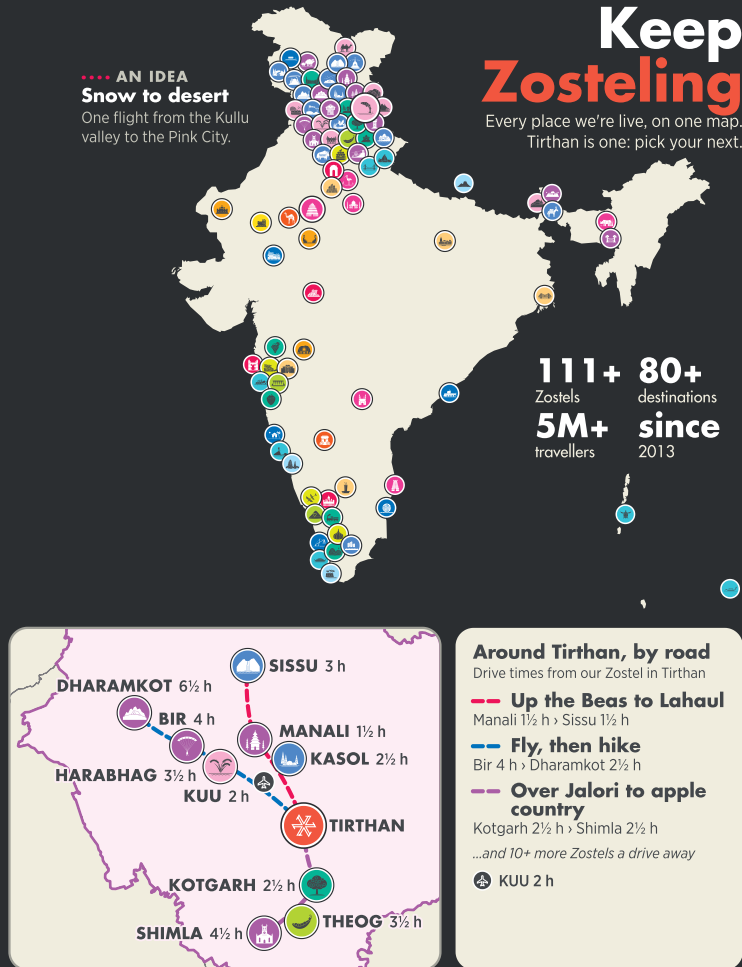


TIRTHAN VALLEY

a map made by Zostel
for young travellers
FREE MAP · HIMACHAL PRADESH



LIVE IT. NOW



Namaste, Tirthan Valley!

Namaste! We're the Tirthan Zbus, and this is our valley: the Tirthan running clear and cold out of the Great Himalayan National Park, past Gushaini and Banjar, down to Larji, with Jibhi, Shojia and the Jalori Pass up its side valley and Shangarh's meadow over the ridge in the Sainj. Walk from the pass to Serolsar Lake, climb to Chehni Kothi's tower, hike to the waterfalls, cast a line with a licence in hand. Eat siddu and trout, buy apples from the grower, keep the villages quiet. And ride the local buses: everyone changes at Banjar.



Every number is a tip on the map overleaf, in the colour of its kind: Look Up
Falls, Forests and the River
Siddu and Trout
Bazaars and Orchards
The Valley's Gods
Pack Up, Go Higher. A drawing beside a line shows what you will find there:

Stay with us in the valley

Five homes across the valley: Shojia on the road to the pass, Gushaini by the river, Laida on its hilltop, Gadagushaini in the quiet Seraj, and Shangarh above the Sainj.

- Zostel Shojia (Jibhi)**
A backpacker hostel on the road to the Jalori Pass, a short walk from the Shojia bus stand.
- Zostel Homes Tirthan (Gushaini)**
A homestay a few steps from the Tirthan, at Mungla by Nagini.
- Zostel Homes Laida**
A traditional Himachali homestay and a mudhouse on a forested hilltop near the park.
- Zostel Homes Gadagushaini (Jibhi)**
A homestay among pine forest and meadows, with a cafe and a garden bonfire.
- Zostel Shangarh**
A backpacker hostel at Dharali above the Sainj, with a rooftop common room.

Maps: © OpenStreetMap contributors (ODbL), data fetched 2026-10-13 (UTC); Terrain: Terrain Tiles on AWS (Mapzen/Tilezen), from SRTM courtesy of NASA and the U.S. Geological Survey, Walk lines routed by FOSSGIS OSRM on OpenStreetMap, Jalori Pass to Raghupur Fort drawn from OpenStreetMap's Jalori-Thogi track. Drawings: the Zostel brand's owns. Things change: check the day's timings at the gate.

Practical tips

- Getting in**
Take an overnight bus from Delhi or Chandigarh towards Manali and get off at Aut, before the tunnel. From there local buses or a cab: Banjar for the Tirthan side, Sainj for Shangarh. The nearest airport is Kullu's, at Bhuntar; the nearest big railway station is Chandigarh.
- Getting around**
Local buses run every hour or two, and almost every one changes at Banjar. There's no direct bus from Aut to Shojia, and only one a day from Sainj up to Shangarh. Cabs wait at Aut and Banjar. Check the day's timings at the stand; online maps are not reliable here.
- The pass in winter**
Snow closes the Jalori Pass from December to March, and with it the walks to Serolsar and Raghupur. From November to February the valley is snowy and some places are hard to reach.

- Rain and roads**
July and August bring the monsoon and the risk of landslides; check the weather before you travel and leave room in the plan. The mountain roads are narrow: give them daylight and patience.
- Cash and signal**
ATMs are in Banjar, Aut, Jibhi and Janjehli; there are none in Gadagushaini or Shangarh, so carry cash. The mobile network is patchy away from the towns, and power can cut out: bring a power bank and a torch.
- Permits**
Treks in the Great Himalayan National Park need a permit from the park's office at Sai Ropa. Trout fishing needs a licence from the fisheries department; the Zostels can help with both and with a guide.
- Rivers**
The Tirthan is fast and freezing: fish from the bank or the shallows, never wade into the current. Below Larji, the Beas rises without warning when the dam lets water out.

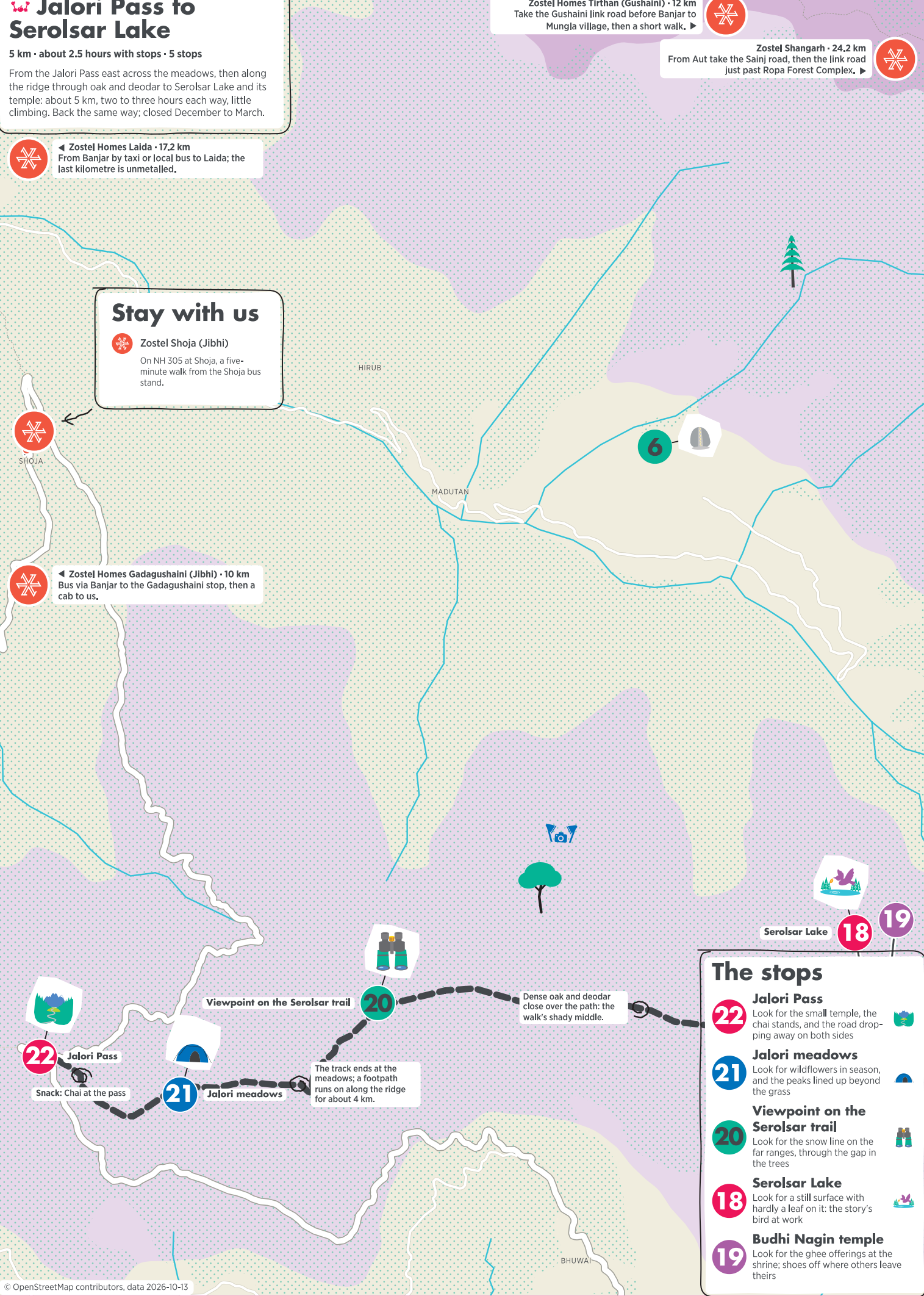
Jalori Pass to Serolsar Lake

5 km · about 2.5 hours with stops · 5 stops
From the Jalori Pass east across the meadows, then along the ridge through oak and deodar to Serolsar Lake and its temple: about 5 km, two to three hours each way, little climbing. Back the same way; closed December to March.

Zostel Homes Laida - 17.2 km
From Banjar by taxi or local bus to Laida; the last kilometre is unmetalled.

Stay with us

- Zostel Shojia (Jibhi)**
On NH 305 at Shojia, a five-minute walk from the Shojia bus stand.
- Zostel Homes Gadagushaini (Jibhi) - 10 km**
Bus via Banjar to the Gadagushaini stop, then a cab to us.



The stops

- Jalori Pass**
Look for the small temple, the chai stands, and the road dropping away on both sides.
- Jalori meadows**
Look for wildflowers in season, and the peaks lined up beyond the grass.
- Viewpoint on the Serolsar trail**
Look for the snow line on the far ranges, through the gap in the trees.
- Serolsar Lake**
Look for a still surface with hardly a leaf on it: the story's bird at work.
- Budhi Nagin temple**
Look for the ghee offerings at the shrine; shoes off where others leave theirs.

Village manners

These are villages first: quiet hours at night, no loud music on the meadows, shoes off on Shangarh's meadow and where others take theirs off at temples, and every bit of rubbish carried back down.

Health

There's medical help at Banjar and at Sainj, about an hour from Shangarh; there are no pharmacies in the high villages, so carry your own medicines and a first-aid kit.

5 minutes of history

Legend

A sage at Chehni
The Banjar valley's god, Shringa Rishi, is said to have meditated ten thousand years on Sakiran Jot, and to have kept an ashram at Chehni. Every May the valley's gods gather for him at the Banjar fair.

Legend
The goddess in the lake
Budhi Nagin, mother of the Nag gods, is said to live in a palace beneath Serolsar Lake. The Pandavas, the story goes, lifted her image from the water and built her first temple on the bank.

Legend
A meadow for the Pandavas
In their exile the Pandavas needed land to farm, the Sainj story says; Shanchul Mahadev sent his beings to flatten the valley's side for them. The meadow at Shangarh is that gift, kept unbuilt ever since.

17th century
A tower of stone and deodar
Chehni Kothi rises near Banjar, stone below and timber above, laid the kath-kuni way. Its age is uncertain; the 17th century is the date most often given.

Early 1900s
Trout come to the hills
The British bring trout to Himachal's rivers for sport. In 1903 by one account and 1909 by another. In 1925 a notification protects the trout of the Tirthan.



1905
The earthquake
The great Kangra earthquake is said to have damaged Chehni Kothi; the villagers repaired it, and the tower still stands.

1933
Rest houses on the pass road
The Himalayan Journal walks the Simla-Leh road over the Jalori: rest houses at Khanag, Shojia, Jibhi, Banjar and Larji, brown trout in the Tirthan and the Sainj. Zostel still calls it the old Brits' road.

1984
A park is drawn
The Great Himalayan National Park is set up over the headwaters of the Tirthan, the Sainj and the Jiwa Nal; it is notified as a national park in 1999.

2004
A river kept free
After the valley's villages object, the state cabinet takes no hydropower projects in the Tirthan valley; in 2006 the High Court rules the Tirthan a no-go river for dams.

2014
World Heritage
UNESCO inscribes the Great Himalayan National Park Conservation Area as a World Heritage Site for its biodiversity.

Talk like a local

Namaste
Hello (Hindi, understood by all)
nuh-mus-tay

Khara
Good
khuh-aa

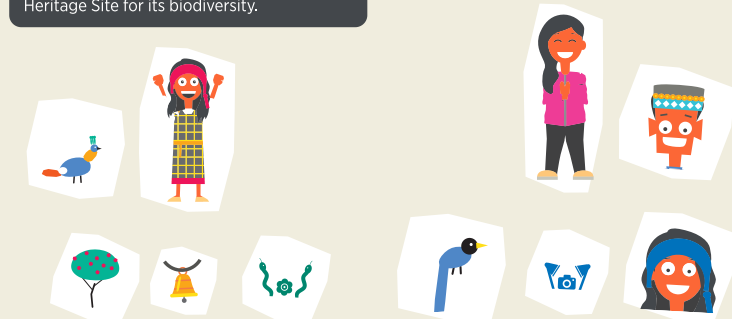
Ho / Naain
Yes / No
ho / naa-een

Ki?
What?
kee

Kun?
Who?
koon

Paani
Water
paa-nee

Ghor
House, home
ghor



Ujhe / Bunhe

Up / Down
ooj-jhay / boon-hay

Dhiara
The sun
dhee-aa-raa

Hau nosha sa
I'm going
haun no-shaa saa

Eat like the valley

The valley eats simply and warm: siddu with ghee, madra and rajma-chawal, the river's trout, and at a fair or a wedding, the dhama. The cafes of Jibhi and Shojia add cinnamon rolls, pizza and momos.

3 Harvest Moon Bakery, Jibhi.
Cinnamon rolls warm from the bakery.
Zostel's guide calls them a hug for your taste buds.



Enzo's Coffee House, Jibhi.

A slow coffee with the mountains in view, when the walking's done.

The Rustic, Shojia. A minute from Zostel Shojia: comfort food with a local twist, pizzas and steaming momos.

Laat Bus Stop Cafe, Shojia. Himachali food with a mountain view, near Zostel Shojia: refuel here after the pass.

Dishes to hunt down

Siddu. A steamed wheat bun stuffed with lentils or roots, torn open hot with ghee.

14 Trout. From the valley's cold river and farms: roasted, steamed or in a curry.

Madra. Beans or chickpeas slow-cooked in curd: the heart of a Himachali feast, and of simple village plates.

Rajma-chawal. Kidney beans and rice, the village's everyday plate, with siddu and madra beside it.

Dham. The feast of weddings and fairs, cooked by hereditary cooks and served on leaf plates. If you're invited, go.

Got a day to spare?

- 5 Chehni Kothi from Banjar.** An easy 4.5 km up to the tower, two to three hours.
- 13 Chhole waterfall from Nagini.** About 3 km and an hour through the forest to the falls.
- 23 Raghupur Fort from Larji.** About 3 km west along the ridge; stay for the sunset.
- 26 Shangarh from Jibhi.** Two hours or so by road over to the Sainj the meadow, Barshangarh falls, and Ralla's towers on the way.
- 24 Bahu and the Balo temple.** A picnic lake, then a forest trail to a meadow and its Nag temple.

Chachgalu Top. A drive and a short hike from Gadagushaini, views to the Kinnaur range, and a forest trail on to a temple and lake.

Tungshi Mahadev Top. From Gadagushaini, a high hike to 360-degree views, a Mahadev temple and the ruins of a Mandi fort.

Festivals worth timing a trip for

- 4 Banjar fair (May).** Every May the valley's gods come to Banjar on palanquins, Shringa Rishi among them.
- Faguli (late winter).** Banjar's late-winter festival, in March by Wikipedia's account: the hills' masked dances to see the winter out.
- Shairi (September).** Banjar's September festival, after the monsoon.



Kullu Dussehra (October). A week on Kullu's Dhalpur ground from Vijayadashmi; the valley's gods go, Shringa Rishi among them.

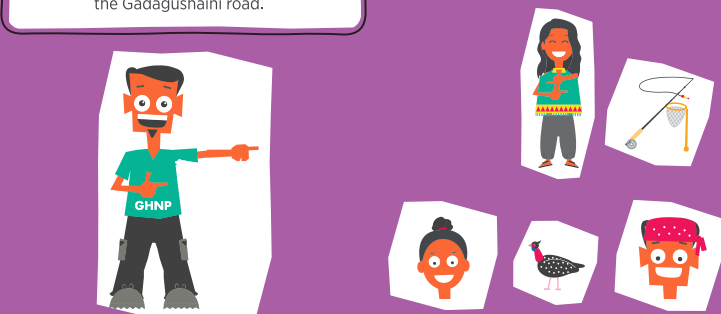
Between our homes, by road

- 9 Aut tunnel to Banjar.** About 26 km up the Tirthan from the Kullu road: the Banjar turn is just before the tunnel.
- Banjar to Zostel Homes Tirthan (Gushaini).** About 8 km east up the Tirthan, by the Gushaini link road to Mungla.
- Banjar to Zostel Homes Laida.** About 14 km, the last stretch a narrow climb.
- Banjar to Jibhi, then Zostel Shojia (Jibhi).** About 8 km to Jibhi, then 8 km more up the Jalori road to Shojia.
- Jibhi to Zostel Homes Gadagushaini (Jibhi).** About 28 km west by Banjar and the Gadagushaini road.

Aut to Zostel Shangarh. About 34 km; up the Sainj road by Sainj, then the Shangarh link road.

The valley's gods

- 4 Shringa Rishi of Bagli.** The Banjar valley's sage, who goes to the Banjar fair and to Kullu for the Dussehra.
 - 19 Budhi Nagin of Serolsar.** Mother of the Nag gods, said to live beneath the lake; villagers bring her ghee.
 - 27 Shanchul Mahadev.** The meadow's god at Shangarh, in a temple of carved wood.
 - 24 The Nag of Bahu.** An old Nag Devta temple in the Bahu meadow, revered by the villages.
- Hanskund's rule.** Where the Tirthan rises, the story says, the deity of Hanskund forbade harming wild creatures: a belief that still helps keep them.



Wool, wood and stone

- 5 Kath-kuni.** Deodar and stone in turns, no mortar or nails, so the walls flex in an earthquake.
- The topi.** The round wooden Himachali cap with its coloured band, worn daily and at every fair.
- The Kullu shawl.** Geometric bands at both ends in up to eight colours; GI No. 19.

Markets by what they sell

- 9 Banjar's market.** Local pottery, mountain produce, the ATMs and everything you forget.
- 3 Jibhi's main market.** Cafes and a bakery by the stream.



22 A tunnel under Jalori, planned. A tunnel of about 4 km under the pass has been planned for years, for a road open all winter; for now, the pass still closes.

Good to know

- 12 Where the Tirthan starts.** The Tirthan rises at Hanskund, about 4,800 m up in the Great Himalayan National Park, and runs down past Gushaini and Banjar to Larji, where it meets the Sainj and the Beas.
- 12 A river with no dams.** In 2004 the state cabinet ruled out hydropower projects in the Tirthan valley, and in 2006 the High Court declared the Tirthan a no-go river for dams, large or small.



11 World Heritage. The Great Himalayan National Park, about 1171 sq km, became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2014 for its biodiversity. Gushaini and Sai Ropa are its Tirthan-side doers.

Over 180 kinds of bird. The park counts over 180 kinds of bird, the western tragopan and the Himalayan monal among them.

22 Inner and Outer Saraj. A spur of the ridge splits Saraj in two: the Beas side, with Banjar, is Inner Saraj; the Suttle side is Outer Saraj. The Jalori and the Bashleo are its two main passes.

5 No nails at Chehni. Chehni Kothi's walls are deodar and stone in turns, without cement or nails: the kath-kuni way, built to flex in an earthquake.

Trout, for a century. The British brought trout to Himachal's rivers in the early 1900s. By 1933 the Himalayan Journal found brown trout in the Tirthan and the Sainj for miles above Larji.

The pass road, 1933. In 1933 the Simla-Leh road crossed the Jalori, with rest houses at Khanag, Shojia, Jibhi, Banjar and Larji. Zostel still calls it the old Brits' road.

22 Closed for the snow. Snow closes the Jalori Pass from December to March; the walks to Serolsar Lake and Raghupur Fort wait for spring.

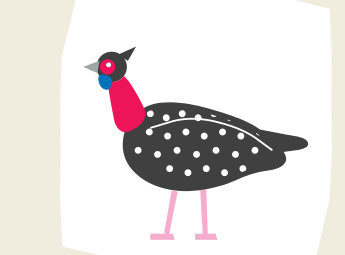
Water mills. Gharats, the stone flour mills that run on the river's flow, once stood at almost every turn of the Tirthan; dozens still worked after the 2005 floods.

19 Ghee for the goddess. Villagers bring ghee to Budhi Nagin's temple at Serolsar, poured as an offering said to flow to the middle of the lake, where she is believed to live.

26 A meadow never built on. Shangarh's meadow is kept open: people avoid walking it in shoes, no permanent building is allowed on it, and there's no camping.

12 The angler's rules. Rod-and-line fishing in trout water needs a licence from the fisheries department, and a licence has its daily limits: ask at Zostel or the department before you cast.

Three rivers at Larji. The Tirthan and the Sainj meet at Larji and join the Beas, just above the dam in the gorge below Aut.



26 The Pandavas' meadow. Shangarh's story says Shanchul Mahadev had the meadow levelled for the Pandavas in their exile, so they could farm.

4 The sage of Chehni. Shringa Rishi, the Banjar valley's god, is said to have kept an ashram at Chehni; his village is Bagli, in Chehni's panchayat.

A language at risk. Kulvi, the valley's Pahari language, is listed by UNESCO as definitely endangered; many children no longer learn it at home.

Jalori Pass to Raghupur Fort

3 km · about 1.5 hours
West from the pass along the ridge, through oak and rhododendron, to Raghupur Fort's grassy top: about 3 km, one to two hours. Go for the sunset; come down before dark.

22 23



