

# Activities of Interest in Kashmir

# GOLFING

Kashmir offers a unique opportunity to play golf in invigorating surroundings, where the wind whispers through enormous trees of chinar and stately pine. In the verdant golf courses at Srinagar and Gulmarg, you will be able to play for longer hours than in the plains because of the lower temperatures – Srinagar's highest temperature seldom goes above 35°C. During the summers, while the plains are boiling, Srinagar's temperate climate allows the golfer to play longer hours without getting tired. During winters, the courses in Srinagar are closed, only when snowbound.

# Gulmarg Golf Club

- The course at Gulmarg is like nothing you've ever seen or imagined before. Situated at an altitude of 2,650 m, it is the highest green golf course anywhere in the world.



# Royal Springs Golf Course

- Spanning an expanse of 300 acres near the famous Cheshma Shahi, The Royal Springs Golf Course was designed and laid out by the World renowned Golf architect, Robert Trent Jones Jr. II, who has designed about 500 courses all over the World, including in Bangkok and China. The picturesque course located overlooking the famous Dal Lake, is set in a natural environment created against the dramatic backdrop of Zabarwan hills. The setting is a combination of aesthetic delight and golfing pleasure. The 18 holes, 6445 mtrs course at a par of 72 offer a challenge to all levels of players, and is now widely acknowledged as the best Golf Course in India.





# Kashmir Golf Club

The Kashmir Golf Club has all the luxuries fitted that make playing golf a memorable experience. It is spread over 52 sprawling acres of lush land adjoining the Maulana Azad Road, the City's main avenue. With well laid out bunkers and hazards, interspersed between chinars & pine, this professional 18-hole course has been the venue of many tournaments. The course has common fairways and a par of 70.

# Shikara Boat Ride

- The water bodies of the Kashmir offer breathtaking Shikara boat rides. The joy of smoothly gliding over the water with the crisp sound of the paddle is indeed a feeling to be imbibed. Dal & Nagin lakes offer joyous shikara boat rides in Srinagar city. While on a shikara boat, the view of Zabarwan hills is just thrilling and with rhythmic tossing of water waves with the boat making the experience of the boat ride a pure fascination.
- The flower and boutique vendors on the shikara boats make the voyage more charming. Sightseeing of Dal and Nagin lakes on a shikara ride makes the trip adventurous particularly the inside the Dal Lake. The joy is unlimited and experience unforgettable. There are several shikara boat ghats alongside the Dal Lake banks of Boulevard road.



# SKIING

- One of the major attractions for adventure loving tourists is skiing in the Himalayas. Gulmarg, the best ski resort in the Himalayas, was first established by the British in 1927, when two British Army Officers, Maj. Metcarp and Maj. Hadow had setup the First Ski Club of India at Gulmarg.
- Skiing had become very popular during the pre-independence years and Gulmarg used to host two main events, one each during Christmas and Easter. In 1938-39, about 500 skiers are reported to have participated in the Christmas and Easter ski races.
- Gulmarg is one of the highest lift-served ski resorts in the world. This is due to setting-up of a Gondola Cable Car Lift. The second section of the lift takes one to a height of app. 4000 mts, giving a downhill ski run of about 5 kms. Daily, weekly & seasonal passes can be purchased for availing the Gondola facility.
- In addition, three ski lifts also service the resort, which are suitable for beginners and intermediate-level skiing, respectively.
- Many foreign skiers visit Gulmarg and stay there for extended periods. For managing skiing in upper mountain reaches, every year the Tourism Department engages a Ski Patrol Team, headed by accredited foreign experts.





# TREKKING

The State has a visibly varied terrain and offers spectacular contrasts in nature, with its alpine pastures in Kashmir and barren wastelands & rugged wastelands in Ladakh. Treks can be set for a week or even for a day and the ideal trekking months spread from May to October. Most treks in Kashmir have lakes as their focus and your companions would be the nomadic shepherds (Gujjars). Ladakh offers tougher treks with true rugged Himalayan adventure amid lofty peaks and endless glaciers. Equipment can be hired from the J&K Tourism Hire Shop at Srinagar, while officers at resorts provide guidance to trekkers

## **Some Popular Treks:**

- Srinagar-Aharbal-Kungwattan-Mahinag-Kounsarnag (4 Days)
- Pahalgam-Chandarwar-Sheshnag-Amarnath Cave-Sonamarg-Sgr (4 days)
- Pahalgam-Aru-Lidderwat-Kolahoi Glacier-Khemsar-Sonamrg-Sgr (4 days)
- Sonamarg-Vishansar-Gadsar-Krishansar-Satsaran-Naranag-Sgr (7 days)



# MOUNTAINEERING

With the mighty Himalayan ranges towering from 10,000 to 28,000 ft, mountaineering options in Kashmir are myriad. Pir Panjal, Great Himalayas, Zaskar, Ladakh & Karakoram mountain ranges run through the State of Jammu & Kashmir. Off Sonamarg, are the lesser peaks, Kolahoi and Harmukh; one can get to these peaks easily making an alpine ascent.

## Popular Peaks (Kashmir )

- Kolahoi (5425 m)
- Harmukh (5148 m)
- Tattakutti (4742 m)
- Sunset (4745 m)

# WATER SPORTS

- Kashmir's two natural advantages are its mountains, and lakes & rivers. These waterways enhance the beauty of the land and are among the chief sources that attract tourists to its verdant valleys. But more than just a means of pleasure, the waterways are an activity-oriented way of discovering new leisure sports.
- To those of you who are by nature passive, command a shikara on the Dal and Nagin Lakes in Srinagar for just a crossing, or for a whole day; a variation on this can be the hiring of a motorboat, if you prefer travelling faster over water. Or better still, when the summer days are balmy, go water skiing.
- The J&K Tourism Department has established a Water Sports Centre at Nigeen, and organises competitions in Canoeing, Kayaking etc. International & National level Rafting Championships have also been recently organised. Commercial Rafting has been introduced in Pahalgam & Sonamarg



# White Water Rafting

- This adventurous sport is played on the white waters of Lidder (Pahalgam, Kashmir), Sindh (Sonamarg, Kashmir). Plunging down the icy waters in a raft must certainly rank as the most adventurous way of seeing Kashmir. The Lidder river in Pahalgam has stretches where its gentle gradients are well suited for beginners. Sonamarg is another favourite place for rafting in Kashmir as the river Sindh roars through the area and makes sport challenging for the players. The grade scale at Sonamarg touches upto 4.

# MOUNTAIN CYCLING

- The valley of Kashmir is connected to the rest of the surrounding places through metalled roads that go over the passes, notable among these are : Banihal pass, Zojila Pass, Margan pass, Smithan pass. All these roads along these passes afford an excellent biking and cycling terrain. It is sort of trekking on wheels. The sport being more adventurous in nature has plenty to come across the valley. The feeling of exhilaration comes as much from our bracing climate as from not knowing what you will see next : a row of hamlets , shepherds, water streams, paddy fields, woods, meadows or a village market. Equally mountain cycling provides enormous thrill and challenge.
- Mountain biking is a tremendous way to see the exotic sights of our State such as the ancient routes of Trans-Himalayan Traders and the rural village life of Kashmir and Ladakh. Here you will enjoy the timeless culture and rich flora and fauna of our heritage as you explore such wonders as the Lidder Valley, Sindh valley, the monuments or the monasteries. Alternatively peddle at your own pace along some of the hidden trails to the rarely visited rural villages where you will see the warm smiles of locals living the preserved, traditional and simple life



# Paragliding

- This is one of the newest entries in the list of adventure sports in the State of Jammu & Kashmir. One can choose to glide over valleys, mountains or lakes. For this adventurous aero sport, Sonamarg, Gulmarg, Harwan (Srinagar) provide excellent winds and landscape .
- Paragliding demonstrations are being held at Pahalgam during Pahalgam Festival and at Sonamarg during Kashmir International Rafting Championship



# Conventions

Srinagar has a modern convention centre, the Sher-i-Kashmir International Conference Centre, located on the shores of the Dal Lake on the Boulevard Road and adjacent to the Royal Springs Golf Course.

# City Walks

- For the interest of walkers, the city of Srinagar (Shahar e Khas) provides excellent walks through historic city touching shrines, temples, mosques, gurudwaras, churches, waterways, bazaars, lifestyles etc. Compared to Leh & Jammu cities, Srinagar is a large city endowed with majestic Dal & Nageen lakes and circular Boulevard road surrounding the Lakes. Infact, city walks of old city of Srinagar have enormous heritage to showcase for the inquisitive and involving travellers. There is a circuit of heritage exhibiting ancient shrines, mosques, lifestyles, typical bazaars, eateries, fort area etc.



# ANGLING

- Kashmir has been rightly called angler's paradise, with a network of glaciated streams, rivers as well as high altitude lakes, all carrying the bounty of trout, both brown and rainbow. The British introduced the trout to the streams of the valley in the 20th century and the varieties succeeded in establishing in the torrential mountain streams flowing down from the ranges of Pir Panjal and outer Himalayas. By 1920, the trout had successfully established in the waters of the Brinji, Lidder, Sindh, Nambal, Madhumati, Eric etc. The Lidder and Sindh streams proved best for the trout.
- Many beats are within a two-hour drive from Srinagar. The more adventurous can fish at one of the many high altitude lakes that are reached by trek. One requires a permit to be issued by the Department of Fisheries; conditions also apply regarding use of bait, period of fishing etc. Only fly fishing and fly rods are permitted; spinning rod/reel and live bait are not permitted.

# Bird Watching

The state has 24 wetlands which are ideal for Bird Watching. The Notable and rare birds of the State are :

- Black Necked Crane
- Bar Headed geese
- Ibis bill
- Falcon
- Yellow billed magpie
- European blue whistling Thrush Vulture.
- It is an all-season sport in Kashmir particularly during the winters when migratory birds fly thousands of miles from Siberia to Kashmir



# Horse Riding

- Horses are abundantly available in all the resorts. Horses are also used to carry trekkers and trekking equipment to the highlands of the State. Gulmarg & Pahalgam predominantly provide good horse rides. Yousmarg also has riding tracks and opportunities, though in nomadic way.

# Wild Life in Kashmir

- The State of J&K has enacted Jammu & Kashmir Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1978 by virtue of which National Parks, Sanctuaries, Game Reserves and Wetlands have been setup to afford protection to the diverse flora & fauna of the State .
- Kashmiri Stag also known as Hangul (*cervus elaphus hanglu*) is found alone in the Valley of Kashmir and happens to be distinctly related to the European Red Deer.





# Dachigam National Park

Dachigam National Park was set up to afford protection to this critically endangered animal. Dachigam National Park is situated 1 km ahead of Harwon Garden (3 kms ahead of Shalimar Garden) and 18 kms from Srinagar. Permission to visit this National Park requires to be obtained from Wildlife Warden of (Wildlife Department). The rare fauna found in the protected areas of the State include:

- Tibetan Wild Ass (*Equus hemionus kiang*),
- Wolf (*anis lupus*),
- Kashmir Stag (*cervus elaphus hanglu*),
- Markhor (*capra falconeri*),
- Musk Deer (*moschus moschiferus*),
- Ovis Ammon or Nyam (*ovis ammon hodgsoni*),
- Snow Leopard (*panthera uncia*),
- Urial or Shabu (*ovis vignei*)

## BIRDS:

- Lammergeier (*gypaetus barbatus*)
- Pea fowl (*pavo cristatus*)
- Black necked crane
- Fragophan Pheasants
- Bar headed Geese



# WET LANDS

Wetlands are important ecosystem and support important biodiversity (Flora & Fauna). They fall along the Central Asian flyway of Winter migratory birds. The Jammu & Kashmir State has 24 wetland, these include :

- Hokersar
- Narkara
- Manibugh
- Chatlam
- Mirgund
- Ajus
- Shallabugh
- Hygam
- Malgam

*END*