



Going off-piste in the Himalayas

By Alexandra Davey | 12 Dec 2012

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In recent years, the north Indian region of Kashmir has been quietly attracting more adventurous travellers, who come for its little-visited sights and tranquil landscapes such as [Dal Lake](#).

Rarely is it thought of as a winter-sports destination; but in fact Kashmir's snow-capped Himalayas, have some of the highest, most challenging and blissfully untouched ski slopes in the world. Some of them are still as-yet uncharted, which make for an extreme snow-sports experience and bring a new meaning to the phrase 'going off-piste'.

Gulmarg is Kashmir's principal ski resort, and is not your average alpine adventure-spot. Intrepid skiers take the world's highest gondola up to a vertigo-inducing 13,400 feet to one of the most unmapped slopes in the world. Meanwhile, for advanced skiers who are daring enough to take on the mountains from giddy heights the gondolas can't reach, heli-skiing is available: a helicopter to whisk skiers up and deposit them on top of some of the world's most dramatic and untouched mountainscapes for a first descent.

While sightings of fellow humans might be fleeting, the mystical landscapes are populated with monkeys, eagles and even the odd elusive snow leopard, although taking your eyes off the wild pistes isn't particularly recommended.

Val d'Isère it is not: the powder is deep, the drops are sheer, and it's possible to traverse the mountainous territory without seeing another group of skiers for hours. A skiing holiday in Gulmarg is certainly not suitable for beginners, or those who can't do without après-ski comforts such as hot chocolate, fondue and French covers bands. But the Kashmiri alternatives - spiced curries, warming mint teas and good conversation - make the experience all the more authentic.

*Ampersand Travel offers an 'Unknown Kashmir Ski' package starting from £1,890 per person that includes seven-nights at the **Hotel Highlands Park** in Gulmarg, international and domestic flights, transfers, ski passes and guides as well as a night in Srinagar and Delhi. For more information visit www.ampersandtravel.com.*

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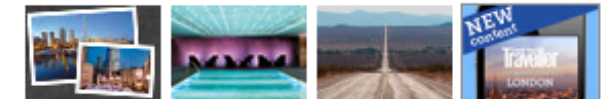


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