



In Search of the Snow Leopard Trip Notes

Ways to Travel: Guided Group, Tailormade Adventures 15 Days Flight Inclusive
Trip Code:

Destinations: India 14 Days Land only

TGL

Programmes: Walking & Trekking



Moderate

16 Min age

Trip Overview

Snow leopards are one of the world's most elusive mammals but in winter they descend from the high Himalaya in search of food. Inhabiting some of the most remote and mountainous regions of Central Asia, the mission to see this enigmatic cat is really more of a pilgrimage. Other rare high altitude wildlife and isolated Himalayan Buddhist communities only add to this quest's allure. The itinerary varies slightly by departure date to fit in the different festivals. Please see the Trip Notes for full details.

At a Glance

- 7 nights hotels, 5 nights full-service camping and 1 night homestay
- 7 days winter walking with full portage
- Group normally 4 to 16, plus leader and appropriate staff. Min age 18 yrs
- Altitude max. 4550m, average 3800m
- Travel on foot, by jeep and 2 internal flights
- Festival visited varies by departure date
- Some departures led by Valerie Parkinson

Trip Highlights

- Chance to see the rare and elusive Snow leopard
- Wonderful winter walking in mountainous Ladakh - when it is cut off from the rest of the world
- Visit ancient monasteries and attend a colourful monastic festival
- Enjoy a homestay night and traditional meal with a friendly Ladakhi family
- Look out for Blue Sheep, wolves, Lammergeyers, Himalayan Griffin Vultures and Golden Eagles

Is This Trip for You?

This is an adventurous tour and you need to be flexible in your approach to the trip. The trip takes place in winter when Ladakh is cut off from the rest of the world by road and temperatures drop well below zero. Although the hotel in Leh is comfortable, water pipes can freeze in winter and water (both hot and cold) may be provided in a bucket. On trek conditions will be basic either camping in sub-zero temperatures or staying in local Ladakhi houses.

The tour is designed to maximise the chance of spotting a Snow leopard and this will mean you need to be flexible and we may need to adjust or change the itinerary at short notice should snow conditions or other adverse or local conditions deem it wise to do so.

What makes this trip challenging is the weather conditions in Ladakh at this time of year. The walking distances each day will be moderate. Most of the walking will be optional dependant on your enthusiasm for tracking animals each day.

Internal flights to Leh are operated throughout the winter when the weather is clear. Delays and cancellations cannot be ruled out.

If you are prepared to be flexible and patient and have a spirit of adventure then this is a magnificent trip into one of the world's most incredible best kept secrets.

Depending on your departure date, you will visit a different festival, as follows: Saturday 10 February 2018 (Ex London) - Dosmoche Festival

Monday 26 February 2018 (Ex London) - Matho Festival led by Valerie Parkinson

Sunday 3 February 2019 (Ex London) - Stok Festival

Friday 15 February 2019 (Ex London) - Matho Festival led by Valerie Parkinson

Group

This trip will be led by an experienced local English speaking leader or by Valerie Parkinson. Our Indian team of leaders have proved very popular with their incredible knowledge, passion and hospitality adding greatly to the experience. There is no better way to experience Indian culture than letting an Indian guide show you around their country.

Valerie has spent the last 32 years leading groups in Ladakh and other parts of the Himalaya. She will be leading the 26th February 2018 Ex London departure. She will be supported by a local guide who is an expert on the wildlife of the area, who works for the Wildlife Department and a full camping crew including cook and assistants.

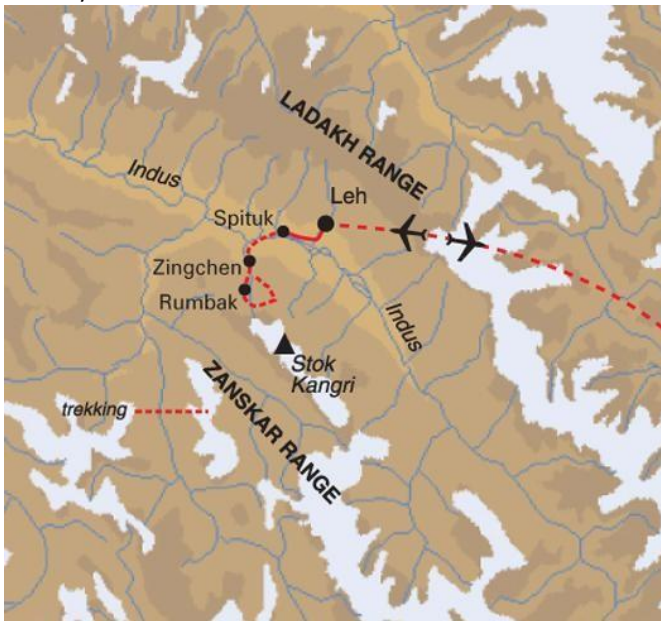
The luggage on trek will be carried by mules.

Adult min age: 16

Min group size: 4 Max

group size: 16

Itinerary



Land Only

Start City: Delhi

Start City: London End City: Delhi

End City: London

Flight Inclusive

Land Only Itinerary

Day 1

Start Delhi.

The group flight will arrive into Delhi in the morning and we will transfer to our hotel. Those who have made their own flight arrangements will join us at the hotel during the day. You are free today to explore Delhi or rest after your flight; rooms may not be available until noon but it is often earlier than this. There is usually a welcome briefing in the hotel lobby this evening. Standard Hotel

Day 2

Fly across the Himalaya to Leh (3500m).

Usually we have a very early start today for the flight to Leh. We may have to leave the hotel at around 2am and drive to the airport for the very early morning but highly spectacular flight over the Himalaya to Leh. Incredibly beautiful in winter we fly over the huge expanse of snow-capped peaks. Landing in Leh the temperature will drop dramatically and we will need our down jackets at the airport. If the weather is good and the flight goes on time we should be in Leh for breakfast. The rest of the day is free to relax and acclimatise to the altitude (3,500m). In the morning we rest and catch up on some sleep and in the afternoon there will be a gentle orientation walk of Leh and its bazaars.

Standard Hotel

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 3

Full day at a monastic festival.

Once a year every monastery in Ladakh has a festival where the monks dress in elaborate brocade and silk costumes and re-enact century old stories of the Tibetan Buddhist religion. People come from all over Ladakh to the festivals and these are a great social as well as religious occasion.

The 10th February 2018 departure will spend today at the Dosmoche Festival in Leh, also known as the 'Scapegoat' festival, which happens in the New Year to bring good luck for the year ahead.

The 26th February 2018 departure will spend the day at Matho Festival which features the appearance of the state oracles who go into trance like states.

The whole day will be spent at the festival and in the evening we return to our hotel in Leh.

Standard Hotel

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 4

Visit Shey, Thikse and Stakna Monasteries.

Today we visit some of the most important monasteries in the Indus Valley. First we drive just over half an hour to Shey, once the residence of the Ladakhi royal family. Below the old palace ruins is a small temple containing a two-storey gilded statue of Buddha. From Shey we can either drive or walk across the fields to Tikse. Set on a hill it is one of the most impressive gompas in Ladakh, it has several temples, one of which contains a superb statue of the Future Buddha. We then drive on to Stakna, a small but friendly monastery perched atop a huge rock. In the late afternoon we return to Leh. Standard Hotel

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 5

Drive to Jinchen; trek to Husing (3700m).

Today we leave Leh and we drive across the Indus towards Jinchen. We follow the trail from Phe to the entrance of the impressive Rumbak Gorge. The trail takes us up into the narrow gorge and we start our search for evidence of Snow leopard and Blue Sheep. We camp tonight at our base camp at Husing (3,700m).

Full-service Camping

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Days 6-10

Five days trekking in and around the Husing, Tarbuns and Rumbak Valleys in Hemis National Park searching for Snow leopards and other mammals and birds.

The next five days will usually be spent in and around the Husing, Tarbuns and Rumbak Valleys in the Hemis National Park. There will be no fixed itinerary and our days will be decided on by our expert wildlife guides - this is to maximise the chances of seeing a Snow leopard. Our days will be spent searching for Snow leopard and other animals which inhabit this area. The extreme cold of winter forces the Snow leopard and other animals down from the high altitudes they normally inhabit. Ladakh is situated at an altitude range of 3,300m - 6,000m and hosts an incredible amount of wildlife. It is full of endangered species including Snow leopard, Tibetan Ibex, Bharal (Blue Sheep), Wolf, Red Fox, Ladakhi Urial and Lynx. We usually spend most of the time at our base camp at Husing (3,700), and daywalks will take us into both the Husing and Tarbuns Valleys, both well-known haunts of the Snow leopard. In 2014 the group saw three Snow leopards in this area and there were also sightings in 2015. A good pair of binoculars is recommended to scan the slopes in and around camp. Our wildlife guides will carry spotting scopes, which they will set up at camp and on ridges on the daywalks. They will also go out in the early mornings and late evenings to search for evidence of any animal movement. We will explore the area around Rumbak Sumdo and Yurutse (4,400m), well known for its sightings of Argali Sheep.

Overnight we will use a mixture of camping and home stays. One night will be spent in Rumbak village, where we will use a Ladakhi home stay - a basic Ladakhi house. The other five nights will be spent camping. We will have a full trekking crew with us including guides, assistant guides, cook, kitchen assistants and porters.

Our guides will be in touch with other guides and if Snow leopards have been spotted in other areas of Ladakh we will need to be flexible and move the camp.

Full-service Camping

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 11

Return to Leh.

Today we trek back to Jinchen, where we will meet our transport back to the relative comforts of our hotel in Leh Standard Hotel

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 12

Fly to Delhi.

An early start for the flight back to Delhi. The rest of the day is free in Delhi for individual shopping or sightseeing. Standard Hotel

Meals included: Breakfast

Day 13

Free day in Delhi for individual sightseeing.

A free day in Delhi in case of any delays in the flight from Leh. If we fly to Delhi on schedule then today is free for individual sightseeing. You may want to visit Old Delhi with the magnificent Red Fort and Jami Masjid. Humayun's Tomb (a forerunner to the Taj Mahal) is worth a visit. In New Delhi there is India Gate and Parliament House to see; and of course Delhi has a wealth of interesting shops and markets. Standard Hotel

Meals included: Breakfast

Day 14

End Delhi.

The tour ends after breakfast today. Those travelling on the group flights will be transferred to the airport for the daytime flight back to London. The group flights depart around lunchtime and will arrive in the UK the same day.

Meals included: Breakfast