



## DHARAMSHALA WEEKEND TRIP



With PMGY volunteers being based in an urban environment and near the capital city of Delhi, they are usually able to organise trips independently without the need for our team to travel with them. For example, you have good train, bus and if required, road links to allow you to travel freely and flexibly across northern India. As a result, participants prefer the flexibility and cheaper method of travel independently. To arrange a more private trip with our team would be expensive and based on experience, volunteers prefer the freedom of being by themselves. Our team can always point you in the right direction and help to organise any transport and accommodation you may require during your trip.

We have outlined a couple of popular weekend trip options to give you an idea of some of the trips you can get involved in during your time with us. We recommend participants do not make any firm commitments until they arrive in India as participants will usually travel in a group and our team are a great resource to help you make plans!

It is common for volunteers to make weekend trip plans for a 3 day period when travelling further afield. This will mean choosing to miss a day from your volunteer project. Subsequently, you should give as much notice as possible to the local team and staff at the project to ensure they can approve your plans before you make any trip commitments and make alternative arrangements if necessary.

Dharamshala is located high in the mountains of the Himachal Pradesh of the Western Himalayas. Most famously known to as the home of the Dalai Lama, the region is famed for its large Tibetan community that is centred around the activities of the spiritual leader.

Dharamshala boasts stunning views, from the colourful houses lining its shallower hills, to snow-topped towering mountains and thick deodar cedar trees. Compared to the craziness of Delhi, this hill-station provides a surprising and welcome change. The region is blessed with crisp mountain breeze, meaning a trip here quite literally provides you with a breath of fresh air compared to the chaos of the city. This weekend trip therefore offers the perfect opportunity to rest, recuperate and explore after a busy week at project back in and around India's bustling capital.

## ITINERARY

### DAY 1- ARRIVAL INTO DHARAMSHALA

You've had a long night as you journey from the Volunteer House in Faridabad. Upon arrival, you will drop your bags off at your hostel and have the opportunity to purchase some breakfast before officially beginning your adventure. After refuelling, the rest of the day is yours!

The relaxing and serene atmosphere of Dharamshala is often mirrored by a 'take each day as it comes' attitude. Rather than engaging in series of pre-set activities,

volunteers visiting Dharamshala have the freedom to explore how they wish. Some ideas of what you can engage in during your time includes the following:

**Markets** - Dharamshala is a haven for shopping, with streets full of carefully and intricately created handicrafts. Kotwali Bazaar is most popular with visitors, offering everything from woven slippers, to traditional Tibetan carpets and Buddha sculptures. Not only do Dharamshala's shopping opportunities allow you to try out your best haggling skills and fill up your rucksack with colourful goods, but you can also learn about the local culture along the way!

**Bhagsu Waterfall** - Bhagsu waterfall is a must see in Dharamshala, famous for both its serenity and beauty. However, in addition being aesthetically pleasing, the waterfall's primary importance is its devotion to Lord Shiva; this makes this natural wonder even more special, attracting worshipers from across the world. A trip to the waterfall is simple, easily accessible from a pleasant walk approximately 4 kilometres from Dharamshala's main market area.

**Tibetan Museum** - Dharamshala has been the Tibetan exile world in India since May 1960, when the Central Tibetan Administration was moved to the town. This museum is therefore a 'must visit', with the aim to exhibit, education and research native locals and tourists about Tibetan History and culture. In addition to illustration both Tibetan history and culture, the museum works to raise awareness of the ongoing human rights abuses in Tibet from China. A visit to this museum will provide you with a much more educated understanding of Dharamshala's diversity. Entry to the museum is minimal, with a charge usually less than 10 pence sterling.

**Tsuglagkhang Complex** - As the monastery of the Dalai Lama, this is the largest Tibetan Temple outside of Tibet. Within the complex is a large meditation hall, decorated with extravagant statues and thangkas – Tibetan Buddhist paintings, displayed on cotton. This temple is another location with significance for the Tibetan culture. If you are lucky, you may make it for a public teaching from Dalai Lama – truly a once in a lifetime experience!

**Cooking Lesson** - No trip India is complete without a putting some time aside to learn the secret behind Indian cuisine. A cooking lesson in Dharamshala is particularly special, with several opportunities to learn a combination of both traditional Indian and Tibetan cooking techniques. This is an opportunity not to be missed!

**Trekking** - Popular with avid adventurers, trekking provides visitors with the perfect opportunity to get up close and personal to Dharamshala's breath-taking surroundings. Prices will vary, largely depending on the length, difficulty and location of the trek. Various tour companies can be found dotted around the town who will be able to help put your plans into action.



## DAY 2 – LET THE ADVENTURE CONTINUE

We have only outlined a handful of the exciting and cultural activities and sites on offer in Dharamshala. You will also find several tourist services across the town to further assist you in your plans.

Any of the activities that you could not complete during day one can be completed on day two. Whether it be a more relaxing approach by taking up a cooking lesson or a more adventurous approach heading to Bhagsu waterfall, Dharamshala is your oyster.

Whatever you end up doing, previous volunteers have frequently named Dharamshala as one of their top destinations in India. We're therefore sure that whatever you get up to, your time in this mountainous and breathtaking setting will be fulfilling!



## DAY 3 – BACK TO FARIDABAD

It's been a weekend not to forget! The coach back to Faridabad typically leaves in the evening, giving you the morning to grab a final breakfast overlooking the Himalayas. You may use the day to pick-up some final handicrafts or cook up some Tibetan Momos for the evening ahead.

Your journey back to the Volunteer House will allow you to reflect on all the new memories you have made during this incredible weekend away. The approximate 10 hour drive should have you back to the accommodation by 5am the next day. The local team will be able to assist you in arranging a taxi back to the Volunteer House from the coach station.



## ACCOMMODATION

You will stay at a hotel or guesthouse for the two nights. Rooms are shared, up to 6 volunteers per room. Our team will do their best to arrange twin rooms or single beds, but from time to time some volunteers may be required to share double beds depending on availability. The guesthouse will be basic but clean and comfortable. You should have all the amenities you need such as western toilet and hot shower. Wi-Fi is also available, although it may be intermittent.

## MEALS

Meals will need to be budgeted for. Drinks or snacks will also be at your own expense.

## TRANSPORT

You will travel to Dharamshala from Delhi and back via coach – these may be overnight.