WAYFARER

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EDITOR'S DISPATCH

Mountains have a way of rearranging a traveller's priorities. A schedule that looks sensible at sea level meets a thin-aired reality at 3,500 metres, and the people who are best at planning for it are usually the ones who live there.

That is why so much of this issue is about the quiet, practical things: sleeping low and climbing high, resting on arrival, listening to guides, and buying from the families who run homestays. Four of our People & Places pages are about people who have built livelihoods around guests in the mountains, and they have a good deal to teach those of us who arrive with a camera.

- Gitanjali Gautam

LEAD STORY



Ladakh's high season: how to climb slowly

Leh sits at about 3,500 metres, and the best trips begin with doing very little. A guide to arriving well, moving up gradually and travelling with the place rather than at it.

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

Khangchendzonga: Sikkim's sacred mountain

A national park, a World Heritage Site and a living deity. How to walk in the shadow of the world's third-highest peak with the respect it asks for.

Spiti: a cold desert of monasteries and homestays

Himachal's high valley asks for time and a little humility. The reward is a landscape where almost every village has its own story.

Nepal beyond Everest and Annapurna

Quieter Himalayan trails, shorter routes and an honest look at what trekkers should check before they fly.

The Dolomites in early summer: huts, lifts and patience

Italy's pale mountains are a World Heritage Site and a hiker's dream. May is the shoulder, and June is when it all opens.

The Altitude Safety Checklist

A one-page list for anyone heading above 2,500 metres. It is general guidance, not medical advice: talk to your doctor before you travel.

Prices, timings, permits and visa notes are approximate - please verify before booking.

COMING UP (DATES APPROXIMATE - VERIFY)

Buddha Purnima
Bodh Gaya, Sarnath and Buddhist sites across India · 1 May 2026 in India (some East and Southeast Asian countries observe Vesak on the following full moon, around 31 May)

Moatsu Festival
Ao Naga villages and Mokokchung, Nagaland · 1–3 May 2026

Saga Dawa Duchen
Buddhist monasteries in Sikkim, Ladakh and Spiti · 31 May 2026 (full moon of the fourth Tibetan month; the month runs roughly 17 May to 15 June)

Hemis Festival
Hemis Monastery, near Leh, Ladakh · 24–25 June 2026 (set by the Tibetan lunar calendar)

ONE PRACTICAL TIP

Spend your first full day in Leh doing very little. A rest day costs a day; altitude sickness can cost a trip.

YOUR TURN

What is the highest place you have been? Reply and tell us — we may feature your answer.

Read the full issue: travaah.com/magazine/2026-05/