



BIR BILLING · HIMACHAL PRADESH

Bir Billing Before Maps

An insider's field manual to India's paragliding capital: thermal flying protocols, Tibetan Buddhist settlements, hidden Kangra tea gardens, slow living cafes, and mountain trails.

The Art of Slow Living in the Dhauladhar Foothills

Bir Billing is globally renowned as the world's second-best paragliding site - where thermals rising off the Kangra Valley floor lift gliders past the snowline of the Dhauladhar Range. But treating Bir simply as an adrenaline day-trip from Dharamshala misses its greatest gift.

Bir is one of the last true sanctuaries for slow mountain living in northern India: a peaceful enclave of 1960s Tibetan refugee settlements, 13th-century stone Shiva temples, organic terraced tea estates, and an international community of writers, filmmakers, and paragliding pilots who stay for months.

This field manual was written to help you experience Bir's dual rhythms: the thrilling morning flights from Billing at 2,400 meters, and the quiet afternoon rituals of spinning prayer wheels at Chokling Monastery and drinking local Kangra green tea in hidden orchard cafes.

- Uddip, Lead Scout & Founder

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SECTION 01

Valley Geography & Micro-Zones

Making Sense of Billing Takeoff, Bir Landing & Village Clusters

Bir Billing is actually two distinct elevations separated by 14 kilometers of winding mountain road. Billing (2,400m) is the cliffside launch ridge facing south into the Kangra Valley. Bir (1,525m) is the valley basin where gliders touch down and where all homestays, cafes, and monasteries are located.

Within Bir itself, there are three distinct zones: the Tibetan Colony (Chougan), Upper Bir (traditional Himachali farming hamlet), and Ahju (peaceful green tea estate boundary).

FLYING & WEATHER SEASONS

October to November is peak flying season: crystal clear skies, strong smooth thermals, and international competitions. March to June offers pleasant spring weather and blooming rhododendrons. July to September is monsoon season: paragliding is officially suspended by the tourism department due to high turbulence and cloud cover.



Aerial view of the terraced fields and Tibetan settlements of Bir in the Kangra Valley.

The 3 Main Micro-Zones

Tibetan Colony (Chougan) ↗

HEART OF THE ACTION

📍 Lower Bir Basin ⌚ Active all day till 10:00 PM

Home to the main Tibetan monasteries (Chokling, Dzongsar), boutique artisan cafes, rental scooties, and walking proximity to the Sunset Landing Ground.

Upper Bir (Bir Village) ↗

TRADITIONAL & SCENIC

📍 2 km uphill from Colony ⌚ Quiet village life

Stone and wood Himachali cottages, organic farming terraces, and stream waterfalls. Far less commercial and ideal for month-long writers' retreats.

Ahju / Gunehar Outskirts ↗

TEA ESTATES & FOREST

📍 3–4 km East / North ⌚ Best for dawn and sunset walks

Lush terraced tea plantations framed by oak forests. Quiet riverside stays and art projects in Gunehar village.

SECTION 02

Where to Base Yourself

From Cozy Monastery Guesthouses to Work-Friendly Stays

Bir has evolved into one of India's top remote-work mountain destinations. Excellent high-speed fiber internet is now widespread across the Tibetan Colony and Chougan.

Curated Basecamps**The Hosteller Bir / Zostel Bir ↗**

SOLO & CO-WORKING

📍 Tibetan Colony Road ⌚ 24/7 Co-working Lounge 🏠 ₹700 (Dorm) / ₹2,800 (Private)

Reliable 100 Mbps fiber Wi-Fi, mountain-view balconies, and social outdoor fire pits. Perfect for solo remote workers.

Chokling Monastery Guesthouse ↗

HERITAGE & SILENCE

📍 Chokling Complex, Chougan ⌚ Check-in before 7:00 PM 🏠 ₹1,200 - ₹1,800/night

Spotlessly clean, austere rooms directly inside the monastery gates. Wake up to morning temple horn calls and prayer chants.

The 4tables Project & Homestay ↗

BOUTIQUE ECO-DESIGN

📍 Gunehar Village ⌚ Reservations mandatory 🏠 ₹3,500 - ₹5,500/night

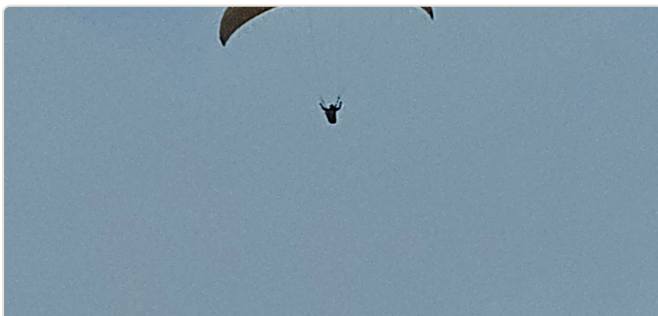
Sustainable mud-and-stone architecture, private art gallery, and bespoke European-Himalayan fusion dining by German-Indian artist Frank.

SECTION 03

Paragliding & Active Exploration

The Sky Protocol and Himalayan Cultural Monasteries

Flying tandem from Billing is unforgettable, but Bir's cultural landscape on the ground holds equal weight: world-class Tibetan Buddhist colleges, secret river gorge trails, and centuries-old stone temples.

*Gliders launching from the high cliff ridge at Billing (2,400m)**The grand ceremonial stupa and prayer flags at Chokling Monastery*

Essential Field Experiences

Tandem Paragliding Flight from Billing ↗

THE SIGNATURE FLIGHT

📍 [Takeoff: Billing \(2,400m\) · Landing: Bir \(1,525m\)](#) ⌚ 8:00 AM – 11:30 AM (Best morning thermals)

🇮🇳 ₹2,500 – ₹3,200 (Includes GoPro footage)

A 15 to 25-minute flight soaring over oak forests, pine ridges, and terraced fields. Ensure your pilot has a valid state registration badge and tandem license.

Palpung Sherabling Monastery (Bhattu) ↗

ARCHITECTURAL GRANDEUR

📍 [6 km south of Bir through pine forests](#) ⌚ 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM 🇮🇳 Free

Seat of the Tai Situ Rinpoche. A massive Tibetan Buddhist monastic university nestled deep in pine forests with ancient gold statues and wood carvings.

Sunset at Bir Landing Ground ↗

DAILY COMMUNITY RITUAL

📍 [Sunset Point, Chougan](#) ⌚ 5:00 PM – 6:30 PM 🇮🇳 Free

The entire town gathers on the green grassy landing field to watch the last gliders touch down against a flaming orange Dhauladhar mountain sunset.

Bajjnath 13th-Century Shiva Temple ↗

ANCIENT STONE HERITAGE

📍 [7 km from Bir on NH154](#) ⌚ 6:00 AM – 7:00 PM 🇮🇳 Free

Exquisite 1204 AD Nagara-style stone temple with intricate sculptures and peaceful river views over the Binwa stream.

SECTION 04

The Culinary Field Guide

Tibetan Street Comforts, Himachali Specialties, and Organic Cafes

Bir's food scene punches far above its weight due to the creative mix of resident monks, international pilots, and Himalayan organic farmers.



The majestic courtyard and shrine of Palpung Sherabling Monastic Institute.

Verified Culinary Spots

June 16 Cafe ↗

 Chougan Road

 8:30 AM – 8:00 PM (Closed Wednesdays)

 ₹250 - ₹450/person

Exceptional pour-overs, single-origin Aeropress coffees, homemade sourdough toast, and cinnamon rolls in a sunlit pine interior.

ARTISANAL SPECIALTY COFFEE

Avva's Cafe ↗

 Near Landing Site, Chougan

 11:30 AM – 9:00 PM (Closed Tuesdays)

 ₹200 - ₹350/person

Crispy ghee roast dosas, steamed idlis, and authentic Chettinad filter coffee overlooking the landing field.

AUTHENTIC SOUTH INDIAN

Tibetan Street Laphing Counters ↗

 Opposite Chokling Monastery Gate

 1:00 PM – 6:30 PM

 ₹50 - ₹80/plate

Cold, silky mung bean noodles rolled with spicy chili oil, garlic sauce, and crunchy soy chunks. Choose dry or soup laphing.

STREET FOOD STAPLE

Silver Linings Cafe ↗

 Upper Bir Trail

 9:00 AM – 6:00 PM

 ₹200 - ₹400/person

Fresh banoffee pies, gluten-free quiches, herbal infusions, and wood-fired pizzas in a quiet garden setting.

MUD OVEN BAKERY

SECTION 05

Mountain Transit & Logistics

How to Move Between the Ridge, Valleys, and Delhi

Getting to Bir is straightforward via overnight Volvo buses from Delhi or Chandigarh, dropping you right at the Tibetan Colony entrance.

Route / Mode	Typical Cost	Timing / Duration	Booking Protocol
Delhi to Bir (Volvo Bus)	₹1,200 - ₹1,800	11-12 hours (Overnight)	Book via HRTC or Zingbus to 'Bir Tibetan Colony'.
Bir to Billing Takeoff (Jeep)	₹500 shared / ₹1,200 private	45 mins (14km uphill)	Book via your certified pilot or Chougan taxi stand.
Scooty / EV Bike Rental	₹500 - ₹700/day	Full day freedom	Available at Chougan main market with valid DL.
Dharamshala to Bir Taxi	₹1,800 - ₹2,200	2 hours (65km)	Fixed union rate; shared buses leave every 30 mins.

SECTION 06

Field-Tested Itineraries

Balancing Flight Windows, Monastery Walks, and Slow Cafe Hours

Here is our scouted 3-day blueprint designed to maximize optimal flying conditions and peaceful walking trails.

The 3-Day Bir Slow Travel Blueprint

Day 1: Arrival, Monastery Stupas & Sunset Landing Ground

08:30 AM

Arrive in Bir via overnight Volvo. Check into basecamp and enjoy fresh pour-over coffee at June 16.

11:00 AM

Walk through Chokling Monastery and Dzongsar Shedra college; observe Tibetan ritual arts.

01:30 PM

Authentic Tibetan lunch: spicy Laphing and steamed vegetable momos near the monastery gate.

04:30 PM

Head to the Bir Landing Ground. Grab masala chai and sit on the grass to watch gliders land during sunset.

Day 2: The Billing Tandem Flight & Pine Forest Sanctuary

07:30 AM

Meet your pilot in Chougan. Shared 4x4 jeep ride up the mountain ridge to Billing takeoff (2,400m).

09:15 AM

Launch from the cliff into morning thermals. 20-minute flight over the valley before landing at Bir.

12:30 PM

Relaxed lunch at Avva's Cafe (Ghee roast dosa and South Indian filter coffee).

03:00 PM

Scenic scooty ride or pine forest hike to Palpung Sherabling Monastery in Bhattu.

Day 3: Ahju Tea Gardens & 13th-Century Baijnath Heritage

07:30 AM

Early morning nature walk through the Ahju organic green tea gardens.

10:30 AM

Visit the 1204 AD Baijnath stone Shiva temple on the banks of the Binwa river.

02:00 PM

Bespoke lunch and art gallery visit at The 4tables Project in Gunehar village.

06:30 PM

Board the evening Volvo bus returning to Delhi or continue onward to Dharamshala.

SECTION 07

Paragliding Safety & Street Defense

Crucial Rules for Booking Flights and Mountain Ethics

Paragliding in Bir is highly regulated by the Himachal Tourism Department, but unlicensed intermediaries still operate on the street.

PILOT VERIFICATION PROTOCOL

Always ask to see your tandem pilot's official Tourism Department license card. Ensure the pilot has at least 5 years of tandem flying experience. Never fly if wind speeds exceed 25 km/h or if dense low-level clouds obscure the landing field.

Safety Rules to Enforce

Check Reserve Parachute & Helmet ↗

PRE-FLIGHT RULE

Ensure your harness is equipped with an intact reserve parachute and a sturdy full-face helmet before taking off from Billing.

Avoid Noon Thunderstorm Windows ↗

WEATHER PROTOCOL

In pre-monsoon months (May–June), thermals become turbulent after 1:00 PM with sudden gust fronts. Complete all flights before 11:30 AM.

Respect Monastic Boundaries ↗

CULTURAL NORMS

Walk clockwise around all stupas and prayer wheels. Dress modestly with covered shoulders and knees when entering temple halls.

SECTION 08

Before Maps Secret Trails

Unmapped Forest Streams and Panoramic Tea Ridges

Beyond the landing ground, these quiet trails offer complete solitude away from tourist vehicles.



Panoramic aerial vista of Bir village and terraced fields across the Kangra Valley.

Private Scout Pins

Gunehar River Waterfall Pool ↗

HIDDEN SWIMMING SPOT

📍 [3 km upstream from Gunehar Village](#) ⌚ Morning sunlight (9:00 AM - 12:00 PM)

A natural turquoise freshwater pool fed by snowmelt streams nestled inside a dramatic rocky gorge.

Ahju Tea Factory Heritage Trail ↗

TEA COUNTRY WALK

📍 [Ahju Village border](#) ⌚ Sunrise (6:30 AM)

A gentle walking trail through 100-year-old organic tea bushes with crisp views of snow-dusted Dhauladhar peaks.

Billing Takeoff Ridge at Sunset (Non-Flyers) ↗

AERIAL VIEWPOINT

📍 [Top of Billing Ridge](#) ⌚ 5:30 PM

Take a taxi up to Billing purely for the sunset: looking down 1,000 meters into the glowing valley as twilight settles.

SECTION 09

Emergency Directory & Checklist

Rescue Contacts, Medical Centers & Packing Needs

Save these emergency contacts and paragliding rescue numbers offline before heading up to the launch ridge.

Emergency Service	Facility Name & Location	Contact Number	Notes
Mountain Rescue & Paragliding Safety	BPA Safety Cell (Landing Ground)	+91 1894 268 001	Monitors all pilot launches and GPS flight tracking.
Primary Health Centre	Civil Hospital (Bajjnath / Bir)	+91 1894 252 022	24/7 basic emergency care and ambulance service.
Specialty Trauma Hospital	Tanda Medical College Hospital	+91 1892 267 115	Top government multi-specialty trauma center (45 km).
Police Station	Bir Police Post (Tibetan Colony)	112 / +91 1894 268 100	Assistance for permits, lost property, and safety.

THE NEXT STEP · BEFORE MAPS HOSTED EXPERIENCES

From Self-Guided Manuals to Fully Curated Expeditions

While this field manual gives you the tools to explore independently, Before Maps also designs bespoke private journeys and hosts intimate small-group expeditions across India.

Curated Group Journeys

Small-group expeditions (max 8–10 travellers) led personally by local scouts across Ladakh, Spiti, Kashmir, Rajasthan, and the Western Ghats. All-inclusive, unscripted, deep local immersion.

[Explore Curated Journeys →](#)
Bespoke Private Travel Architecture

End-to-end custom itineraries crafted for high-touch private travel. Zero-commission drivers, hand-picked heritage properties, verified permits, and 24/7 on-ground scout oversight.

[The Signature Standard →](#)
● Direct WhatsApp Scout Companion

Travelling independently with this guide? Get direct 1-on-1 WhatsApp access to Scout Uddip during your trip for live restaurant vetting, taxi union rate sanity checks, weather updates, and emergency routing.

[Chat on WhatsApp →](#)

BEFORE MAPS

"We don't just show you where to go – we show you how to experience it."

Every route in this field manual was scouted personally, walked slowly, and verified on the ground. No sponsored listings. No crowd aggregations. Just unfiltered local intelligence.

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