



Duration: 4 Nights and 5 Days

Tour name: Kashmir's Wild Wonders

Tour Code: KWWL02

One line intro: Exhilarating adventure through Kashmir's wild beauty with exclusive forest hut stays, thrilling wildlife drives, scenic nature walks in Dachigam National Park, and a picturesque day trip to Sonamarg.

Cost: ₹ xxxxxx + 5% GST
(Min. 2 Pax travelling together)

Highlights

- Stay in forest huts within Dachigam National Park
- Morning and evening wildlife drives to spot rare species, including the Hangul deer
- Guided nature walks exploring Dachigam's rich biodiversity
- Discover Srinagar's iconic Mughal Gardens: Pari Mahal and Cheshma Shahi
- Scenic day trip to Sonamarg with optional visits to Thajiwas Glacier
- Early morning Shikara ride to the floating vegetable market on Dal Lake
- Visit the historic Shankaracharya Temple overlooking Srinagar and Dal Lake

Description

This bespoke itinerary invites you to experience the wonders of Kashmir, from the serene beauty of Dachigam National Park to the historic sites of Srinagar. Enjoy thrilling wildlife drives, explore lush trails, and visit the revered Shankaracharya Temple, which offers panoramic views over Dal Lake. Discover the Mughal gardens, marvel at the golden meadows of Sonamarg, and complete your journey with a tranquil morning at the floating vegetable market on Dal Lake. This tour is crafted for nature lovers and those seeking a deeper connection with Kashmir's cultural heritage.

Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival in Srinagar – A Day of Discovery in the City of 'Sri'

Upon arrival at Srinagar Airport, you will be warmly welcomed by a Kashmirinluxury™ representative who will assist with your smooth transfer to your luxurious accommodations. Srinagar, derived from the Sanskrit words 'Sri' (symbolising wealth and prosperity) and 'Nagar' (meaning city), exudes richness in both culture and natural beauty.

After lunch, embark on an exploration of Srinagar's iconic Mughal Gardens. Begin with Pari Mahal, the 'Palace of Fairies,' built by Mughal Prince Dara Shikoh, offering panoramic views of Dal Lake from the Zabarwan mountain range. En route, visit Cheshma Shahi, the 'Royal Spring,' known for its natural spring waters. If visiting during tulip season, Srinagar's blooming gardens will add an extra treat for the senses.

Enjoy the sunset at Pari Mahal, then return to your luxurious hotel for a lavish dinner, preparing you for the wilderness experience ahead.

Day 2: Into the Heart of Dachigam National Park – Encounters with the Wild

Following a hearty breakfast, you'll transfer to Dachigam National Park, where you'll check into the Panzgam Forest Hut—a rustic, comfortable base deep within this protected sanctuary. The name Dachigam, derived from the Kashmiri words *dachi* (meaning “ten”) and *gam* (meaning “villages”), pays homage to the ten villages relocated to create this pristine habitat.

This afternoon, embark on your first wildlife drive. Dachigam is home to the critically endangered Hangul deer, or Kashmir stag, a species found only in this region. These deer are recognised by their impressive, lyre-shaped antlers that can have up to 12 points. Alongside the Hangul, Dachigam supports a variety of other large mammals, including the Himalayan black bear, known for its distinct white chest markings, and the elusive leopard, which is often spotted in the park's higher elevations.

Bird enthusiasts will be thrilled to discover over 150 bird species here. Look to the skies for golden eagles and watch for colourful pheasants, such as the vibrant Himalayan monal, which flaunts iridescent plumage. As your afternoon wildlife drive concludes, return to the forest hut, where a cozy bonfire dinner awaits. Dachigam's nocturnal residents often come alive as night falls; keep your eyes peeled for sightings of red foxes and jungle cats near the hut.

Day 3: Wildlife Drives and Nature Walks in Dachigam

Wake to the symphony of the forest and prepare for a morning wildlife drive that takes you deeper into Dachigam's varied ecosystems. The park's altitude range, from 5,500 feet to nearly 14,000 feet, results in a breathtaking array of landscapes—from alpine meadows and rocky outcrops to dense pine and deciduous forests. As you venture through these diverse habitats, keep watch for langurs playfully leaping among the trees, and marmots scurrying in and out of their burrows.

After breakfast, embark on a guided nature walk that reveals some of Dachigam's smaller, yet equally fascinating, inhabitants. The park's flora includes over 500 species of vascular plants, with medicinal herbs like *Podophyllum*, used in traditional medicine, and colourful wildflowers such as primulas and asters. You might even spot tracks of the rare snow leopard, which, although elusive, leaves traces in the form of paw prints and claw marks on trees.

Birdwatchers will be delighted by sightings of the blue magpie and paradise flycatcher flitting through the forest canopy. The Himalayan griffon vulture, another resident of Dachigam, can often be seen gliding gracefully above the park's rugged terrain.

In the afternoon, unwind at the forest hut or visit the trout fish hatchery, located within the park. Here, you'll find both Rainbow and Brown trout thriving in cool, clear streams—a testament to the pristine quality of Dachigam's waters. As the day draws to a close, another wildlife drive awaits, offering a chance to observe Dachigam's twilight life, such as the Himalayan weasel and the shy musk deer, before returning for a delicious dinner beneath the starlit sky.

Day 4: Scenic Day Trip to Sonamarg – Valley of Golden Meadows

After a nourishing breakfast, set out for a day trip to Sonamarg, the “Meadow of Gold.” Located at an elevation of approximately 2,740 meters, Sonamarg is a gateway to some of the most breathtaking scenery in the Kashmir Valley. The drive itself is a treat, winding along the Sindh River and through landscapes that transform from lush green valleys to rugged mountain passes.

Upon arrival, immerse yourself in the beauty of this alpine paradise, surrounded by towering snow-capped peaks and expansive meadows blanketed with wildflowers. Sonamarg's rich biodiversity and pristine landscapes make it a haven for nature lovers. Take a leisurely walk along the riverbanks, where the crystal-clear waters of the Sindh River reflect the surrounding mountains and alpine flora.

For those seeking a bit of adventure, there is an optional pony ride to Thajiwas Glacier, nestled in the Tajwas Wildlife Sanctuary. Here, you can witness the dramatic contrasts between the glacier's pristine white ice and the deep green forests below. The sanctuary is also home to various wildlife species, including the Himalayan brown bear, ibex, and snow partridges. The glacier is accessible during the summer months, offering a close-up view of this icy wonder, as well as stunning photo opportunities.

Lunch is an independent affair, with the option to enjoy a picnic by the river or explore local eateries that offer traditional Kashmiri dishes. Afterward, take time to breathe in the crisp mountain air, marvelling at the grandeur of the Himalayas that encircle you.

As the day winds down, return to Srinagar, where you'll check into a deluxe hotel for a final evening of relaxation. A delightful dinner will be served, providing a chance to savour Kashmiri flavours and reflect on the adventures of the day. Sonamarg's captivating landscapes and serene ambiance make for a truly memorable experience, leaving you with vivid memories of this alpine wonderland.

Day 5: Morning Shikara Ride and Temple Visit – A Fond Farewell to Kashmir

Begin your day with an early morning Shikara ride to the floating vegetable market on Dal Lake, a unique cultural experience that's truly one of a kind. As dawn breaks, glide across the calm waters, passing by houseboats and lotus gardens, until you reach the market. Here, local farmers and vendors arrive in brightly coloured boats laden with fresh vegetables, fruits, and flowers, bartering and trading in a tradition that dates back centuries. This bustling exchange, set against the tranquil backdrop of Dal Lake, offers a vibrant glimpse into the daily lives of Kashmiris.

After this enriching experience, return to your hotel for a leisurely breakfast. Following breakfast, you'll visit the historic Shankaracharya Temple, perched atop Gopadhari Hill at an elevation of 1,000 feet above the valley. This ancient temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva, is believed to date back to 200 BCE, making it one of the oldest in the region. The temple holds significant spiritual importance and is also famed for its stunning panoramic views of Srinagar, Dal Lake, and the surrounding mountains.

As you ascend the steps to the temple, take in the serene atmosphere and the rich history that surrounds you. Once at the top, you'll be rewarded with a breathtaking perspective of the valley below—an unforgettable farewell to your journey through Kashmir.

With your soul nourished and your senses filled, return to the hotel, where a Kashmirinluxury™ representative will assist with your smooth transfer to Srinagar Airport. As you bid farewell to Kashmir, take with you cherished memories of this enchanting region, where nature, culture, and history seamlessly blend into an unforgettable experience.

Accommodation

- 2 Nights at Deluxe Room's on Half Board (Breakfast and Dinner) meal plan at Lalit Grand Palace or WelcomHeritage Gurkha Houseboats or similar in Srinagar, India

- 2 Nights at Basic Room's on Full Board (Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner) meal plan at Panzgam Forest Hut or similar inside Dachigam in Srinagar, India

Inclusions

- Services of naturalist/local guide in Dachigam National Park.
- An hour-long morning floating vegetable market Shikara ride on the Dal Lake
- Accommodation with meals in deluxe double/twin-occupancy rooms as specified in accommodations.
- All relevant permits and entry fees for Dachigam National Park and sightseeing locations.
- Guided wildlife drives and walks inside Dachigam National Park.
- All relevant sightseeing, parking, tolls, and driver allowances as per itinerary.
- Luxurious transfers and sightseeing by private, chauffeur-driven Toyota Innova, as per itinerary.

Exclusions

- Goods and Services Tax (GST)
- Professional guide services
- Professional Camera fees
- Alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages
- Comprehensive travel insurance
- Any airfare or train fare -
- Entrance fees to monuments and museums
- Gondola Tickets, Pony Rides, Sliding or Skiing in Gulmarg
- Personal expenses not explicitly mentioned in the itinerary
- Local Taxi Service in Gulmarg as a result of local union norms
- Optional experiences and services, available at an additional charge
- All personal expenditures, including tips, laundry, and beverages