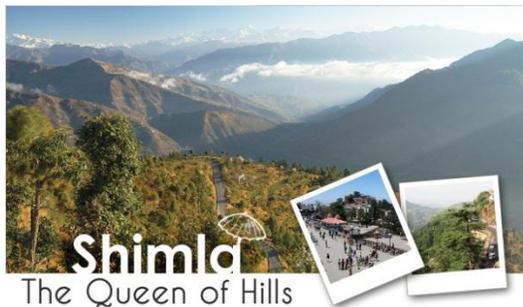
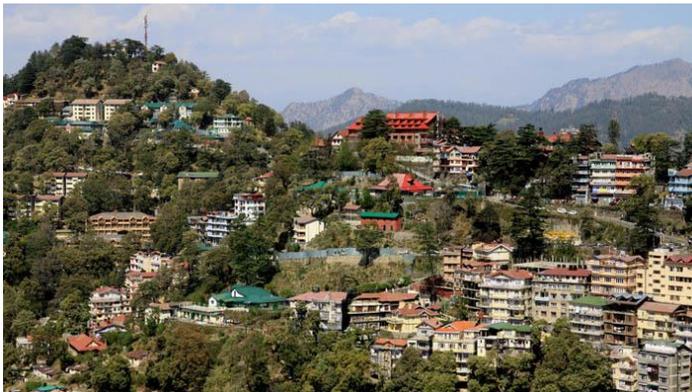


Shimla: India's Queen of Hills

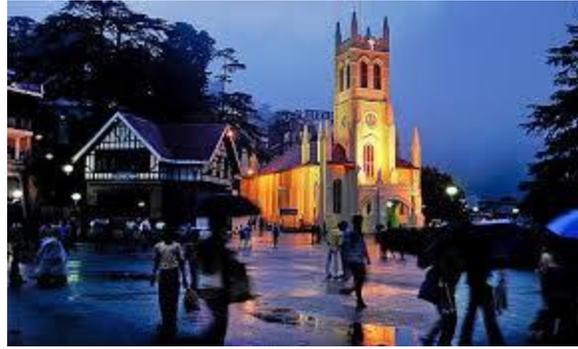


Shimla also known as **Simla**, is the capital and largest city of the northern Indian state of **Himachal Pradesh**. Shimla is also a district which is bounded by **Mandi** and **Kullu** in the north, **Kinnaur** in the east, the state of **Uttarakhand** in the south-east, and **Solan** and **Sirmaur**. In 1864, Shimla was declared as the **summer capital** of **British India**, succeeding **Murree**, northeast of **Rawalpindi**. After **independence**, the city became the capital of **Punjab** and was later named the capital of Himachal Pradesh. It is the principal commercial, cultural and educational centre of the hilly regions of the state. As of 2011, the city had 171,817 permanent residents, and was one of the least populous **capital cities** in India.



Small hamlets were recorded prior to 1815 when the English forces took control of the area. The climatic conditions attracted the British to establish the city in the dense forests of **Himalayas**. As the summer capital, Shimla hosted many important political meetings including the **Simla Accord of 1914** and the **Simla Conference** of 1945. After independence, the state of Himachal Pradesh came into being in 1948 as a result of integration of 28 **princely states**. Even after independence, the city remained an important political centre, hosting the **Simla Agreement** of 1972. After the reorganisation, the Mahasu district and its major portion were merged with Shimla. Its name is derived from the goddess **Shyamala Devi**, an incarnation of the **Hindu goddess Kali**^[citation needed]. As of 2011 Shimla comprises 19 hill states, namely **Baghal**, **Baghat**,

Balsan, **Bashahr**, **Bhajji**, **Bija**, **Darkoti**, **Dhami**, **Jubbal**, **Keonthal**, **Kumharsain**, **Kunihar**, **Kuthar**, **Mahlog**, **Mangal**, **Nalagarh (Hindur)**, **Sangri** and **Tharoch**.



Shimla is home to a number of buildings that are styled in the [Tudorbethan](#) and [neo-Gothic](#) architectures dating from the colonial era, as well as multiple temples and churches. The colonial architecture and churches, the temples and the natural beauty of the city attract a large number of tourists. The major attractions include the [Viceroy Lodge](#), the [Christ Church](#), the [Jakhoo Temple](#), the [Mall Road](#) and the [Ridge](#), which together form the city centre.



The [Kalka–Shimla Railway](#) line built by the British, a [UNESCO World Heritage Site](#), is also a major tourist attraction. Owing to its steep terrain, Shimla hosts the mountain biking race [MTB Himalaya](#), which started in 2005 and is regarded as the biggest event of its kind in South Asia.



Shimla also has the largest [natural ice skating rink](#) in South Asia. The ice skating season usually begins in the start of December and goes on till the end of February. Apart from being a tourism centre, the city is also an educational hub with a number of colleges and research institutions. The city also has sporting venues like the Indira Gandhi Rajya Khel Parisar, the main [sports complex](#) and the [Naldehra Golf Club](#).

The people of Shimla are informally called Shimlaites. With largely cosmopolitan crowds, a variety of festivals are celebrated here. The Shimla Summer Festival, held every year during peak tourist season,^[47] and lasting 3–4 days, is celebrated on [the Ridge](#). The highlights of this event include performances by popular singers from all over the country.^[48]

Shimla has a number of places to visit. Local hangouts like [the Mall](#) and [the Ridge](#) are in the heart of the city. Most of the heritage buildings in the city are preserved in their original 'Tudorbethan' architecture. The former [Viceregal Lodge](#), which now houses the [Indian Institute of Advanced Study](#), and Wildflower Hall, now a luxury hotel, are some of the famous ones. A collection of paintings, jewellery and textiles of the region can be found at the State Museum (built in 1974).

Lakkar Bazaar, a market extending off [the Ridge](#), is famous for souvenirs and crafts made of wood. Tatta Pani, 55 kilometres (34.2 mi) from the main city, is the name of hot [sulphur](#) springs that are believed to have medicinal value located on the banks of the River [Satluj](#). Shimla is also home to South Asia's only natural ice skating rink.^[49] State and national level competitions are often held at this venue. Shimla Ice Skating Club, which manages the rink, hosts a carnival every year in January, which includes a fancy dress competition and figure skating events. Due to effects of global warming and increasing urban development in and around Shimla, the number of sessions on ice every winter have been decreasing in the past few years.
