

ACTION

Asia

January 2001

THE PURSUIT OF POWDER

10

of Asia's HOTTEST cold places

ADVENTURE CRUISING

TRACING THE COAST FROM
SAMUI TO SINGAPORE

INVITATION TO A FUNERAL
SULAWESI STYLE

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The Himalayan mountains to the north of Delhi promise quality powder and wild off-piste terrain that's almost out of this world. There are two hugely different ways to take advantage: either hike yourself to Manali and go heli-skiing in the 6,500m peaks of the Pir Pinjal range, or head up to Auli, in the Nanda Devi range in Uttarakhand state, where you'll find India's top ski resort. Flanked by pine and oak forests, Auli is a long, like drive from New Delhi, then uphill (by road) from Jushimath, though the fun cable car ride from the town is a more scenic way to get to the resort.

In action

Manali's charm is the combination of comfortable infrastructure and the thrill of being helicoptered in to ski on peaks draped with pristine powder. Once in position, the mountain is all yours, with runs of 800-1,800 vertical metres at your feet. Ski school Helicopter Skiing tours run from early January to mid-April, but a one-week package starts from US\$5,750, so this ski option is only for those who don't mind splashing out.

The compact Auli resort is far more affordable – its prime attraction is an excellent blue slope that starts at 3,000m. And, unlike other less well-equipped Indian resorts, this one actually has a 300m ski lift and 800m chair lift. Heavy snowfall and the absence of huge crowds result in powder that's always at optimum level for downhill skiers and cross-country fans. A seven-day course costs \$2,000 (US\$40).

Back at base

Manali offers good accommodation options, but overlooking in the mountains means simple huts and porter-cooked food. In both cases side trips to ancient monasteries, hot springs and rural communities can make your trip extra special.

In Auli, a 100-bed lodge provides the bulk of the accommodation, but a few cottages and log huts are also available in the surrounding villages. There is a lone restaurant but no bars at present.

Bring all your own equipment, and be prepared to be the centre of attention among the Indian ski community.

HIMALAYAS



In a nutshell – India

Season	Oct-April (Manali), Jan-March (Auli)
Altitude	Manali 2,700m (Sunni), 3,000m (Auli), 3,000m (Auli)
Snow	Deep powder as far as the eye can see and more on the way
Cost	\$100 (Manali), 1 (Auli)
Currency	New Delhi
Who go?	Tourists and gypsies in addition to some locals are never a problem



In a nutshell – Nepal

Seasons:	Jan-April
Altitude:	5,000m +
Snow:	Whole mountains of untouched powder
Cost:	\$\$\$\$
Gateway:	Kathmandu
Why go?	Extreme skiing, fabulous powder, a unique setting among the world's highest peaks



The newest thing in cutting-edge skiing trips, Nepal offers a non-stop procession of first descents down virgin slopes, starting from a head-swimming 5,000m or more. This is heli-skiing Nepal style, pushing the limits in the hitherto unskied Khumbu range with Himalayan Heli Ski Guides (HHS), based in Kathmandu. The powder is perfect: a mix of wind-blown, hard and spring snow – and there's not a ski lift in sight.

In action

In March 2002, HHS opened up the Manang area for the first time. This year, they're tackling the Khumbu, and there's the chance to ski among classic peaks such as Lhotse, Nuptse and Ama Dablam as you speed down 2,000m vertical runs. Days start early at 7am, and you might have up to six runs if the weather is good. Groups of six can fit into one of three helicopters, and private groups are welcome. One-week, ten-day and two-week trips are available.

Back at base

Although accommodation in Kathmandu and Pokhara is at top-quality hotels, during the trip you're limited to mountain lodges, or to a fully equipped base camp with Sherpas and cooks. After runs, ice climbing, trekking and horse riding can also be arranged. $\Delta\Delta$



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India

www.himachal.com
<http://travel.indiamart.com/uttar-pradesh/skiing/auli.html>

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http://asian-trekking.com/expedition_nepal/himalayan_heli_ski_guides.htm

General websites

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