

Manali, one of the most beautiful places in India.

“Life without memory is no life at all”... **Luis Bunuel**

Trip to Manali

In 2017, I had taken a trip to Manali with my college mates. We had covered Chandigarh-Kullu-Manali-Dalhousie-Amritsar in 9 days. It was the best time I had in my life. Vast green farms of Punjab that reminds you of scenes from Game Of Thrones, the sinuous mountain pass of Delhi-Manali road, beautiful morning sunrise at the bank of the gushing river, panoramic views of huge mountains, snow-covered valleys, snowball fights, lots and lots of memories, so much to enjoy on one trip. The trip gave me the experience to cherish. Something which gives me a warm feeling during these difficult times of coronavirus pandemic.

The Road

My college mates and I, we started our journey from Mumbai, then we traveled to Chandigarh. In Chandigarh, we enjoyed some sightseeing and left for Manali at night. Chandigarh to Manali on-road distance is 288 km. Normally it would have taken 6 - 7 hours but this particular sinuous mountain pass took almost 12-14 hours. The journey is much more enjoyable when you are traveling early morning.

Manali is particularly much more fun in the early winter. If you prefer it without the snow, then December is your month. But if you wanna throw some snowballs and make a snowman, visit after mid-January. Although, the Rohtang pass will be closed after it snows. If you really wanna enjoy Manali, I have 3 tips for you. Have your stay outside the main city, definitely visit Hadimba temple and Solang valley, and use rental bikes for site seeing. Plenty of Rental bikes are available in the city. Also, try to trek to the Shiv temple at Solang valley, it gives an unusual sense of satisfaction. If you are into high adrenaline sports, paragliding is also available at the valley.

Local sightseeing

Same day evening, we went to explore the local market (Mall road). The market in Manali is huge. A lot of shawls vendors, leather jackets, and souvenir shops. Also, make sure to check out some of the local delicacies. Tibetan monastery, Hadimba temple are some of the must-visit temples on the trip. You can either rent a bike or hire a taxi to cover all the local points.









Ok, on with the story!

The next day we arrived at the Citrus Manali hotel. There was something about this hotel location. It was 15 km away from the city. The hotel was surrounded by mountains, and I could see the top of the mountains covered in white snow. There was a river named Beas(pronounced Biyas) flowing behind the hotel. Everyone, including me, took tones of pictures on the riverbank.

The river was shallow and quite transparent. For hours we laughed, played some games, and sang around the bonfire after dinner, and then went to our cottages to rest. I woke up early the next morning and got a crazy idea to just take a stroll around the river bank. This time all by myself. I didn't have a good camera so I decided not to take any pictures. I started walking

along the bank. It started raining. Not the typical Manali deluge, just a drizzling. The touch felt very nice.

I could hear the river flowing and its music, which I couldn't hear before because of all my friends and chaos. As I closed my eyes, I was able to hear birds chirping, the burble of a river, the sound of flowing mountain air, and occasional thunder, etc. It was like an orchestra. Everything felt like it was synced with one another. It was so beautiful. I felt the touch of cold flowing air and occasional raindrops. There was a small road along the bank. I took a walk for about an hour, and it was the best time I had on the whole trip.

Capture moments, not just pictures.

That night I decided that I want to write about today's experience. I wrote all about the riverbank, the road beside, and everything. Months pass by; I was looking through all the pictures and videos from the trip. I forgot all about the river walk. It was in the pictures and videos but, I couldn't picture how it felt that day.

Recipe of meditation

After a year, I remembered, I had written about the same in my old journal. I found my old diary and read all about the walk. Suddenly I was able to relive the whole experience. After reading the diary, I just closed my eyes. The whole river bank and the road were in front of me. Each time it was a bit different, but to my imagination, it was beautiful every time. I feel capturing a moment in pictures and videos helps, but if we write about the experiences, we can truly relive the moment like it happened yesterday. That riverbank became my happy place for meditation. Every time I sit to meditate, I imagine myself walking that road. By the end of the road, I feel fresh again.

Conclusion

Friends, family, and nature; what else do we need? Right! Enjoy heaven in India. Again, I am not saying we shouldn't take pictures. We should definitely take pictures but they should state a moment or a memory and not just smiles shouting CHEESE. I feel traveling is more meaningful when we capture experiences the right way. We can cherish the experience for many years to come.