



Planning a Budget Trip to Manali from Delhi: Tips & Costs

Description

Planning a budget trip to Manali from Delhi in 2025 can be a truly rewarding experience. Whether you're a student looking for a quick escape, a group of friends planning an adventurous weekend, or a family exploring the Himalayas on a budget, this hill station has something for everyone. The key is knowing when to go, how to travel, where to stay, what to eat, and how to explore without burning a hole in your pocket. In this blog, we break down everything—from costs and itineraries to hacks and FAQs—so you can plan an affordable yet enriching trip to Manali.

Why Choose Manali for a Budget Trip?

Manali has long been a top choice for budget travelers seeking an affordable yet memorable getaway. The town's accessibility, range of affordable accommodations, and wide array of activities make it an ideal destination for anyone looking to stretch their travel budget without compromising on experiences. Unlike other tourist destinations that cater mostly to luxury travelers, Manali offers something for everyone, from backpackers and solo travelers to families and groups.

Manali's scenic beauty, rich culture, adventure sports, and the opportunity to connect with nature all at affordable prices is why it is such a popular spot for budget-conscious travelers. Not only is it affordable to get to, but once you arrive, you'll find plenty of options to suit all budgets. With a vibrant backpacker scene, you can find budget accommodations ranging from hostels to guesthouses and homestays. The food is also cheap, yet delicious, and local street vendors and small cafes offer satisfying meals that won't cost a fortune.

Best Time for a Budget Trip to Manali

Timing plays a crucial role when planning a budget trip to Manali. The best time to visit Manali on a budget is during the off-season, which includes the months from February to April and from August to mid-October. During these times, the crowds are fewer, and accommodation costs are significantly lower. Additionally, bus services and local attractions are less crowded, giving you more value for money.

Avoid peak season (May-June and December-January) as hotel rates, travel fares, and food costs rise dramatically during these months. During the peak season, rates for hotels and buses can double or even triple, making it much harder to stick to a budget.

For an even more budget-friendly experience, travel mid-week, between Tuesday and Thursday. Travel demand is lower during this period, and you'll likely find cheaper accommodations and transportation.

How to Reach Manali from Delhi on a Budget

1. By Bus: The Most Budget-Friendly Option [Check Our Package here](#)

The most cost-effective way to travel from Delhi to Manali is by bus. Himachal Roadways and various private Volvo buses offer affordable transportation options. The journey takes around 12-14 hours, and bus fares range from ₹500 to ₹1500 depending on the bus type (ordinary, semi-sleeper, or Volvo). The semi-sleeper and Volvo buses offer more comfort and a smoother ride for a slightly higher price, while the ordinary buses are the cheapest but may not offer the same comfort level.

Pro Tip: Book your tickets in advance through the HRTC website or apps like RedBus for better deals and to avoid last-minute price hikes.

2. Carpooling or Self-Drive: Splitting Costs with Friends

If you're traveling with a group, carpooling or renting a car can be a great option. The round-trip cost for fuel (approximately 1050 km) from Delhi to Manali will range from ₹15000-₹16000, depending on your car's fuel efficiency. When you split this cost with a group of 4-5 people, it becomes quite affordable, and you get the benefit of flexibility in terms of stops and travel time.

For those who prefer self-driving, it's a scenic and enjoyable route with plenty of opportunities to stop at picturesque locations for photos and food along the way.

3. By Train + Bus Combo: A Cheaper Alternative

Although Manali does not have a railway station, you can travel by train to nearby stations such as Chandigarh or Jodhpur. From there, you can take a bus to Manali. This combination of train and bus travel can often be cheaper than taking a direct bus, especially if you book your train tickets early. The total journey will take longer, but it's a good option if you're looking to save money and have some flexibility with your travel time.

Budget Accommodation Options in Manali

Manali offers a wide range of budget accommodations that cater to travelers on a tight budget. The key to saving on accommodation is to book in advance, especially if you're traveling during the shoulder seasons. Here's a breakdown of budget-friendly places to stay:

1. Zostel Manali (Old Manali) - Budget-Friendly Dorms and Private Rooms

Zostel is a popular hostel chain for backpackers and budget travelers. Situated in Old Manali, Zostel offers dormitory beds starting at ₹1450 and private rooms from ₹1999. The hostel has a vibrant social atmosphere, a common kitchen, and beautiful views of the surrounding mountains. It's a great option for solo travelers who want to meet fellow backpackers.

2. The Hosteller Manali → Perfect for Socializing and Comfort

Another great option is The Hosteller in Manali, which offers both dorms and private rooms at affordable rates. Prices for dorms start at ₹1500 per night, and private rooms are available starting at ₹11200. The property is well-known for its social atmosphere, making it a good option if you're traveling alone or with friends. They also offer group discounts, making it ideal for budget travelers.

3. Local Homestays → A Local Experience for Less

If you prefer a more authentic experience, you can opt for a local homestay. Staying with local families not only gives you a chance to experience the local culture, but it's also one of the most affordable options. Homestays in Manali start from ₹1500 to ₹1800 per night and often include home-cooked meals.

Budget Food Guide in Manali

Eating in Manali doesn't have to be expensive, especially if you opt for local eateries instead of touristy cafes. Here are some affordable and delicious food options to try:

1. Street Food & Dhabas → Traditional Meals at Low Prices

Local dhabas (roadside eateries) serve hearty meals at unbeatable prices. You can enjoy a delicious plate of dal, rice, roti, and sabzi for just ₹180-₹150. These meals are filling, authentic, and satisfying. Street food vendors also offer snacks like momos, pakoras, and local sweets, all for under ₹100.

2. Cafe Renaissance (Old Manali) → A Fusion of Flavors

Renaissance Cafē in Old Manali serves a variety of cuisines, including Israeli, Tibetan, and Indian, with prices starting as low as ₹1150 for basic meals like pita bread with hummus, falafel, and shakshuka. It's an excellent choice for backpackers who want a quick, affordable, and tasty meal.

3. Chopsticks (Main Market) → Delicious Tibetan Food

For something more substantial, head to Chopsticks in the Main Market. Known for its Tibetan food, Chopsticks serves delicious noodle dishes, momos, and rice platters starting at ₹1150. The cozy atmosphere and friendly service make it an affordable yet enjoyable dining experience.

4. Johnson's Cafē (Mall Road) → A Special Treat for ₹1300

If you're craving something more upscale but still budget-friendly, Johnson's Cafeteria is a great option. With a wide range of international and local dishes, you can enjoy a full meal with drinks for under ₹300.

Pro Tip: Many hostels and homestays have kitchen facilities where you can cook your meals. Stocking up on some basic groceries can help reduce your food costs even further.

5-Day Budget Itinerary for Manali from Delhi

Here's a sample 5-day budget itinerary that combines affordability and exploration, giving you a fulfilling Manali experience.

Day 1: Delhi to Manali (Overnight Bus)

- **Travel:** Depart from Delhi around 6:00 PM by bus. The bus journey will take around 12-14 hours.
- **Cost:** ₹700-₹1200 depending on the type of bus.
- **Accommodation:** Arrive in Manali and check into a budget hostel or homestay for ₹400-₹600.

Day 2: Arrival + Local Sightseeing

- **Activities:** Visit Mall Road, Hidimba Devi Temple, Manu Temple, and the local market.
- **Meals:** Have breakfast at your hostel, grab a local lunch at a dhaba (₹150-₹200), and enjoy dinner at Old Manali cafeteria (₹1200).
- **Cost for the Day:** ₹1900 for stay, meals, and sightseeing.

Day 3: Solang Valley + Activities

- **Activities:** Take a shared cab or rent a scooter to Solang Valley (₹1500-₹1800 for rental).
- **Adventure:** Try snow activities (₹300-₹700) or simply enjoy the scenic beauty of the valley.
- **Meals:** Enjoy Maggie and tea with a view (₹100-₹150).
- **Cost for the Day:** ₹1200 including travel and activities.

Day 4: Day Trip to Kasol or Naggar

- **Travel:** Take a local bus to Kasol (₹100) or a cab to Naggar (₹1400-₹1600).
- **Activities:** Trek and enjoy a riverside picnic or visit Naggar Castle.
- **Meals:** Grab lunch at a local restaurant (₹150-₹250).
- **Cost for the Day:** ₹1100 for travel and food.

Day 5: Souvenir Shopping + Departure

- **Shopping:** Visit local markets to buy woolens, handicrafts, and souvenirs (₹1300-₹1500).
- **Travel:** Take the night bus back to Delhi (₹1700-₹1200).

