealer specifies the percentage of each yarn used, he is taking into account the yarn used for the base too. Therefore, a carpet with a pure silk pile may be referred to as a '80 per cent silk carpet.' Do not be alarmed! He is merely stating that the warp and weft are not of silk.

A third type of yarn, staple, also referred to as mercerized cotton, is being mentioned here although it is by no means traditionally Kashmiri, being a man-made fiber. Its shine is not unlike that of silk, although in price it is much lower than silk, but more expensive than wool. Staple carpets are made to fill a slot in the market customers demand a carpet which is not unlike silk in appearance to blend with their decor of the moment. In a couple of years they will change their furniture and furnishings and the staple carpet will have served its purpose, as such a carpet is neither durable nor increases in value with time. One important difference between silk and staple is that pure silk is far lighter than staple, area for area. Thus a 3 ft x 5 ft carpet of silk will never weigh more than 4 kg; one of staple never less than 6 kg.

Carpet weaving in Kashmir was not originally indigenous but is thought to have come in by way of Persia. Till today, most designs are distinctly Persian with local variations. One example, however, of a

typically Kashmiri design is the tree of life. Persian design notwithstanding, any carpet woven in Kashmir is referred to as Kashmiri. The color-way of a carpet, and its details differentiate it from any other carpet. And while on the subject of color, it should be kept in mind that although the colors of Kashmiri carpets are more subtle and muted than elsewhere in the country, only chemical dyes are used vegetable dyes have not been available now for a hundred years.

The knotting of a carpet is the most important aspect, determining its durability and value, in addition to its design. Basically, the more knots per square inch, the greater its value and durability. Count the number of knots on the reverse of a carpet in any one square inch. It should be roughly the same as the dealer tells you, give or take 10 knots. The most common configurations for knots on wool or silk Kashmiri carpets are 18x 18, 18x20,20x20, 20x22, or 22x22. A carpet with 18x 18=360 knots per square inch will obviously cost less than one with 22x22=484. If you are told that a carpet contains 360 knots, and your count indicates about 10 less, it simply means that the weft has not been evenly combed down in parts this is not a fault, and several random checks throughout the carpet will even out the figure to the dealer's estimate. Also, there are single and double knotted carpets. You can quite easily identify one from the other on the reverse of the carpet. The effect that it has on the pile, too, is important a double knotted carpet has a pile that bends when you brush it one way with your hand, and stands upright when it is brushed in another direction. A single knotted carpet is fluffier and more resistant to the touch: there is no 'right' and 'wrong' side to brush it.

Why make knots at all? you may ask. It increases the durability dramatically than had the pile just been looped through the base and cut. Knotted carpets are always stiffer and firmer they don't flop or bend as easily as do tufted carpets.

The points to keep in mind when choosing a carpet, then, are: - whether it has been made of silk (pile) on silk (base), silk pile on cotton base, silk and wool on cotton base or wool on cotton base: - the number of knots on the reverse of the carpet: - whether one or more line in the design has been omitted completely in which case the pattern looks lopsided: - whether any element in the design has been wrongly woven so that one motif is larger or smaller at one end than the corresponding motif at another end, or any similar fault: - whether each motif or element of design has clear, crisp outlines. Blurred edges indicate a fault in the weaving. - whether the edges of the carpet are crooked as if it had been incorrectly mounted on the frame, so that one end is broader than another.

7.2 Namdas

Far less expensive are these colorful floor coverings made from woollen and cotton fiber which has been manually pressed into shape. Prices vary with the percentage of wool, a namda containing 80 per cent wool being more expensive than one containing 20 per cent wool. Chain stitch embroidery in woollen and cotton thread is worked on these rugs.

7.3 Papier Mache

At first glance, all papier mache objects look roughly the same, and the price differential seems almost unreasonable. However, besides at least three different grades of papier mache, some is actually cardboard or wood! The idea, however, is not to hoodwink the unwary, but to provide a cheaper product for someone who wants the look of papier mache.

To make papier mache, first paper is soaked in water till it disintegrates. It is then pounded, mixed with an adhesive solution, shaped over moulds, and allowed to dry and set before being painted and varnished.

Paper that has been pounded to pulp has the smoothest finish in the final product. When the pounding has not been so thorough, the finish is less smooth.



Papier mache` table lamp.

The designs painted on objects of papier mache are brightly colored. They vary in artistry and the choice of colors, and it is not difficult to tell a mediocre piece from an excellent one. Gold is used on most objects, either as the only color, or as a highlight for certain motifs, and besides the finish of the product, it is the quality of gold used which determines the price. Pure gold leaf, which has an unmistakable luster, is far more expensive than bronze dust or gold poster paint. It also has a much longer life and will never fade or tarnish.

Varnish, which is applied to the finished product, imparts a high gloss and smoothness which increases with every coat.

Cardboard, virtually indistinguishable from papier mache, gives in slightly when pressed firmly. Otherwise the only difference is in the price, cardboard being cheaper than papier mache.

7.4 Chain Stitch And Crewel Furnishings

Because of the high quality of embroidery done on wall hangings and rugs, Kashmiri crewel work is in great demand throughout the world.

Chain stitch, be it in wool, silk or cotton, is done by hook rather than by needle. The hook is referred to as ari, and quality for quality, hook work covers a much larger area than needle work in the same amount of time.



Workers finish a crewel-embroidered fabric.

All the embroidery is executed on white cotton fabric, pre-shrunk by the manufacturers. The intrinsic worth of each piece lies in the size of the stitches and in the yarn used. Tiny stitches are used to cover the entire area the figure or motifs are worked in striking colors; the background in a single color, made up of a series of coin sized concentric circles which impart dynamism and a sense of movement to the design. Stitches ought to be small, even sized and neat. The background fabric should not be visible through the stitches.

Crewel is basically similar to chain stitch. It is also chain stitch done on a white background, but here the motifs, mainly stylized flowers, do not cover the entire surface, and the background is not embroidered upon. Wool is almost invariably used in crewel work and colorways are not as elaborate as in chain stitch, two or three colors being the norm here. This fabric is available in bolts, and is sold by the length. They make excellent household furnishings being hand or machine washable.

7.5 Saffron, Walnuts, Almonds, Honey

Pampore, outside Srinagar, is the only place in the world besides Spain where saffron is grown. The crocus sativus which blooms for a brief month in the year, has six golden stamens and one crimson one. It is the crimson stamen which when collected and dried is referred to as the most expensive spice in the world. Sealed jars of this spice, with the government laboratory's stamp of approval, are available all over Srinagar. When buying loose saffron, sampling one strand is enough, for the flavor and fragrance of saffron are unmistakable.

The climate of Kashmir is ideal for walnut and almond trees which grow here in abundance. Natural honey too, is a produce of the apiaries which abound in the state.

7.6 Silks, Tweeds

Sericulture and tweed weaving are important industries in Kashmir, with departments of the state government closely monitoring the process. Interestingly, just as little or no raw material for tweed comes from Kashmir, almost no weaving and printing of silk is done in the state. However, the cocoon reared in Kashmir is of a superior quality, yielding an extremely fine fiber, and any silk woven from this thread becomes known, quite legitimately, as Kashmiri silk. The fineness of the yarn lends itself particularly well to the weaves known as chinon and crepe de chine. In addition to the universally recognized silk weave. The cost of silk fabric goes up with its weight per meter, 30 grams being at one end of the scale and 80 grams at the other. Fabric is generally sold by the length as saris and its lightness and softness lends itself well to shirting and dress material.

Tweed on the other hand is woven in Kashmir with pure, never blended, wool. The resultant fabric, made with imported know-how, compares favorably with the best in the world. It is available by the length; occasionally as ready to wear garments.

7.7 Pherans

This garment, somewhere between a coat and a cloak, is eminently suited to the Kashmiri way of life,



The richly embroidered 'neck' of a pheran.

being loose enough to admit the inevitable brazier of live coals which is carried around in much the same way as a hot water bottle. Men's pherans are always made of tweed or coarse wool: women's pherans, somewhat more stylized, are most commonly made of raffer, with splashes of ari or hook embroidery at the throat, cuffs and edges. The quality of embroidery and thickness of the raffer determines the price.

7.8 Shawls

There are three fibers from which Kashmiri shawls are made wool, pashmina and shahtoosh. The prices of the three cannot be compared woollen shawls being within the reach of the most modest budget, and shahtoosh being a once-in-a-lifetime purchase.

Woollen shawls are popular because of the embroidery worked on them which is special to Kashmir. Both embroidery and the type of wool used causes differences in the price.

Wool woven in Kashmir is known as raffer and is always 100 per cent pure. Sometimes blends from other parts of the country are used and Kashmiri embroidery is worked on them. These blends contain either cashmilon, cotton, or a mixture of both. Many kinds of embroidery are worked on shawls 'sozni' or needlework is generally done in a panel along the sides of the shawl. Motifs, usually abstract designs or stylized paisleys and flowers are worked in one or two, occasionally three colors, all subdued. The stitch employed is not unlike stem stitch, and only the outline of the design is embroidered. The fineness of the workmanship and the amount of embroidery determines the value of the shawl.

Sozni is often done so skillfully that the motif appears on both sides of the shawl each side having a different colorway. This naturally has a bearing on the cost.

Another type of needle embroidery is popularly known as 'papier mache' work because of the design and the style in which it is executed. This is done either in broad panels on either side of the breadth of a shawl, or covering the entire surface of a stole. Flowers and leaves are worked in satin stitch in bright colors such as those of papier mache and each motif is then outlined in black.

A third type of embroidery is ari or hook embroidery; motifs here are the well-known flower design finely worked in concentric rings of chain stitch.

Pashmina is unmistakable for its softness. Pashmina yarn is spun from the hair of the ibex found at 14,000 ft above sea level. Although pure pashmina is expensive, the cost is sometimes brought down by blending it with rabbit fur or with wool. It is on pashmina shawls that Kashmir's most exquisite embroidery is worked, sometimes covering the entire surface, earning it the name of 'jamawar'. A jamawar shawl can, by virtue of the embroidery, increase the value of a shawl three-fold. Not all pashmina shawls, however, have such lavish embroidery some are embroidered on a narrow panel bordering the four sides of a shawl, others in narrow strips running diagonally through the shawl.

A second, less frequently seen weave, done only on pashmina, covers the surface with tiny lozenge shaped squares, earning it the delightful name of 'chashme bulbul,' or eye of the bulbul. As this weave is a masterpiece of the weaver's art, it is normally not embroidered upon.

Shahtoosh, the legendary 'ring shawl' is incredible for its tightness, softness and warmth. The astronomical price it commands in the market is due to the scarcity of the raw material. High in the plateaus of Tibet and the eastern part of Ladakh, at an altitude of above 5,000 meters, roam Pantholops Hodgsoni, or Tibetan antelope. During grazing, a few strands of the downy hair from the throat are shed and it is these which are painstakingly collected until there are enough for a shawl.

Yarn is spun either from shahtoosh alone, or with pashmina, bringing down the cost somewhat. In the case of pure shahtoosh too, there are many qualities the yarn can be spun so skillfully as to resemble a strand of silk. Not only are shawls made from such fine yarn extremely expensive, they can only be loosely woven and are too flimsy for embroidery to be done on them. Unlike woollen and pashmina shawls, shahtoosh is seldom dyed that would be rather like dyeing gold! Its natural color is mousy brown, and it is, at the most, sparsely embroidered.

7.9 Basketry

Willow rushes that grow plentifully in marshes and lakes in Kashmir are used to make charmingly quaint objects, ranging from shopping baskets and lampshades to tables and chairs, all generally inexpensive. To increase their life-span, unvarnished products should be chosen and frequently sprayed with water, particularly in hot, dry climates, to prevent them becoming brittle.



A local crafts shop in the old city.

7.10 Walnut Wood

Kashmir is the only part of India where the walnut tree grows. Its color, grains and inherent sheen are unique and unmistakable, and the carving and fretwork that is done on this wood is of a very superior quality.

There are two types of walnut trees the fruit bearing species whose wood is so well-known, and one which bears no fruit and is locally known as 'zangul.' Zangul has none of the beauty of walnut wood, being much less strong and possessing no grain, and will not be dealt with here.

The walnut root is almost black, and the grain here is much more pronounced than the wood of the trunk which is lighter in color. The branches have the lightest color, being almost blonde, and have no noticeable grain. The intrinsic worth of the wood from each part of the tree differs that from the root being the most expensive, and the branches having the lowest value.

Often, when a tree is sawn, a marked difference in color is noticed between one part of the trunk and the other. This is overcome by dyeing the lighter part to the exact shade of the darker. Dye is prepared from the outer covering of the fruit of the walnut. Sometimes small objects of utility trays, bowls and the like are left with the natural variation of color for customers who find it appealing.

As the grain on any wood is its distinguishing feature, when a walnut tree is sawn, the prime motive is to display to full advantage its densely packed rings. After a tree is felled, the ideal period for which it should be left to season is two years. The advantage of seasoning is that molecules of moisture which are entrapped in the wood of the live tree evaporate so that shrinking takes place before the wood is cut and fashioned into objects for sale.

When a dealer buys a whole tree and leaves it to season, a part of his capital becomes blocked for that period and this will naturally be reflected in the cost of his product. A cheaper product, on the other hand, is liable to warp, or in case it is taken to warmer climes, will crack or shrink.

Knots on any tree are natural and inevitable, but as their appearance is commonly thought to mar the beauty and smoothness of the finished product, knots are usually concealed skillfully in the sawing, as it is difficult, though not impossible, to mask them while carving.

Carving is a demonstration of the carver's skill, and walnut is eminently suitable for this, being one of the strongest varieties of wood. There are several varieties of carving deep carving, usually with dragon and lotus flower motifs, two inches deep or more; shallow carving, half an inch deep done all over the flat surface; open or lattice work, usually depicting the chinar motif; and most popularly, semi carving, which is a thin panel along the rim of the surface, with perhaps a center motif. The advantage of semi-carving is that it allows the grain of the wood to be displayed, together with the carver's skill. Naturally deep carving with all the skill and labor required, is the most expensive.

Wax polishing brings out the sheen inherent in walnut wood, and is by far the most popular finish. Because varnish obscures the grain of the wood and alters its hue, it is seldom used.

When choosing objects made from walnut wood, keep in mind that the type of carving and part of the tree used will affect the price.

The optimum thickness for items of furniture is one inch. Anything less than that will naturally be less expensive as it shortens the life of the object. Furniture which makes exclusive use of walnut wood will naturally cost more than articles in which zangul has been used for surfaces normally hidden from view.

7.11 Copper and Silverware

The old city abounds with shops where objects of copper line the walls, the floor and even the ceiling, made generally for the local market. Craftsmen can often be seen engraving objects of household utility samovars, bowls, plates and trays. Floral, stylized, geometric, leaf and sometimes calligraphic motifs are engraved or embossed on copper, and occasionally silver, to cover the entire surface with intricate designs which are then oxidized, the better to stand out from the background. The work, known as 'naqash', determines the price of the object, as does the weight.

8 Glimpses: A Cultural Heritage

An ancient repository of the arts, the culture of Jammu & Kashmir is closely linked with the lifestyles of its people. In the aesthetic environment of their homesteads, all items of daily use and all furnishings are created with the help of cottage industry crafts, mostly within the house itself. The beautiful carpets, the carved walnut furniture, the delicately embroidered shawls, papier mache objets d' art, silver and gold jewellery and the beautiful samawar are all expressive of the art the people of the region bring to their daily lives.



The communities are largely agrarian based, and in the simple village lifestyles of the people of the state, governed by changing seasons, adaptation to natural conditions has been an essential aspect. This then has dictated the proliferation of the cottage crafts, the development of a classic cuisine, and resulted in a strong faith in religion and in the simple religious beliefs of the people.

Though the state's artisans go back to several generations, the arts gained eminence with the advent of the Muslim rulers to the state. A great exchange took place between the two cultures of which historian Sir J. Marshall recounts, "Seldom in the history of mankind has the spectacle been witnessed of two civilizations, so vast and so strongly developed, yet so radically dissimilar, as the Hindus and Muslims, meeting and mingling together."

On the following pages are some aspects of the culture of the state now translated into a modern heritage.

8.1 Lifetsyles

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Planting rice in the paddy fields of the valley

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8.2 Music & Dance

Kashmir, since ancient times, has been known as a centre of art, literature and scholarship. The art of drama too draws ancient lineage here, its origins being traced to the Bhand, minstrels who moved from house to house entertaining valley dwellers. This later gave way to the Pather, a spectacle full of satire and humour. As elsewhere, early dance was based on religion and on the populist faith of good overpowering evil, as in the Dhamali.



Essentially, the dances of Jammu can be classified into four forms, mostly folk and community based, in character. The Bindloo and the Jagarna are both dances set to the theme of marriage and marital relationships. The Bhakhan details the joys and sorrows of lovers' meetings and partings. The Kud is a thanksgiving dance performed before the local deity. Other season-based dances are the Phummian, Bhangra and Dandaras.

It is in Kashmir that the folk-plays or Pather are popular. Another notable dance is the Roff, performed by women on the occasion of Idd.

Popular songs are the Chhakri and the Hafiz Naghma. The music of Kashmir, Sufiana Kalam, combines elements of Indian and Iranian music, and the most popular instrument is the Santoor. Several ragas and mukams are common to Kashmiri and Persian music.

Because of the rarified atmosphere of the Ladakh mountains, dancing and singing movements here are more subdued. On religious festivals and fairs, the Ladakhis don colourful brocade costumes and participate in community dances to the accompaniment of drums, shehnais and narsinghas. Scenes from myths and legends are enacted and in simplistic portrayals the dancers wear large and exotic papier-mache masks depicting forms evil and good. Like elsewhere in Buddhist settlements, the snow-lion dance is popular and brings to the state a carnival-like ambience.

Musical instruments include drums, among them the Damaru, Shnavuk and Daman, and the Shankh or conch shell and the brass Surna which is held by two lamas while the third blows into it.

8.3 Arts & Handicrafts

Famed worldwide, the handicrafts of this region are executed with love and care, and are reflective of the interpretation of an aesthetic idiom.

Kashmiri shawls have been renowned since several centuries and were once the pride of the French queen, Marie Antoinette. European ladies of court favoured these rare shawls. The most famous of these is the Jameawar shawl, made of soft pashmina wool and covered with fine and lacy embroidery. So soft is the Shahtush shawl, that it can be passed through a ring. And the embroidered phiran, a woollen cloak worn by women, too carries fine embroidery on it.



Carpet weaving, one of Kashmir's most proclaimed arts

Equally well known is the art of carpetmaking with its exquisite Persian motifs handknotted in subdued, but warm colours, on wool and silk. Floor coverings also include namdas, gabbas and chain-stitch rugs made of thick wool and felted in the form of a rug.

Papier mache handicrafts from Kashmir make excellent souvenirs. Light in weight, yet colourful, and very artistic, these are interpreted lay artisans in the form of wall hangings, boxes, bowls, vases and lamps. Floral motifs occupy the surface of all papier mache handicrafts. Equally intricate is the carving on Kashmiri woodwork and furniture, chiefly walnut, but also in teak and rosewood. Patterned into heavy furniture, or into trays, boxes, tables and cigarette-cases, they make use of the chinar motif in the carving, just as the shawl-maker and the carpet--weaver.

Other Kashmiri handicrafts include silverware and jewellery, as well as silk fabrics, and woollen fabrics, chiefly patto (tweed) and Patti (milled blankets).

In Jammu, one can have rugs embroidered in chain-stitch patterns, or pick up wicker-work produce, a common sight in the markets. The latter is chiefly available as baskets, hampers and boxes. The chintzes

of Samba too are well known. The Dogra Art Gallery has many samples of the miniature school of paintings of the region.

In Ladakh, the carpets, woven in wool, use Buddhist motifs, and a popular symbol is the dragon. Thankas are religious paintings made in monasteries, and framed in silk and brocade patchwork and use highly artistic skills. Masks, painted furniture, and everyday and religion-based *objets d'art* speak of an intricate art perfected over generations.

8.4 Festivals

A time of joy, a time to celebrate, and there's an expression for every mood. Whether personal celebrations, or religious and social festivals, merrymaking and dancing are essential to them all.

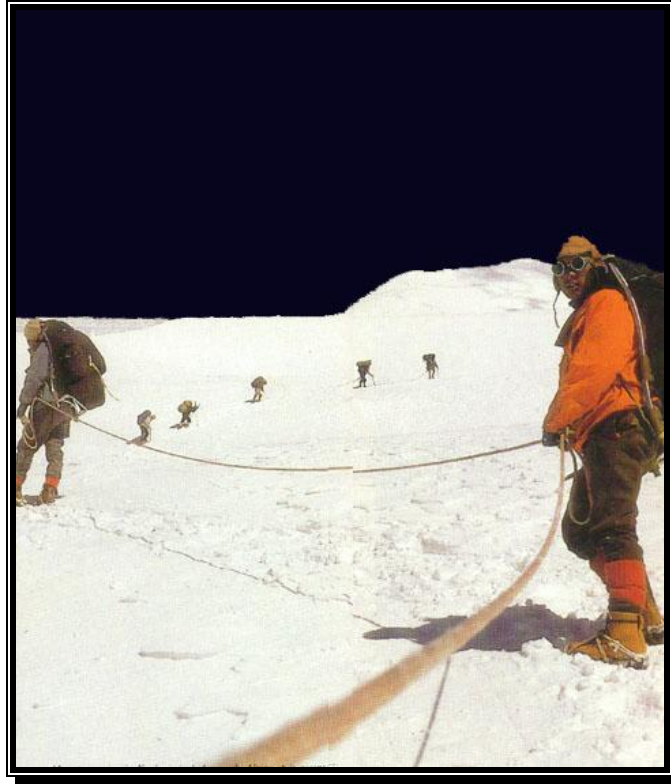
The annual dance-drama festival is celebrated all over Ladakh, and though best known at Hemis, is not exclusive to it. A much-celebrated event for the religious Buddhist Ladakhis, it is held on the birthday of Guru Padma-sambhava, a Buddhist missionary who spread the message of Lord Buddha in the Himalayan region. At Hemis, this July fest is held in the courtyard of the monastery and masked participants of the dance-drama are the major attraction. Successive troupes of lamas dressed in flowing, exquisite brocade robes and papier mache masks whirl in the constricted space to the tune of drums and oboe pipes.

In Jammu & Kashmir regions major festivals celebrated include the Sout or spring festival in March, Naw Warih on new year's day in March-April, Baisakhi, Jeth Ashtami, Har Nawami, Pun, Janmashtami, Kambari Pach and Dusserah, each with merrymaking and dance, and the observance of prescribed rituals.

Idd is celebrated with great eclat, new clothes are worn and the devout attend prayer meetings at mosques. Beyond the mosques, open grounds become fairs, and food and souvenir stalls spring up and do brisk business. It is said of Kashmir Hindus and Muslims "equally holding in reverence Hindu shrines and Muslim Khanqahs situated closely or almost in the same precincts". Notable examples of this are the great Khanqah of Shah Hamdan, Kali Temple, Shah Sahib's Mosque, Ziyarat-i-Makhdoom Sahib, Hari Parbat and Madin Sahib.

9 Adventure Sports in Kashmir

In times of yore, before the development of modern communications, even getting to Kashmir was an adventure. Cupped within some of the highest mountains in the world ranging in altitude from 5,000 to 7,000 m, some unnamed and unclimbed, the remote beauty of Kashmir has become comparatively more easily accessible only since it came under the umbrella of modern Jet travel.



Following contemporary holiday tradition, Kashmir extends an invitation to breathtaking adventure. Climbing sheer ice-walls and vertical granite slabs, trekking the beautiful forest trails to glaciers and mountain lakes, angling in swift flowing trout streams, golfing on some of the highest courses in the world, rafting down rapids and narrow gorges, hang-gliding and hot air ballooning, skiing down some of the finest slopes and ski-mountaineering across range upon range of mountains are among some of the exciting sports Kashmir has to offer. In Kashmir, you can even be a pioneer in what you do - if you're daring enough. It's the adventure playground par excellence.

9.1 Watersports

Kashmir's two major natural advantages are its mountains on the one hand, and lakes and rivers on the other. These waterways enhance the beauty of the land and are one of the chief sources that attract tourists to its verdant valleys. But more than just a means of pleasure, the water-ways are an activity oriented way of discovering new leisure sports.

To those of you who are by nature passive, there is little more needed than a wining nod to a passing shikara-wala before you are invited on board these narrow boats with their sprung-cushion seats and chintz curtains. You can command a shikara on the Dal and Nagin lakes in Srinagar for just a crossing, or for a whole day, and dis-cover the tranquillity of being gently oared over water from one scenic spot to another. You can also stretch your time limit by actually staving aboard a houseboat so you wake to the sound of soft waves lapping beside your bedroom window.

A variation on this can be the hiring of a motor boat so you travel faster over water. Or better still, when the summer days are balmy, go water skiing. Interested enthusiasts can use the facilities of the Watersports Institute at Nagin Lake.



The Jhelum river has remained the lifeline of Srinagar, and there are people who live on the river in boats, called doongas. These water-people claim to be descendants of Noah. If you hire a slow boat from them, you can actually visit old parts of Srinagar where, because of narrow, wind-ing roads, access by taxi is almost impossible. The advantage of going by boat is that you get to see numerous old mosques and temples, as well as attractive houses, that line the banks hut cannot be viewed or photographed from land. Constructed of wood, and with carved and latticed balconies and verandahs, they are well maintained and preserve the ancient heritage of Srinagar.

As you float past the houseboats moored along the river front, you also have the opportunity to observe the life of the people of Kashmir. In succession, the numerous bridges spanning the Jhelum pass by (and at places are ferry services for local travel). Srinagar city is located by the banks between Zero Bridge and Chattabal where a meir controls the water level on this stretch. A small lock on the west bank allows the movement of boats up or down stream. Once past Chattabal, the river changes character as it widens and meanders past visages in the valley. The river flows into the giant Wular Lake but the journey is best terminated at Manasbal Lake.

The advantage of cruising by a low powered boat over a shikara or a doonga is that a river-trip from Anantnag to Manasbal is considerably shortened over its three days, that photography is more convenient, and that mooring at the place of your choice is not restricted.

The two rivers, Indus and Lidder, are essentially mountain streams and are suitable for white water rafting on some stretches. The Indus in Ladakh, in particular, has three portions that are ideal for this sport. Due to a low volume of water and a wide river bed, it can be navigated only in pares. Options offered are a half day run for amateurs from Phey to Niemo, or a two day exciting run from Phey to Alchi (day one) and Nurla (day two) with a choice of going further to Khalsi. The Zanskar River, also in Ladakh, can offer professionals six days on rapids that begin at Padum and And through the picturesque Zanskar valley. The best season is August-September.

Similarly, the Lidder near Pahalgam has two short stretches suitable for white water rafting, specially for day trips. As the gradients are not steep, they are excellent for first-timers being introduced to this enthusing sport.

Miscellaneous Details

Kashmir has many lakes - Dal, Nagin, Mansbal and Wular. These are excellent spots for rowing - whether it is a shikara or a racing skull. No OIIC has tried canoe-ing in these lakes so far. These lakes are inter-

connect-ed as also the river Jhelum which flows through the entire length of the valley and connects with all the lakes. An interesting sport is what is locally called '*Water Trekking*'. One can have a three to four day trip along the river to various lakes in a shikara with all the camping gear. There are lovely spots to camp for the night.

The lakes are also famous for water skiing. The Ski School of Gulmarg organises ten day water ski courses in Dal and Nagin lakes during the summer months. The courses include boarding and lodging facilities.

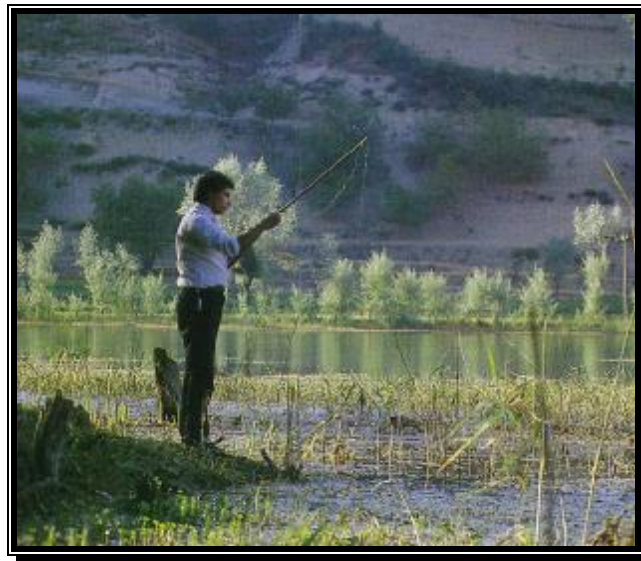
As you pick up more courage you can venture into the white waters. Rafting is a very recent sport in Kashmir. Indus, the river which gave India its name, offers two to three day host stretches for rafting in the vicinity of Len. However the most challenging and enjoyable ride is on Zanskar: a five day trip from Pa-dam to its confluence with Indus at Nimu. One has to pass through a narrow gorge where only a streak of sky is visible for as long as two days. The Zanskar ride can be combined with a week long trek from Manali to Pa-dam.

White water canoeing has extensive possibilities. Lidder, Sindh, Drass, Suru, Indus, Zanskar, Chenab and for the less adventurous, even the Jhelum river can present interesting trips. The time to raft is either in May/June or in September/October. Equipment is available with some local agents.

No one has yet tried diving in the lakes. It would be fun to discover the legendary city which is believed to lie at the bottom of Wular Lake. It is also said that Manasbal lake has no bottom. The high altitude lakes of Tarsar, Marsar, Kaunsarnag, Kishensar, Vishensar and Gangabal could also be interesting for canoeing, a sport that has still to catch on.

9.2 Fishing

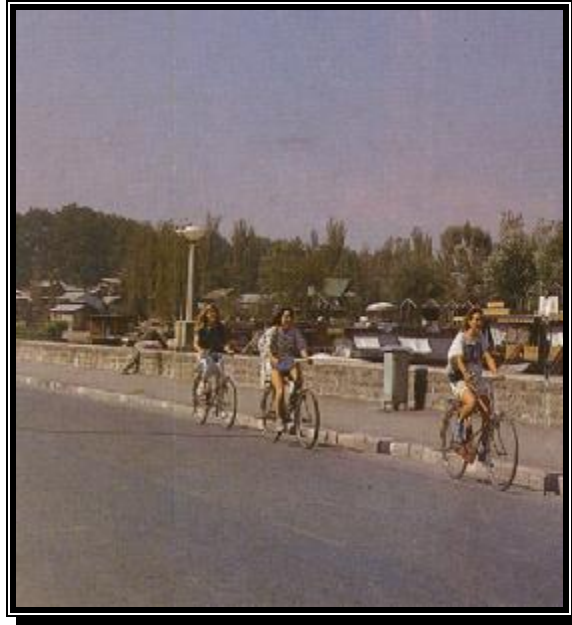
Kashmir has often been referred to as an angler's paradise, with a network of rivers and streams as well as high altitude lakes all abounding in trout - both brown and rainbow. Trout fishing in Kashmir is far, far cheaper than it is in any other part of the world.



Kashmir's fabled natural beauty needs no introduction here. Criss-crossing the state are the well-known Sind and Lidder rivers, alongwith their tributaries and a silvery network of smaller rivers and streams. The geographical variation along the course of each river is immense, afford-ing endless possibilities for the angler. Nearer the source of each river, the gradient is steeper and the waters faster flowing. The landscape is generally hilly, with dark brooding pines towering an around. As the river runs its course, the gradient evens out, and the flow of water loses its torrential force. You are now in open countryside where the horizon is wide and sweeping, and where trees are willow, poplar and walnut. Rivers and streams are divided into approximately 100 beats, most of which are are within a two hour drive from Srinagar.

If you are more adventurous, you can fish in one of many high altitude lakes (14,000 ft above sea level) which are reached by a trek. On trek in particular starts from Sonamarg and goes on to Vishansar, Kishansar, Satsar, Gadsar and Gangabal, all alpine lakes. When their surface is frozen over during the winter, the fish (mainly brown trout) keep close to the bottom of the lake, rising nearer the surface as the ice melts. In these lakes, the use of spoons and spinners is allowed.

9.3 Cycling



While our capital city, Srinagar, is too sprawling to be explored on foot, taxis may be thought a trifle 'insulated' for some. Cycling, therefore, remains a popular, not to say inexpensive, way of experiencing the flavour of the city.

9.4 Mountaineering

Kashmir's mountain ranges are both Alpine and Himalayan and can be grouped into four distinct regions: Kashmir, Kishtwar, Zaskar and Ladakh.



The most well known peaks are Kolahoi (5,425 m) known as the Matterhorn of Kashmir; Harmukh (5,148 m) whose north face resembles Eiger; Tattakuti (4,742 m); Sunset (4,745 m) the highest peak in

the Pir Panjal range, and numerous small peaks in Sonamarg and Pahalgam. One can climb these peaks quickly, making Alpine style ascents.

Kishtwar represents small Himalayan peaks of great technical difficulty involving week long trek-king to the base camps. The popular peaks in this re-gion are Sickle Moon (6,575 m); Eiger (6,001 m); Brammah-I (6,416 m); Brammah's Wife (5,297 m); Crooked Finger (5,630 m); Flat Top (6,100 m); Ca-thedral (5,370 m); Barnaj-I (6,100 m); Barnaj-II (6,290 m); Arjuna (6,200 m); Agyasol (6,200 m) and Shivling (6,000 m).

The Zanskar Range encompasses the famous massif of Nun-Kun. This group of mountains has been explored since 1898 by Bruce, Sillem, the Bullock-Workmans, Piacenza, Harrison and Waller. Kun (7,077 m) was first climbed by the Italian climber Pia-cenza in 1913 and Nun (7,135 m) by the Swiss climber, late Madame Claude Kogan, in 1953. This is the only climbing group accessible by a day's trekking from the road head. One can reach the base camp of Nun in two days from the airport in Srinagar. The other signific-ant peaks in this range are the White Needle (6,500 m); Pinnacle (6,930 m); Z-1 (6,400 m); Z-2 (6,175 m); Z-3 (6,270 m); Z-8 (6,050 m); D-41 (5,813 m); N-8 (6,392 m); Bien Guapa (6,006 m); Bobang (5,971 m). In addition, the range has many unnamed peaks over-looking the Durung Drung glacier.

The Ladakh range comprises the peaks of Stok area - Stok Kangri 6,135 m, Parcha Kangri 6,065 m, Gulap Kangri 5,900 m; and some peaks of Nimaling area such as the famous Kang Yissay-6,400 m.

Recently, the Karakorams have also been thrown open to selected joint expeditions. Three expeditions are allowed every year to three groups - Saser Group, Rimo Group and Momostong Group in Nubra Val-ley. Some of these peaks overlook the Siachin glacier, among the longest in the world.

The climbing period extends from mid May till mid October. The monsoons do not affect the Ladakh peaks and the main climbing season is July/August when most of the Himalayas remain closed.

One need not worry about emergencies in the mountains. The Army and the Air Force are autho-rised to assist climbers and trekkers in distress. Most of the climbing regions are linked by high-frequency radio to Srinagar - the base of rescue operations. Some very daring and dramatic helicopter evacua-tions have been undertaken by the pilots of the Indian Air Force in recent years.

All foreign mountaineering expeditions to India have to obtain permission in writing from the Indian Mountaineering Foundation who charge a booking fee depending upon the height of the peak. A Liaison Officer is provided with each team.

9.5 Skiing

Not many know that it is possible to ski in India. Skiing in India as a modern sport started almost at the same time as in Europe. The Ski Club of India was established in Gulmarg in 1927. The Indian Ski team won eight diplomas in the first ever Asian Winter Sports held in March, 1986, at Sapporo, Japan. Six of the winners are from Gulmarg - the ski paradise of In-dia. People think of mountains only in the summers, reflecting on their cool shade and lovely breezes. The meadow of flowers, Gulmarg is about 50 km from Sri-nagar, situated at an altitude of 2,730 m. It turns into a meadow of romance in winter, a small ski resort where everyone knows everyone else. There are comfortable hotels and huts to stay in. It is the only ski-resort in the mighty Himalayas where you can ski with a magnific-ent view of the Karakorams. Gulmarg provides an al-titude difference of over 1,500 m with lengths of more than 10 km. But presently only a ski-mountaineer can reach these higher slopes. Four ski-lifts and a chairlift are available but these are suitable for beginners only. Gulmarg is also the cheapest ski resort in the world to learn skiing. The latest Austrian and French equipment is available on hire. There is a ski school known as the Indian Ins-titute of Skiing and Mountaineering, which conducts 10 day and 21 day short ski courses for beginners and advanced skiers. The season is mid-December to mid-April and the road is kept open to Gulmarg throug-hout the winter with the help of powerful German machines. Apart from downhill skiing, one can also enjoy cross-country runs. Excursions to the shrine of Baba Reshi through the 'powder chute' is an experi-ence to treasure. One hasn't started yet with heliskiing but there are tremendous possibilities for the sport here. You can mark new tracks almost throughout the entire winter season. There are long chains of

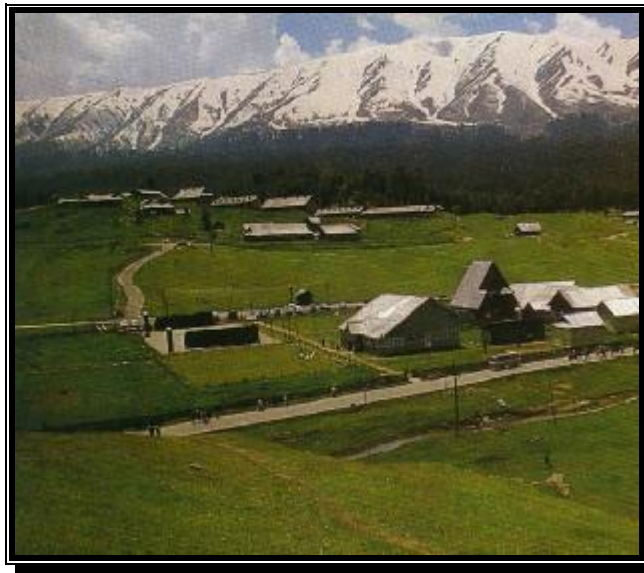
mountain valleys and ridges covered with fine powder snow. One can even try a different valley each day with the aid of a helicopter.



Gulmarg is not the only place to challenge your courage. Ski tours from Pahalgam to Sonamarg through high mountain passes are not only arduous but also exciting. Some people have even gone on skis to Ladakh through the Wardwan Valley. Adventure here has no limits.

9.6 Golfing

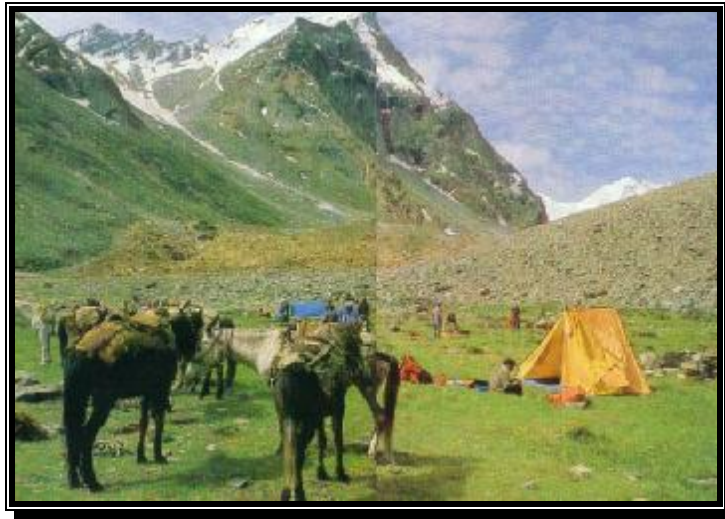
Kashmir offers a unique opportunity to play golf all through the summer - from April to November - in invigorating surroundings where the wind whispers through trees of chinar and pine.



In the verdant golf courses at Srinagar and Gulmarg, you will be able to play for longer hours than you can in the plains because of the lower temperatures - Srinagar's highest temperature never goes above 30 deg. C. Srinagar has an 18 hole golf course with common fairways, and a par of 70. The course at Gulmarg is like nothing you have ever seen or imagined before. Situated at an incredibly high altitude of 3730 metres above sea level, it is the highest green golf course anywhere in the world. The layout of the course too is strikingly different from most golf courses - hardly any stretch is flat - the land slopes and inclines along the complete area of the course which has a par of 72.

9.7 Trekking

For trekkers, Kashmir is the ultimate paradise. The terrain from the Shivalik hills of Jammu to the rugged mountains of Ladakh is a geographer's delight. Nowhere in the world can one see so much change in geography in such a small distance: flora and fauna; Alpine pastures saddled among snow clad peaks with pure oxygenated air; high-altitude lakes of Kishensar, -Vishensar and Gangabal full of trout. Your constant companions would be the nomadic shepherds - the Gujjars - the tough and sturdy mountain folk who can carry you on their back and still complete the trek in half the time and



Trekkers set up camp in a valley

who claim to be descendants of Moses. One can go back-packing on one's own or take on a 'five star' trek in the Mughal fashion with camp cots, tables and chairs and bearers in waiting. A number of local travel agencies organise all inclusive trekking. For those who want to do it in real Alpine style, equipment is readily available in Srinagar, Pahalgam and Sonamarg, the main take off points. Choice provisions can be purchased in Srinagar. Mules and porters can be engaged through the respective tourist offices. One can hike for a day, or disappear in the mountains for a week, enjoy the tranquility and serenity, becoming one with the surroundings in a rare communion with nature.

For tougher treks, Ladakh offers the true rugged Himalayan adventure amid high mountains, lofty peaks and endless glaciers. Treks range from four days to two weeks. In fact, if one combines some of the trails, one can go on exploring the mountains for months together. But one has to be cautious while trekking in Ladakh. The climate and terrain are more demanding, being almost a high-altitude desert with extreme temperature. One has to be self-sufficient in food as the local population has very little food to spare. In some places one may not see any life for days together. The trekking season extends from mid May till mid Oct.

Some of the more popular trails are:

Base: Srinagar

Srinagar-Aharabal-Kungwattan-Mahinag-Koun-sarnag (5 days)

Srinagar-Erin-Poshpathri-Sarbal-Kundsar-Ganga-bal (7 days)

Base: Pahalgam

Pahalgam-Chandanwari-Sheshnag-Panchtarni--Amarnarh Cave-Sonamarg-Srinagar (7 days)

Pahalgam-Chandanwari-Sheshnag-Rangmarg--Humpet-Kanital-Lonivilad-Panikhar-Kargil (9 days)

Pahalgam-Aru-Lidderwat-Kolahoi Glacier-Yem-her Pass-Khemsar-Kulan-Sonamarg-Srinagar (9 days)

Base: Gulmarg

Gulmarg-Khilanmarg-Apharwat-Alpather (4 days)

Gulmarg-Danwas-Tejjan-Tosha Maidan (4 days)

Gulmarg-Kantarnarg (4 days)

Base: Sonamarg

Sonamarg-Thajiwas Glacier (2 days)

Sonamarg-Nichnai Pass-Vishansar-Gadsar-Krish-ansar-Satsaran Pass-Mangadub-Zojibal Pass-Narang--Srinagar (11 days)

Base: Leh

Leh-Lamayuru-Wanla-Ursi-Tar La- Mangyur - Sa-spol-Leh (7 days)

Leh-Stok-Zachan-Rumbagh Pass-Gandala Pass--Shingo-Skiu-Shaluk-Markha-Nimaling-Longmaru La-Churkirmo-Shang-Hemis-Leh (14 days)

Base: Padam

Padam-Ichar-Fuktal-Purne-Thangse-Kargiya-Shingola-Zampo-Darcha-Manali (9 days)

Padam-Mone-Pupila-Thangse-Kargiya-Lakong--Zanskar-Sumdo-Darcha-Manali (9 days)

Padam-Pishu-Pidmu-Snertse-Linshat Gompa-Chila-Lamayuru-Leh (12 days)

Padam-Tungri-Ating-Huttra-Buswas-Machail-Athole-Galhar-Kishtwar (7 days)

Base: Kishtwar

Kishtwar-Palmar-Ekhala-Sonder-Sirshi-Hanzal-Yourdu-Sarkandu-Inshan-MarganPass-Lahinwan-Daksum-Srinagar (13 days)

Kishtwar-Galhar-Shashu-Athole-Ishtiari-Dharwas-Kilar-Brindabani-Sach Pass-Satrundi-Bhanodi-Trele-Tissa-Chamba (14 days)

Base: Doda

Doda-Bhaderwah-Jai-Kansar-Gandho-Kilhotran-Kanti Dhar-Kanthi-Bhal Padri-Padri Pass-Bheja-Bhaderwah-Doda (12 days)

No permits are required for trekking anywhere in Kashmir or Ladakh in open areas. However, certain areas close to the border are restricted zones. Entry into these areas delineated by an imaginary line drawn one mile north of Zojila-Kargil-Leh road and one mile west of Leh-Upshi-Manali road is forbidden. Violation may result in arrest and prosecution. Should one be going for very long treks in these high mountains, it is advisable to register with tourist authorities and also inform them on return.

One important thing to remember while trekking in these beautiful mountains is that one is not the last person to trek here. There will be many more to follow, so keep the mountains clean. No litter, no garbage, no juniper bushes for making fires (kerosene and gas stoves are readily available). Save the lush green forests - they are the only (green) gold left. Re-member in Ladakh, due to an extremely dry climate, a piece of paper may take 20 years to decompose and plastics may survive forever.

9.8 Wildlife

Dachigam National Park: amidst forests of silver birch and conifer roams the hangul. Rare and on the verge of extinction till a few years ago, the national park at Dachigam contains the last viable hangul population in the world. Related to the red deer of Europe, this breed is characterized by its white rump patch and impressive spread of antlers.



Of an the many sanctuaries in the state, the one at Dachigam is the best known. At one time the exclusive hunting pre-serve of the Maharaja of Kashmir, it was declared a national park in 1951, and owing to a strictly enforced conservation programme, the hangul population, once 150, now stands at over 400 animals.

Dachigam, spread over an area of 141 sq km, is the home of 20 mammal species including the leopard and over 150 species of avifauna. Open throughout the year, there is no prime viewing season, as the visitor will find something of in-terest all through the year. At Panzgam, Laribal, Sangargulu and Gratnar are huts for overnight stay.

The Hemis High Altitude National Park: includes the catchments of two valleys which drain into the River Indus. It is named after the famous monas-tery - Hemis, and sprawls over 600 sq km. approachable by road from Leh. This national park contains several camping sites. The area is barren and rocky, covered only sparsely with vegetation. Most of the ten species of mammal here are extremely rare - shapu, bharal, great Tibetan sheep, ibex and snow leopard. The avifauna too comprises species which are not seen at lower altitudes: Himalayan snow cock being an example. The best season for mammal viewing is September to May and for bird viewing March to May and September to December. For passes contact the Wildlife Warden, Leh.

Overa Wildlife Sanctuary: located 76 km from Srinagar, near Pahalgam, it has an area of 32 sq km, and is famed for its many species of pheasants. It sustains 13 species of mammals and over 80 species of birds. The best time to visit the sanctuary for mammal viewing is September to April and for bird viewing from March to August.

Overa-Aru Biosphere Reserve: located 76 km from Srinagar, near Pahalgam, it has an area of 32 sq km. Several species of birds as wed as fauna are found here - musk deer, brown bear, leopard to name a few. The altitudinal range varies from 3,000 to 5,425 metros above sea level. Prime viewing time for the upper areas is from May to August. In the lower areas, for bird viewing the best time is March to May and for animal viewing from September to March.

Gulmarg Biosphere Reserve: 48 km from Srinagar, the reserve has an area of 150 so km. and an altitudinal range of 2,400 - 4,300 metres above sea level. Fauna includes Himalayan musk deer, red fox, brown and blackbear. Among avifauna are upland birds, both resident and migratory. The best time for animal viewing is September to March and for bird viewing March to May.

Ramnagar Wildlife Sanctuary: situated only 6 km away from Jammu city, this sanctuary occupies an area of 31 km. The area sustains 8 mammal species including nilgai and barking deer, and 15 species of birds. The best season for mammal viewing is September to March and for bird viewing March to May.

Other sanctuaries near Jammu are:

Nandni Wildlife Sanctuary: (26 km) the sanctuary has an area of 33 sq km.

Surinsar Mansar Wildlife Sanctuary: named for the two lakes on each corner of it, this sanctuary comprises an area of 98 sq km, and supports a mammal population of 8 species, and upto 15 species of birds.

Jasrota Wildlife Sanctuary: spread over an area of 10 sq km, the sanctuary houses an appreciable variety of bird and animal life, most notably cheetal or axis deer.

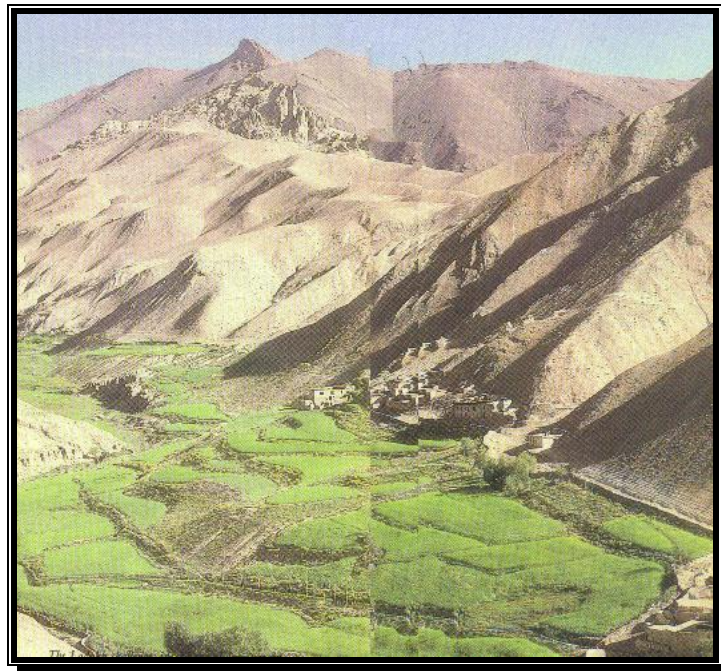
Kishtwar High Altitude National Park: in Jammu is interesting for the marked variations in topography and vegetation that occur here. Spread over an area of 400 sq km, the park contains 15 mammal species including the musk deer, and Himalayan black and brown bear. There are 50 species of birds. Prime mammal viewing season is from March to May.

9.9 Caving

There are many caves in different parts of the state which have remained unexplored so far. It is said that the Kalaruss caves of Lolab extend upto Russia. People have explored the caves for up to two days and then given up due to the darkness.

9.10 Hang Gliding and Hot Air Ballooning

Though some trials for hang gliding have been held in the valley, the sport still continues to be rare. The location of a flat valley surrounded by high mountains is an ideal terrain for hang-gliding.



The Ladakh challenge: ideal hang gliding terrain

Higher up, the meadows at the foot of mountains such as Yus-marg, Gulmarg and Sonamarg are idyllic spots to try hang-gliding. Hot air ballooning along the valleys of Suru and Zaskar can prove very challenging.