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Himachal Pradesh: Apples, Hydropower, and the Himalayas

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Himachal Pradesh: Apples, Hydropower, and the Himalayas

Himachal Pradesh is a small hill state in northern India. Its name points to snow-covered mountains.

The state is known for apples, hydropower, hill towns and high mountain valleys. Exams ask about its history, its rivers, its protected places and its numbers.

This page sticks to figures from official sources. Where an old claim could not be checked, it has been dropped.

Himachal Pradesh, by the numbers

- **Statehood:** 25 January 1971, the 18th state.
- **Area:** 55,673 sq km.
- **Height:** 350 m to 6,975 m.
- **Population (Census 2011):** 68,56,509.
- **Literacy:** 82.80%.
- **Sex ratio:** 974 females per 1,000 males.

Census: This is the count of every person in the country, held once every ten years. The 2011 count gave the figures on this page. It tells planners how many people live in each district.

Sex ratio: This is the number of women for every 1,000 men. Himachal has 974. A ratio close to 1,000 means men and women are almost equal in number.

Ramsar site: This is a wetland, such as a lake or marsh, that a country will protect under a 1971 treaty signed at Ramsar, Iran. Himachal has three: Pong Dam Lake, Renuka Wetland and Chandertal. Such sites shelter birds and store water.

GSDP: This is the total value of goods and services a state makes in a year. Economists use it to compare how states grow.

How Did Himachal Pradesh Become a State?

Who lived here in early times?

The earliest known people of the hills were tribes called the Dasas. Later, Aryans came and mixed with these tribes.

In the centuries after that, hill chiefs accepted the rule of larger powers. These were the Mauryan empire, the Kushans, the Guptas and the Kanauj rulers.

Under the Mughals, the hill rajas made their own agreements to manage relations with each other. In the 19th century, Maharaja Ranjit Singh took over many of the hill states.

The British then defeated the Gorkhas. They signed treaties with some rajas and annexed the lands of others. The picture stayed much the same until 1947.

Sources: static.pib.gov.in

How did it become a state?

Think of it as a ladder with five steps. On 15 April 1948, thirty princely states were united. They formed the Chief Commissioner’s province of Himachal Pradesh.

On 26 January 1950, the Constitution came into force. Himachal became a Part C state.

On 1 November 1956, it became a Union Territory. On 1 November 1966, Kangra and most other hill areas of Punjab were merged into it. Its status stayed that of a Union Territory.

Parliament passed the State of Himachal Pradesh Act on 18 December 1970. The full state came into being on 25 January 1971. Himachal was the eighteenth state of the Indian Union.

Sources: static.pib.gov.in

Date	Step
15 April 1948	Thirty princely states united into a Chief Commissioner’s province.

Date	Step
26 January 1950	Became a Part C state under the Constitution.
1 November 1956	Became a Union Territory.
1 November 1966	Kangra and other Punjab hill areas merged in.
18 December 1970	Parliament passed the State of Himachal Pradesh Act.
25 January 1971	Full statehood. The 18th state.

Think it through: why does Himachal have two different dates, 1948 and 1971, in its story?

Show the answer

The 1948 date is when the princely states were first joined together. The 1971 date is when Parliament made it a full state. In between, it was a Part C state and then a Union Territory.

Quick check 1. Himachal Pradesh became a full state on 15 April 1948. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Geography and Climate

Where is Himachal, and how big is it?

Himachal is a small, hilly state in the north of the country. Jammu and Kashmir lies to the north. Punjab lies to the west and south-west. Haryana lies to the south.

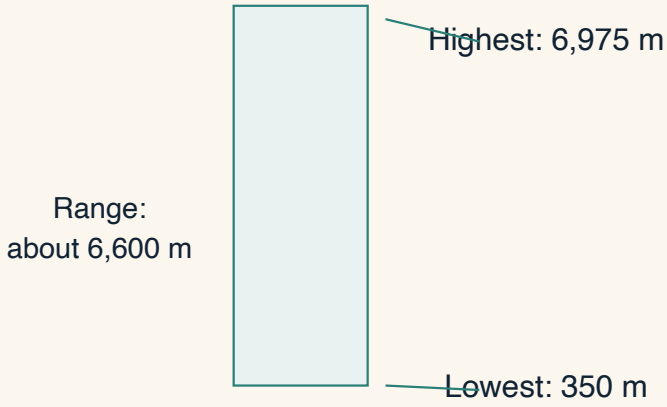
Uttarakhand lies to the south-east. China lies to the east.

The total area is 55,673 square kilometres. Heights range from 350 metres to 6,975 metres above sea level.

The snowy part of the state is the source of three major rivers. They are the Beas, the Ravi and the Chenab.

Some parts stay under snow all year. Other parts enjoy all six seasons.

Sources: static.pib.gov.in



One small state, a huge height range. Himachal rises from 350 m to 6,975 m above sea level. This is why its rainfall, farming and weather change so much from valley to peak. Schematic, not to scale.

Why does the rainfall vary so much?

Rain in Himachal depends on where you stand in the hills. Dharamshala and Palampur, in Kangra district, receive the highest rain after Cherrapunji.

Spiti is very different. It gets almost no rain in the winter season.

The climate runs from extremely hot to severely cold. This wide range is one reason tourists come in every season. They come for snow and winter sports in winter. They come to escape the heat of the plains in

summer.

Sources: static.pib.gov.in

How is the state divided?

Himachal has 12 districts, 117 tehsils and 83 sub-divisions. It also has 168 police stations.

The population is given as 68,64,602 and the area as 55,673 square kilometres. The chief minister is Shri Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu.

Sources: himachal.gov.in

Remember: Beas, Ravi and Chenab all rise in the snowy part of the state.

People and Literacy

How many people live in Himachal?

Census 2011 counted 68,56,509 people in the state. The 2001 census had counted 60,77,900.

The growth rate for 2001 to 2011 was 12.8%. In 1991 to 2001 it was 17.53%.

So the population is still growing, but more slowly than before. Of the total, 34.74 lakh are male and 33.82 lakh are female.

That gives a ratio of 974 females for every 1,000 males. Life expectancy is 71 years. The national average is 67.5 years.

Sources: static.pib.gov.in

How high is literacy?

Literacy is the share of people who can read and write. Himachal's literacy rate is 82.80% in Census 2011. It was 76.5% in Census 2001.

Male literacy rose from 85.03% to 89.53%. Female literacy rose from 67.04% to 75.93%.

So the gap between men and women is narrowing. The rate has risen steadily over the decade. No national rank is given, so avoid claiming one.

Sources: static.pib.gov.in

Think it through: female literacy rose faster than male literacy. Which number shows this?

Show the answer

Female literacy went up by about nine percentage points, from 67.04% to 75.93%. Male literacy went up by about four and a half points, from 85.03% to 89.53%.

Quick check 2. Himachal ranks second in India for literacy. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Economy and Energy

How has the economy changed?

Himachal moved from farming toward industry and services. In 1950-51 the secondary sector gave only 7% of the state's GSDP. By 2017-18 it gave 43.01%.

The state has 19 National Highways with a total length of 2,592 km. Per capita income is above the national average.

The state is called the Fruit and Vegetable Bowl of India. It ranks second in apple and almond production, along with stone fruits such as plum and peach. It is also a large producer of off-season vegetables such as capsicum, tomato and peas.

Sources: static.pib.gov.in

Why is hydropower so important?

Rivers fall steeply in the hills. That fall can turn turbines.

The state has an estimated hydropower potential of 27,587 MW. Of this, 10,948 MW has been assessed as harnessable.

The installed hydropower capacity is 2,910 MW. Himachal holds 26% of India's total hydropower potential.

It is a net exporter of power. Industrial power is among the cheapest in the country. Projects named in the note include the Renukaji Dam, Luhri Stage 1, Dhaulasidh and Sawra-Kuddu.

Sources: static.pib.gov.in

Why is it called a pharma hub?

Solan district, around Baddi and Nalagarh, has many drug factories. Himachal is the largest hub for drug manufacturing units in Asia.

It meets 35% of the demand for pharma formulations in Asia. The state has over 300 pharmaceutical companies and 700 or more formulation units.

In FY21, exports of drug formulations and biologicals reached US$814.39 million. The first Medical Devices Park in northern India, 265 acres in Nalagarh, has been approved. On 21 March 2022, fifteen MoUs worth Rs 810 crore were signed for it.

Sources: static.pib.gov.in

What does the Atal Tunnel change?

The Atal Tunnel runs beneath the Rohtang Pass. It was opened in October 2020.

It is 9.02 km long and sits at about 3,000 metres in the Pir Panjal range. It links Manali with the Lahaul-Spiti valley.

Before it, the valley was cut off for about six months each year by heavy snow. The tunnel cuts the road distance between Manali and Leh by 46 km. It saves four to five hours.

A 475 km Bilaspur-Manali-Leh railway line is also planned. Keylong station on it would be India's first station under a tunnel.

Sources: static.pib.gov.in; himachaltourism.gov.in

Measure	Figure
Hydropower potential	27,587 MW
Harnessable	10,948 MW
Installed capacity	2,910 MW
Share of India's potential	26%
National Highways	19, totalling 2,592 km
Tourists in 2019	About 17.2 million

How big is tourism?

Tourism gives about 7% of the state's GDP. The state aims to raise this to 8.5% by the end of 2022.

About 17.2 million tourists came in 2019. Himachal is marketed as a Destination for All Seasons and All Reasons.

It has pushed activity-based tourism such as rafting, paragliding, skiing and trekking. Main pilgrim centres include Jwalaji, Chamunda Devi, Chintpurni, Renuka and Naina Devi.

Sources: static.pib.gov.in

> **Quick check 3.** Himachal Pradesh uses most of its hydropower potential already. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Places and Culture

Place	Known for
Shimla	Became the summer capital of the British empire.
Dharamshala (McLeodganj)	Seat of the Tibetan Government in exile. The Dalai Lama escaped in 1959.
Kullu	Valley of the gods. Week-long Dussehra each October.
Manali	Beas valley resort. Manu Temple gives the town its name.
Kangra	Old fort and the Kangra school of miniature painting.
Chamba	Founded in 920 AD. Temples and the Chamba Rumal.
Kinnaur	Chitkul, India's last village, and Mt. Kinner Kailash.
Lahaul	Cut off at Rohtang for about six months before the tunnel.
Spiti	A cold desert. Its name means the middle land.

Why is Shimla so famous?

The British made Shimla the summer capital of an empire. The Kalka-Shimla railway has 102 tunnels. It was built from 1898 to 1903.

The Kalka-Shimla mountain railway is a UNESCO World Heritage site. The Viceregal Lodge is now the Indian Institute of Advanced Studies. Shimla and Dharamshala are to be developed as Smart Cities.

Sources: himachaltourism.gov.in; static.pib.gov.in

What is special about Dharamshala?

Dharamshala is a hill town in Kangra district. Its upper part, McLeodganj, is the seat of the Tibetan Government in exile.

The Dalai Lama escaped to India in 1959 and settled here. The town and nearby Palampur receive some of India's heaviest rain after Cherrapunji. A 1905 earthquake flattened many buildings in the Kangra valley.

Sources: himachaltourism.gov.in; static.pib.gov.in

Why is Kullu called the land of gods?

Village deities, called devtas, are central to life in the Kullu valley. Kullu was founded as a capital in 1660 and now serves as the district headquarters.

It lies on the banks of the Beas river. Every October, the town holds a week-long Dussehra festival.

Deities are carried on palanquins to celebrate the victory of good over evil. Manikaran, 45 km from Kullu, has a gurdwara for Guru Nanak Dev and a hot sulphur spring. The water is believed to ease skin diseases.

Sources: himachaltourism.gov.in

How did Manali get its name?

Manali sits in the Beas river valley. Tourism there began to boom only in the early 20th century.

The Manu Temple in Old Manali is built of stone and wood with a slate roof. It honours Rishi Manu, who codified the Hindu laws in the Manusmriti.

Manali takes its name from Manu Alya, the home of Manu. The river Beas allows rafting and river crossing on the stretch between Manali and Kullu.

Sources: himachaltourism.gov.in

What is the Kangra school of art?

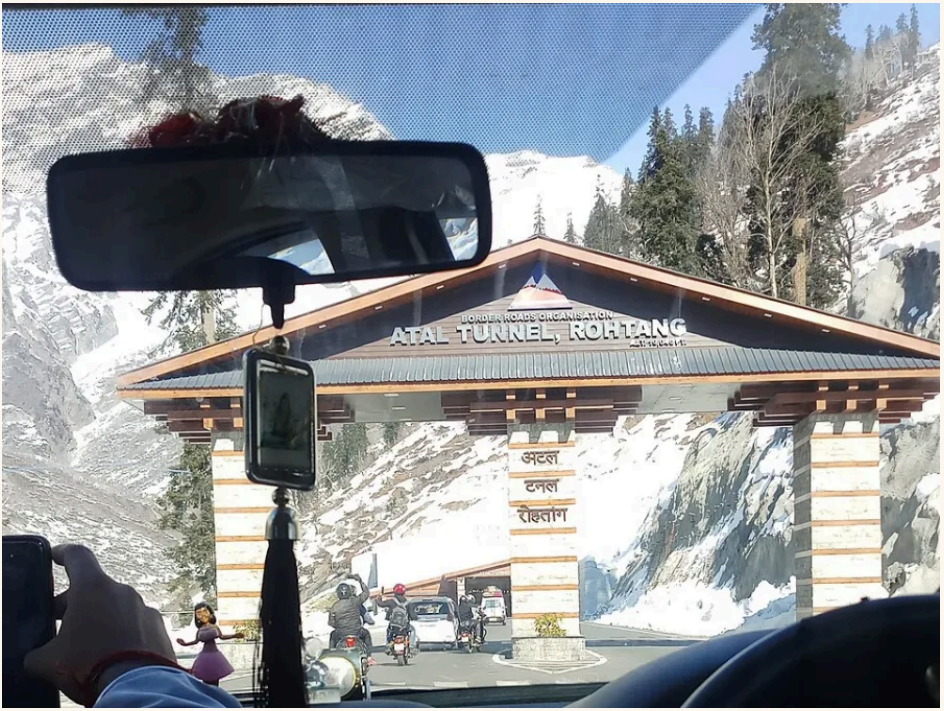
Kangra had a strong fort. It held out against most invaders.

After the Mughal empire declined in the 17th century, artists fled royal courts. Many found refuge in Kangra.

Local art forms blended with their styles. The result was the Kangra school of painting.

Miniatures of this style hang in galleries across the world. The natives mostly speak Kangri, a dialect.

Sources: himachaltourism.gov.in



Atal Tunnel, Rohtang. Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.

Who founded Chamba?

Chamba sits on the right bank of the Ravi river. Raja Sahil Varman founded the town in 920 AD.

His daughter Champavati asked him to shift the capital from Bharmaur. The town carries her name.

The district is the northernmost in the state and borders Jammu and Kashmir. It is famous for temples, miniature paintings and the embroidered Chamba Rumal. Streams drain into the Ravi in the south and the Chenab in the north.

Sources: himachaltourism.gov.in

What are Kinnaur, Lahaul and Spiti like?

These are the high, cold districts of the north-east. Kinnaur lies on the old trade route between India and Tibet. Chitkul there is called India's last village on the Indo-Tibet border.

Kinnaur has Hinduism in the lower parts and Buddhism in the higher reaches. Lahaul takes its name from the Tibetan Lho-yul. Heavy snow once cut it off at Rohtang from late November to mid-May.

Spiti means the middle land. It is a cold desert with whitewashed chortens and the Kee monastery. The thousand-year-old Tabo monastery in Spiti is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Sources: himachaltourism.gov.in; static.pib.gov.in

> **Think it through:** why did Lahaul stay cut off for months before 2020?
>
> **Show the answer**
>
> Heavy snow closed the road over the Rohtang Pass from late November to mid-May. The Atal Tunnel now goes under that pass and keeps the road open.

Remember: Kangra earthquake 1905. Kullu Dussehra in October. Chamba founded 920 AD. Spiti means the middle land.

Wildlife and Wetlands

Which animals and birds are symbols of the state?

The snow leopard is the state animal. It lives in the harsh high mountains and hunts mainly blue sheep and ibex.

The western tragopan is the state bird. It is a rare pheasant, adored as Jujurana, the king among birds.

The monal pheasant lives between 2,000 and 3,500 metres. Only the male has the bright plumage.

Other animals include the ibex, wild yak, musk deer, ghoral and the Himalayan black bear. Yaks are also kept as beasts of burden in Spiti, Lahaul and parts of Chamba.

Sources: himachaltourism.gov.in

Pong Dam Lake	Renuka Wetland	Chandertal
Ramsar site	Ramsar site	Ramsar site

Himachal has three Ramsar sites. A Ramsar site is a wetland a country promises to protect under the 1971 Ramsar treaty. They shelter birds and store water. Schematic list, not a map.

What plants mark the landscape?

Forests range from dry scrub in the lower Shivaliks to deodar, oak and fir in the mid hills. Above the treeline are alpine pastures.

The pink rhododendron, called Gulabi Buransh, is the state flower. It grows only close to the treeline in the high ranges.

The forests also hold many medicinal herbs. Forests cover over 65% of the area.

Sources: himachaltourism.gov.in; static.pib.gov.in

Which wetlands are Ramsar sites?

Himachal has three Ramsar sites. Pong Dam Lake in Kangra was listed on 19 August 2002. It covers 15,662 hectares.

Chandertal in Lahaul and Spiti was listed on 8 November 2005. It covers 49 hectares.

Renuka in Sirmaur was listed on the same day. It covers 20 hectares.

Pong Dam was built on the Beas in 1975. Migratory birds from far away now winter there. The State Wetland Authority was set up in 2017.

Sources: moef.gov.in; himcoste.hp.gov.in; himachaltourism.gov.in

What is the Great Himalayan National Park?

The park lies in the Kullu region. It covers over 1,000 square kilometres.

Its height runs from about 1,300 metres to over 6,000 metres. The Parvati and Tirthan rivers and the Jiwa Nallah rise inside it.

The western tragopan and monal find shelter here. UNESCO inscribed the park as a World Heritage Site at its 38th session in 2014.

There are no roads or paved trails inside it. It is only for trekkers and campers.

Sources: himachaltourism.gov.in; whc.unesco.org

> **Think it through:** which of the three Ramsar sites is the smallest?
> **Show the answer**
> Renuka in Sirmaur. It covers 20 hectares, smaller than Chandertal at 49 hectares and far smaller than Pong at 15,662 hectares.

> **Quick check 4.** Pong Dam Lake, Chandertal and Renuka are the three Ramsar sites of Himachal Pradesh. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Development Scorecard

How did Himachal do on the SDG India Index?

NITI Aayog's SDG India Index measures progress on the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. In the 2020-21 edition, Himachal scored 74. Kerala scored 75.

So Kerala was first and Himachal was second. Do not mix the two up.

Sources: static.pib.gov.in

What did welfare schemes achieve?

On 17 January 2022 Himachal became India's first smoke-free state. It also became 100% LPG-enabled that day, helped by the Ujjwala and Himachal Grihini Suvidha schemes.

Jal Jeevan Mission raised tap-water households from 44% in 2019 to 93% by March 2022. Over 8.40 lakh households now have clean tap water.

For three straight years from 2018-19, Himachal ranked first in running DAY-NULM, the urban livelihoods mission. Pragpur is a declared Heritage Village.

Sources: static.pib.gov.in

Must Know

- Himachal became the **18th state** on **25 January 1971**.
- Area **55,673 sq km**; altitude **350 m to 6,975 m**.
- Three Ramsar sites: **Pong Dam Lake, Chandertal, Renuka**.
- State animal: **snow leopard**. State bird: **western tragopan**.

Good to Know

- The **Atal Tunnel** is 9.02 km long and cuts 46 km from Manali to Leh.
- Hydropower potential is **27,587 MW**. Installed capacity is 2,910 MW.
- Literacy is **82.80%** and the sex ratio is **974**.

Great to Know

- The Kangra valley was shaken by a **1905** earthquake.
- Himachal scored **74** on the 2020-21 SDG Index. Kerala scored 75.
- Chamba was founded in **920 AD** by Raja Sahil Varman.

Previous Year Questions

CDS (I) 2022 asked which energy source is linked with Manikaran in Himachal Pradesh. The answer is geothermal energy. See the exact CDS question.

CDS (II) 2017 asked students to match mountain passes with their states. Shipki La is in Himachal Pradesh. See the exact matching question.

UPSC Civil Services Prelims 2022 asked about wetlands and their states. Renuka is in Himachal Pradesh. See the exact UPSC question.

CAPF (ACS) 2021 asked which state ranked first on the SDG index. The scores above show Kerala at 75 and Himachal at 74. Check it against the exact question and options.

Quick Q&A

- Statehood date? 25 January 1971.
- State animal? Snow leopard.
- State bird? Western tragopan.

- Ramsar sites? Pong, Chandertal, Renuka.
- Atal Tunnel length? 9.02 km.

Practice MCQs

1. In which district is Pong Dam Lake, a Ramsar site, located?

A. Sirmaur

B. Kullu

C. Chamba

D. Kangra

See answer ↓

2. How many Ramsar sites does Himachal Pradesh have?

A. Five

B. One

C. Three

D. Seven

See answer ↓

3. Which Ramsar site of Himachal Pradesh lies in Lahaul and Spiti?

A. Renuka

B. Pong Dam Lake

C. Chandertal

D. Chilika

See answer ↓

4. How long is the Atal Tunnel under the Rohtang Pass?

A. 9.02 km

B. 4.5 km

C. 2.2 km

D. 12.8 km

See answer ↓

5. Before the Atal Tunnel, for about how long each year was the Lahaul valley cut off by snow?

A. Nine months

B. One month

C. Two weeks

D. Six months

See answer ↓

6. In which district is the Renuka Wetland, a Ramsar site, located?

A. Shimla

B. Solan

C. Kullu

D. Sirmaur

See answer ↓

Answer Key

1. **D.**
   Pong Dam Lake in Kangra was listed on 19 August 2002.
   ↑ Q1
2. **C.**
   Pong Dam Lake, Chandertal and Renuka are the three Ramsar sites.
   ↑ Q2
3. **C.**
   Chandertal was listed on 8 November 2005 and covers 49 hectares.
   ↑ Q3
4. **A.**
   The tunnel is 9.02 km long and cuts the Manali-Leh road distance by 46 km.
   ↑ Q4
5. **D.**
   Heavy snow closed the Rohtang road from late November to mid-May, about six months.
   ↑ Q5
6. **D.**
   Renuka Wetland lies in the Sirmaur district and became a Ramsar site on 8 November 2005.
   ↑ Q6

Quick-check answers

1. **False.** That date is the birth of the province. Full statehood came on 25 January 1971. ↑ 1
2. **False.** The note gives the rate, 82.80%, but no national rank. ↑ 2
3. **False.** Installed capacity is 2,910 MW against 10,948 MW that can be harnessed. ↑ 3
4. **True.** The MoEF list names exactly these three. ↑ 4

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