

# Himachal Pradesh:

## Adventures in India's mountain playground



**R**un, run faster, run FASTER!' shouted my instructor. I could feel a hint of panic rising as I pushed against the wind with all the strength I could muster. Then suddenly, before I knew it, I was airborne, sailing out into the Himalayan sky above Himachal Pradesh - the world's second highest point for paragliding - clinging to my paragliding harness and completely dependent on my pilot to steer me safely back to the ground.

But my fears quickly vanished as I saw India's mighty Dhauladhar mountain range from this breathtaking vantage point, with the sun rising behind me and the picturesque valley that I had just stepped out from sprawled below me like a topographic map. As I returned to ground at the end of the flight, I was ecstatic, having just ticked off an adventure sport that I had never believed I would actually try.

Tucked away in the western part of the Himalaya at the top end of India, Himachal Pradesh beckons to adventure seekers with a full basket of adrenaline-pumping experiences. From pine and deodar-covered mountain valleys to the high-altitude deserts of Lahaul-Spiti, Himachal's towering mountains become a trekking playground in summer and ski slopes in winter, while gushing rivers challenge rafters to test their skills against some of the world's most dramatic rapids.

But what gives every activity in Himachal Pradesh a special edge is the majestic views of snow-capped Himalayan ranges that unfold dramatically before you, whatever thrilling pursuit you sign

