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Kashmir â€“ the proverbial heaven on earth By Raj Mehta

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Kashmir is the proverbial heaven on earth. With its heartwarming sights, sounds and aroma, Kashmir attracts millions of tourists to it. Snow capped mountains, rolling hills, green meadows, serene lakes, charming gardens, lush green orchards and musical waterfalls â€“ the attractions of Kashmir are many.

Kashmir Tour Operators will list Srinagar, Gulmarg, Phalgam, Sonmarg, Jammu, Patnitop, Sanasar, Katra, Leh, Ladakh, Kargil, Zanaskar and Nubra Valley as important destinations to visit in Jammu and Kashmir, the northern most state of India.

Srinagar is located in the heart of Kashmir valley. Srinagar is situated at an altitude of one thousand seven hundred and thirty meters above sea level and is spread on both sides of river Jhelum. It is endowed with breathtaking environment, lakes, Mughal gardens, hills, mountains and spiritual places. It homes cycling tracks, golf course, trekking opportunities, water sports, indoor sports, world class hotels and multi cuisine restaurants. As is whole of Jammu and Kashmir, Srinagar is blessed with lakes. The prominent of them are Dal and Nagin lakes. Dal is one of the most beautiful lakes of India. Dal has its three sides surrounded by majestic mountains and shores laid by a large number of gardens and orchards. A number of houseboats ply in Dal lake. Nagin lake is nearby Dal lake. Even in summer, water in Nagin is pleasantly cool. There are boats which are full fledged shops in the lake. In short, you can shop in the lake. There are a number of gardens in Srinagar. Of them, the prominent one are Shalimar and Nishat both made by Mughal Kings. These gardens with lawns, fountains and flowers are a treat to senses. One way of sightseeing in Srinagar is in Shikaras moving through lakes. You can visit Mughal gardens and sites like Hazratbal Shrine like this.

Gulmarg is a premier mountain resort of exceptional beauty adjacent to Srinagar. It is also a prime winter destination. Gulmarg is turned into ski resort in winter when it is covered by snow. It has good sunshine and good snow â€“ both prerequisites for a fine skiing resort. The skiing season usually commences on mid December and lasts till end of March. Gulmarg is apt for learning skiing. There are good quality trained instructors available and skiing equipments can be had on rent. Gulmarg offers a lot of other snow sports other than skiing. Tourists make snowman and conduct camp fire around it. The provision of Heli-skiing is there in Gulmarg. For this exciting sport skiers are taken in helicopters to top of mountain ridges and they ski down the slope from there.

Pahalgam is the premier resort in Kashmir. Pahalgam is cool even during the height of summer. It has many places of interest and pony can be hired for sightseeing. Pahalgam is one of the twin starting points of Amarnathji Yatra, the other being, Baltal. Horse riding, Golf, fishing and trekking are the activities you can have in Pahalgam.

Kashmir Tourism will arrange for visit of Ladakh area. Ladakh is situated at the western edge of the Tibetan Plateau. Landscape of Ladakh has been modified and sculpted into its present spectacular shape by the wind and the erosion over the centuries. It is now a high altitude desert.

Kargil constitutes the western parts of Ladakh which comprises of river valleys. Prominent of these fascinating valleys are Suru and Zanskar. There are small lateral valleys of Drass, Wakha- Mulbek and Chiktan.

Leh town offers a number of sightseeing options. It is dominated by a nine storied palace built in the grand tradition of Tibetan architecture.

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Raj Mehta - About Author:
Raj Mehta is an eminent analyst and writer in Travel & Tourism related topics. He has authored may books on tour guide a Kashmir Tourism Map and a Tourist Places in Kashmir.

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