

Delhi -
Srinagar -
Leh

Routes of the Golden

SOON after take-off from Palam Airport, Delhi, you leave the river Jamuna behind and fly past Panipat, the great plain where so many of the decisive battles of Indian history were fought. Four times has India's fate been decided here, the most important battles being Babar's victory over the Lodis in 1526 and then the overthrow of the Maratthas in 1761. Even the famous battles in the Mahabharat are said to have been fought not far from here. Panipat emphasises the importance of this area of the Indo-Gangetic Divide that has always been the gateway into Hindustan and which has made of Delhi a great city. No city apart from Rome and Istanbul has had such long sustained historic significance.

You cross two rivers, first the Saraswati, then the Ghaggar, both of which flow out of the Sirvadik hills and into the Indo-Gangetic Divide. You leave Patiala to your right and fly over a fertile tract of land which is irrigated by a network of canals, many of them navigable, that draw their water from the mighty Sutlej. An irrigation scheme is ideally viewed from the air for one sees, as in a pattern, the man-made

streams that are so vital to India's economic prosperity.

You fly past Ludhiana and as you approach Jullunder you are in the heart of the Bist Doab. Presently you approach the border and Amritsar, with its famous Golden Temple and crowded bazars. Amritsar has become exceedingly important since the partition for it is the leading border-town.

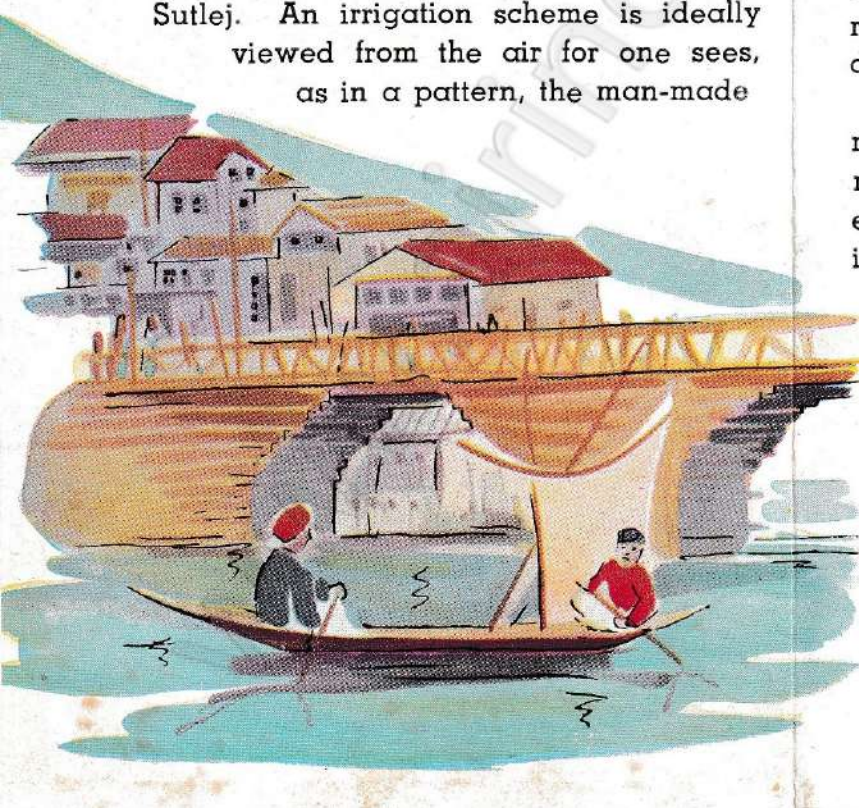
Almost immediately after take-off you



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are over Pakistan. You fly over two of the five great rivers of the Punjab (the Sutlej you have already flown over), the Beas and the Ravi and as you approach Jammu, the land is often over six thousand feet high and you may see beautiful forests of chir or chil. The rocky terrain hereabout is rich in mineral deposits that have yet to be exploited.

After leaving Jammu you fly for about forty miles parallel to the Chenab, the fourth great river of the Punjab, where the river runs eastward in a wide arc. You fly right over it and leaving Punch and Murree to your west,

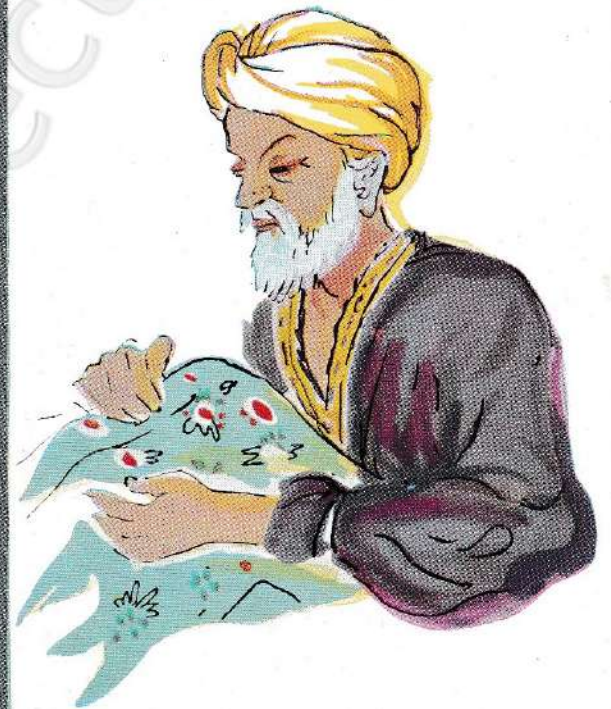


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you make straight north for the Pir Panjal range of mountains that vary in height from 13,000 to 15,000 feet. The passes lie mainly at 11,000 to 12,000 feet. The major passes in this region are the Pir Panjal Pass and the Banihal Pass, over which you fly.

Once over the Banihal Pass you are in the Vale of Kashmir, cradle of the Himalayas, land of indescribable beauty, and as you fly over Arantipur and approach Srinagar you see below you the Jhelum, the fifth of the great rivers that flow down to the Punjab and pour their water into the Indus. There is, every morning, a two-way service between Srinagar and Pathankot. The flight takes exactly an hour and the terrain you fly over is very similar to that which lies between Jammu and the Banihal Pass.

A fascinating flight is the once-a-week single hop from Srinagar to Leh. You take off at dawn of a Monday morning, climb through the mists into the rising sun and find yourself in sight of and then crossing the Great Himalayas and the Zaskar Range, all over 15,000 feet. You see wide open valleys once you are in Ladak and you leave to your right, that is Indiawards, the Hemis Gempa, the most important Buddhist Monastery in Little Tibet. Before you land at Leh, which is a pleasant caravan-serai-town, you cross the Indus, which here is no more than a wild mountain stream.



The Snow-clad
peaks of the
Himalayas



see India by
air



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Srinagar -
Leh

INDIAN AIRLINES
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