

Ladakh – Zaskar Traverse



Activity: Trekking & Walking

Tour Duration: 22 Days

Min Age for trips: 18+

Group Size: 4-12

Inclusions:

- 6 Nights Hotel, 15 Nights Camping
- 22 Breakfasts, 15 Dinners, 15 Lunches
- Fully supported trekking
- Flights Delhi to Leh return



This information should answer some of your questions about the trip and give you a better idea of what we do day-to-day. It doesn't hope to answer everything. If you have any questions please get in touch.

Trip Summary

This trip is a fantastic journey across the Indian Himalaya through remote parts of Ladakh and Zaskar. The trek takes us through wonderful Zaskari valleys using trading routes and ancient paths of the Gaddi shepherds. We start the trip with an amazing flight over the Indian Himalaya to Leh, the capital of Ladakh. After a few days acclimatising to the rarefied air we set off on one of spectacular road drives in the world to enter southern Zaskar valley. We start our trek at Base of Senge La and walk into the heart of Zaskar.

Crossing Sengela (5090 m) the Parfela (3900 m), we are now in the main Zaskar. After a visit to the impressive cliff-side monastery of Phuktal, we cross phirtsela (5435m) We end the trek in Kilong Sarai and the trip finishes with a hard but fascinating drive over the Rothang Pass to Manali and on to Chandigarh, where we catch the train back to Delhi. This is a wonderful but tough trip involving several river and stream fordings which will require wading, in some cases in waters up to waist high. There are some long days so a good level of physical fitness is required.

India and Ladakh

High Places began in India. 1987 saw our very first trip set off to trek in the Garhwal Himalayas in north India. We have gradually widened our destinations and now also go to Ladakh, Sikkim and to Kerala. If you are looking for an authentic, energetic yet sensitive holiday in India we are the specialists. Moreover we continue to hold India in great respect and have a deep regard for the land and its people. To travel with High Places here will disprove many of the myths you might hold and leave you with a sense of wonder and incredulity. There is a life-force in India, which we may already have lost in

the West. Go and see for yourself.

The mountain kingdom of Ladakh is in the far north of India and is a remote region of wild arid valleys, rocky gorges and ridges leading to peaks over 6000m. It lies in the rain shadow north of the Himalayan divide and so avoids the influence of the monsoon. It is subject to extremes in temperature, with hot summers and very cold winters. Little wonder that the Ladakhis are a hardy and self-sufficient people. Through ingenious irrigation systems, the villages in summer are oases of green barley fields; isolated splashes of colour in the desert landscape. Prayer flags, chortens, and mani walls of carved prayer stones are a constant reminder that Buddhism is a way of life, with symbols and spirits from pre Buddhist times incorporated into the present day faith.

Itinerary

This itinerary is flexible and should be seen as a guide only. Local conditions, weather or fitness could lead to changes in our daily plans. All times and distances are approximate. **(B,L,D)** refers to meals included in the trip cost, i.e. **Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner**.

This trip is 22 days ex DELHI. The first and last days refer to the days of arrival in and departure from DELHI, and may not be the days you leave or return home.

DAY 1 - Arrive Delhi

We arrive in Delhi in the morning and transfer to our hotel. The rest of the day is free to explore the markets near the hotel or for sightseeing.

DAY 2 - Flight to Leh

Transfer to domestic airport for flight to Leh. Arrive Leh (3500m) transfer to hotel. Morning free. Afternoon short walk around Leh bazaar. Overnight in Hotel **(B)**

DAY 3 - In Leh

Today we will have an acclimatisation walk round the Leh Valley. Set above Leh on the Namgyal Hill are the ruins of the Old Royal Palace. From here a winding path takes us to the Tsemo Monastery, from where we are rewarded for our efforts by magnificent views of the whole of Leh and its surrounding villages. Descending round the back of the palace we walk via Sankar to the recently built Japanese Peace Pagoda with good views back to the palace and across to Stok Kangri, dominating the skyline across the valley. The rest of the day is free to explore the back streets and bazaars of Leh. Overnight Hotel **(B)**

DAY 4 - In Leh

Today there is a sightseeing tour to two of the major gompas in the area. We first drive to Shey, a former Royal Palace of the Ladakh kings. Inside is a small temple containing a 350 year old copper and gold statue of the Buddha. From Shey we drive (or we can walk across the fields) to Tikse, where we visit the monastery - perched on top of a hill - its red and white buildings can be seen for miles. A recently built temple contains a magnificent image of the Future Buddha. After visiting Thiksey we drive to Hemis the monastery belongs to Dugpa Kargyutpa order, built on a green hillside surrounded by spectacular mountain scenery, is hidden in a gorge. It is the biggest and richest monastery in Ladakh and is must see for visitors. Sacred mask dance is performed on 9th, and 10th, day of the

Tibetan 5th, month of Tibetan calendar. A pleasant 3 Km walk, on the side of the mountain above the monastery there is a sacred hermitage founded by the great Gyalwa Kotsang where in the cave, his foot-print and hand - print on the rock is available for visit. This Kotsang is an old hermitage, which was founded many years before the Hemis Monastery. We return to Leh and the rest of the afternoon is free to explore. Overnight Hotel.(B)

DAY 5 - Drive to Base of Sengela -4300m -enroute visit Lamayuru Monastery-170 kms.

We drive to Lamayuru, where we visit monastery. The history states that the Indian scholar Naropa (956-1041 CE) allegedly caused a lake which filled the valley to dry up and founded Lamayuru Monastery. The oldest surviving building at Lamayuru is a temple called Seng - ge - sgang, at the southern end of the Lamayuru rock, which is attributed to the famous builder-monk Rinchen Zangpo (958-1055 CE). Rinchen Zangpo was charged by the king of Ladakh to build 108 gompas, and certainly many gompas in Ladakh, Spiti Valley and the surrounding regions, date from his time. Lastly we drive to Sengela Base to start our Trekking Camp . (B,L,D) 05-06 hrs drive.

DAY 6 - Trek to Skiupatta - 3840m over Sengela - 4950m -14 kms.

Begin trek to Lingshed. After Kiupa La (3850mts) is a steep descent to the villages of Gongma and Skiumpata (3840mts). It is a wonderful landscape with a view of the valley of Nierag on the other bank of the Zaskar. Camp . (B,L,D) 05-06 hrs

DAY 7 - Trek to Hanumala Base 4200m over Murgula Pass - 4400m – 17 kms.

Trek over Murgula Pass (4400m) down to Lingshed.03 hrs walk.we visit Lingshid monastery and have our Lunch here and later walk two and half hrs to reach Hanumala Base for overnight. Camp . (B,L,D) 06-07 hrs

DAY 8 - Trek to Rinchen –3800m over Hanuma La 4725m - 20 kms

Today you will have the special experience of venturing into the lush green valleys and beautiful passes. To reach from Lingshed ascent to the Hanuma La pass (4725 mts). From there enjoy a gradual descent to Snertse. After Snertse we walk mostly down to our camp Rinchen Camp. (B,L,D) 06-07 hrs

DAY 9 - Trek to Hunimal- 3380m over Parfi La - 3900m - 14 kms

This morning you will trek to your next stop Hanumil. After crossing a zigzag boulevard you will reach on the bank of Oma Chu River. From here, climb up to Parfi La (3900mts). At Parfi La, you will have your lunch and then decline to the foot of the pass. Take a stroll to the virgin plateau which will take you to Hanumil. Camp. (B,L,D) 04-05 - hrs

DAY 10 - Trek to Pishu – 3430 m – 15 kms.

Followed by a hearty breakfast in the camp, you will move out for Pishu. After walking through the easy and picturesque plateau, you will cross a river bridge and arrive at Pishu. Late evening visit Pishu village and experience typical rural life. Camp (B,L,D) –05 hrs

DAY 11 - Drive to Ichar –(3750m) – 55 kms –02-03 hrs drive.

After breakfast we drive to Ichar enroute visit Karsha monastery and Padum Bazaar. Karsha is the largest and most important monastery in Zaskar. It is attributed to Padmasambhava, and there are ancient rock-carvings at the site. The oldest remaining structure, an Avalokiteshvara temple, Chukshik-jal, contains wall paintings which seem to associate it with the era of Rinchen Zangpo (958-

1055). The monastery is under the control of the younger brother of the Dalai Lama. Behind his seat in the chapel is a statue of Lhaso Cho Rinpoche, which was brought from Lhasa in the 1960s and has a golden crown with carnelian and turquoise decorations. The most important festival, known as the Karsha Gustor, is held with masked cham dances on the 26th to the 29th day of the 11th Tibetan month, which is usually in January. Camp **(B,L,D)**- 55 kms – 02-03 hrs drive.

DAY 12 - Trek to Purne 3810m - 20 kms.

Descend down to Lingti Chu. Cross over through a wooden bridge and climb up to a small pass. Descend steeply to the main river valley and follow the right hand sides of the river until we reach our campsite just besides the river. Camp **(B,L,D)** 06-07 hrs.

DAY 13 - Day trip to Phuktal - 4055m - 14 kms.

Go up the right bank of the Tsarap River in to the Splendid Gorges. Cross a bridge in good condition, walk up for few minutes. A ledge leads to a small plateau sprinkled with Chorten and religious banners. From here see the most spectacular sights in the Zaskar regions. Phuktal Monastery, which is built under a huge cave. Phuktal belongs to the tradition of Gelukpas (Yellow section).

Camp **(B,L,D)** – 06 – 07 hrs.

DAY 14 - Trek to Tanze 3850m - 14kms.

We retrace our steps to Punch. It's a short walk and one will get enough time to rest one's legs.

Camp **(B,L,D)** 05-06 hrs

DAY 15 - Trek to Zinchen - 4800m - 19 kms.

From Tanze we take the trail towards the Phitse La. Initially we move through a gorge and then the trail opens out to a wider plateau. We will try to camp as near as possible to the base of the pass so that it's easier tomorrow to climb the pass. A remote pasture, though small is where we camp for the night. Camp **(B,L,D)** - 5-6 hrs

DAY 16 - Trek to Chumik Marpo - 4700m over Phirtse La - 5250m - 17 kms.

It's a short but steep climb to the pass. The final ascent is up a scree slope, making the going tough, to reach the Phirtse La (5250m). The effort is more than rewarded by spectacular views of Himalayan peaks and hanging glaciers close to the pass. A short detour climb to a small ridge, affords excellent views of the Zaskar range. The descent is also steep and crosses further scree slopes before reaching a meadow at Chumik Marpo. Camp **(B,L,D)** - 7-8 hrs.

DAY 17 - Trek to Khamerab - 4400m - 14 kms.

We follow the Lingti River to a confluence with the Tsarap where we make camp. Our route today crosses several ridges dotted with juniper and marked with prayer flags or mani walls, and through meadows used by nomadic Gaddi shepherds. We have to cross streams at several places.

Camp **(B,L,D)** 4-5 hrs.

DAY 18 - Trek to Lingti Debri, 4360m - 18 kms.

We follow the Lingti River to a confluence with the Tsarap where we make camp. Our route today crosses several ridges dotted with juniper and marked with prayer flags or mani walls, and through meadows used by nomadic Gaddi shepherds. We have to cross streams at several places.

Camp **(B,L,D)** - 6-7 hrs

DAY 19 - Trek to Kilong Sarai 4600m - 14 kms

We walk in the lower meadows where the valley widens out and we can see the Leh-Manali highway in the far distance. We camp in a grassy field at Kilong Sarai. Camp **(B,L,D)** 5-6hrs

DAY 20 - Drive to Manali - 189 kms

After breakfast we drive to manali through the Baralacha La and infamous Rothong Pass (3980 m) to Manali (1950 m). Hotel. **(B)** 07 hrs

DAY 21 - Drive Manali - Chandigarh (305 kms / 8 hrs & Train to Delhi)

After breakfast, drive to Chandigarh railway station then take train to Delhi. Arrive Delhi at Evening time & transfer to hotel, Hotel.**(B)**

DAY 22 - Depart

Depart Delhi or continue with your own arrangements. **(B)**

Accommodation

In Leh, Chandigarh and Manali we use simple hotels, all with en suite facilities. On trek we use two person tents, with a larger communal tent for meals. In Delhi we stay in a comfortable hotel. A single supplement is available on this trip which includes a single tent whilst on trek.

Food

On trek all meals are included. In Delhi, Leh and Manali. We provide bed and breakfast only. This allows you the option of choosing where you would like to eat, which is very much part of the adventure. On trek we eat Indian, Chinese and western food prepared to a surprisingly high standard. There are always several dishes: dhals, vegetables and sometimes meat if fresh chicken or lamb is tracked down. Breakfasts and lunches are varied and appetizing.

Vegetarians are well catered for in India. If you have any other dietary restrictions please let us know when booking.

Transport

We fly from Delhi to Leh and use buses, jeeps or taxis for the sightseeing round Leh and the journey from Leh to the start of the trek and from the end of the trek to Chandigarh. We use an air conditioned carriage on the train from Chandigarh to Delhi.

Health and Hygiene

We have an excellent record of staying fit and well in India. The key seems to be our enthusiasm for Indian vegetarian food, (most of India is vegetarian), and care with water, peeling fruit, avoiding salads etc.

Climate

In Delhi it will be hot around 35°C, and wet. During the monsoon (June to mid-September) it rains almost every day, often in a downpour, but the sun comes out between showers. Beyond the monsoon in Leh and on the trek it should mostly be hot and dry, but rainfall (and snow) are always

possible in the mountains. At night on the trek, temperatures could drop well below freezing, especially at the high camps so suitable clothing is required.

Language

There are 14 major languages in India and around 200 minor languages and dialects. Hindi is the most important Indian language and is spoken by about half the population. Both English and Hindi are used administratively throughout the country. In Ladakh, Ladakhi, Hindi and English are used. Many people will speak English, but a willingness to pick up some basic words of Hindi and/or Ladakhi may enrich your trip.

Tipping

It is custom and practice to tip in India. You should perhaps allow the equivalent of around £60/US\$100/NZ\$120 per person or so which would normally be given by the group at the end of the trek. Try to avoid giving sweets, biscuits, pens or cash to children or anyone who has not rendered a service.

Indian Visas

A full passport is required to apply for the Indian visa, with a validity of at least 6 months beyond the intended duration of stay in the country. It is the client's responsibility to complete all the application procedures and obtain their visas before the intended date of departure. A simplified facility of applying for an eVisa is now available to British passport holders, this will entitle the applicants to a 60 day tourist visa, for more details please log on to the official website of Indian Government <https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/> Alternatively UK passport holders can apply themselves for Indian Visa through India High Commissions Visa service VFS by logging on to <http://in.vfsglobal.co.uk/>. Current visa fee for British passport holders

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