



# The Responsible Travellers

www.theresponsibletravellers.com

Ladakh: Discovery Trip Notes

Grade B 17 days



## Introduction

This is a thoughtful full packed tour of Ladakh, which includes the annual Ladakh festival as well as tours of Delhi, Taj Mahal, & Amritsar, also including the Dalai Lama's residence at Dharamsala & an unforgettable Himalayan overland journey. After arriving in Delhi we take a tour of the red fort and the following day enjoy a trip to the Taj Mahal. After this experience in the plains of India we take the incredible flight across the Himalaya to Ladakh. The Ladakhi people have a great hospitable nature and here you will see first hand the landscapes and culture of "Little Tibet". Here we explore the area around the capital, Leh visiting Thikse Monastery and the Shey Palace – the ancient residence of the King's of Ladakh. The highlight in Leh will surely be two days visiting the festival where locals try their hands at archery, horse racing and polo as well as dancing and cultural displays. The overland trip commences with a night camping with nomads at Tso Kar, a remote lake before driving in 4WD jeeps across the Himalaya to Manali and on to Dharamsala. Here we visit the Dalai Lama's residence with the temple and Norbulinka before then moving on to Amritsar to visit the Golden temple. This is a superb finale to an incredible all round adventure, which is a serious "Must Do" for all discoverers with a cultural interest and thirst for exploring different landscapes.

## Highlights:

- Red Fort, Delhi, Taj Mahal & Golden Temple, Amritsar
- 3 days Sightseeing Ladakh
- 2 days Ladakh Festival
- 1 day trek 'old silk route'
- Tso Kar Nomad Camp
- 4 Day Overland Journey across Himalaya
- Dalai Lama Residence
- Rohriech's Art Gallery & Naggar Castle
- Mountain flight Delhi – Leh



## Day 1: Arrival in Delhi

Arrive in Delhi and transfer to the hotel. The morning can be spent resting, then in the afternoon tour the great Red Fort. Situated in Old Delhi, the fort was built in the 17th century by Shah Jehan the Mughal Emperor who built the Taj Mahal. Built in red sandstones it therefore has the resemblance to Agra Fort his original capital. We will retire early this evening in preparation for the early start tomorrow.  
Accommodation: City Hotel Bed & Breakfast

## Day 2: Taj Mahal

Today we take our transport to Agra to visit the Taj Mahal. This magnificent mausoleum has become known as one of the wonders of the world and is a site that pilgrims come to visit from far and wide. It was built by Emperor Shah Jehan for his wife, but she died before it was finished and so the story of this symbolic building means that it has always been associated with everlasting love. We shall return to our hotel in Delhi for the night. Accommodation: City Hotel Bed & Breakfast

### **Day 3: Transfer to Leh**

The flight to Leh is early in the morning, arriving at the destination by approximately 08:00 am. Weather permitting it is a fantastic flight over Himalaya and Stok ranges with great views of this mountainous region. At times you are flying what seems to be very close to the mountain tops and can get great views of the glaciers and mountain features. Coming into Leh you descend over the mountain tops into the arid desert landscape of the basin in which the capital of Ladakh is situated. This is quite a spectacular landing. As you descend the airplane there is a definite feel of being in a remote outpost with the sparse facilities at the airstrip terminal. You will then be transferred to our hotel, a family run Ladaki home in a quiet part of Leh. Today we concentrate on acclimatising, the day should be spent resting and enjoying the mountain views and maybe a walk to the market in the afternoon. Leh is a small quiet town with traditional Tibetan style buildings. It is very chilled and slow pace with restaurants, shops selling Ladakhi, Tibetan and Kashmiri products.

Accommodation: Hotel Bed & Breakfast

### **Day 3: Leh Sightseeing**

Today we visit two of the great sites in Ladakh. Firstly we will go to Shey Palace, a beautiful monastery sitting majestically on a spur looking out on the plains of the Indus valley. This is the old palace of the Kings of Ladakh before the more recent palace was built in Leh. The main temple contains a large Buddha which is said to be carved by Nepali craftsmen. In the courtyard there is a gold topped stupa, which we will view from above as we walk around the complex. Here we have views not only of the Indus valley, but also of the Stok Range and Spituk Valley. We then visit Tikse Monastery, a large monastery complex on top of a small hill with the village sprawled around below the Main Gumpa buildings. Although, it was founded in the 15th century it is extremely well kept and maintained.

Accommodation: Hotel Bed & Breakfast



### **Day 5: Drive to Hemis Suchpachen**

We drive south from the hotel past the airport and Spituk monastery and head west on the Highway. After passing Phyang Village and the Magnetic Hill, we arrive at the confluence of the Indus and Zasker Rivers which are both very heavily silted in different colours just before the dusty village of Nimu. Continuing on we pass through Nurla, Wuleh Tokpo, then just after Saspol cross over to the south side of the river to visit Alchi Choskor. The temple was built in the 11th century under the influence of Rinchen Zangpo who at the time was responsible for reviving and strengthening the Buddhist faith in the region. The architecture is very unique to the region; unlike most of Ladakh's Tibetan style monasteries this has been built in Kashmiri tradition, strong reminder that the Islamic region was once Buddhist. Another outstanding feature of this temple is that it is hidden down by the river rather than elevated like most monasteries. We shall explore and view the amazing mandala paintings on the walls.

We will drive on to Hemis Shukpachen and in the afternoon explore the village and visit the nearby nunery. Ladakhis have adopted a very sophisticated irrigation system. All villages are connected by a canal from the main stream of which is again divided into about three, for washing, cooking and irrigating. The irrigation is done on a rotational basis and is regulated by an appointed member of the community by blocking and opening the sub canals as required through the day. The women work to spread the water all over the field with the use of wooden spades. It is very nice to spend at least some time watching them at work.

Drive time: 2 hrs

Accommodation: Camp



### **Day 6: Trek to Tingmosgang (Temisgam)**

We begin with a very gentle climb out of the village up to a small pass, where you can see the old Shukpa trees on the western periphery of the village amidst the bogs. The view is good looking ahead from the pass; the trail leading up to the Meptek La can be made out faintly on the far side amongst other very bare mountains in various shades of pink and mauve. We descend alongside the rock face, then traverse around awhile before climbing up to Meptek La at 3750m the highest point of the walk. It is worth an extra climb up to the mount on the left of the pass for good views all around. We descend gently and a while later follow a dry stream bed down to Ang village. Different varieties of wild flowers can be seen and if on the lookout may even be able to spot herds of blue sheep on the slopes above. At Ang we cross the Tokpo and follow the road to the adjoining village Tingmosgang where we shall camp for the day. Wild rose bushes in various shades of pink are a feast to the eye and apricot orchards are all along the road. In the afternoon we can climb up to visit the monastery or explore the village.

Walking time – 4 to 5 hrs

Accommodation: Camp

### **Day 7: Lamayuru Monastery**

Our transport vehicles will meet us this morning to drive us to Lamayuru, a spectacular drive through the scenery of Ladakh. Passing through a wonderful gorge carved by the river, and as we approach our destination one can see the vast clay deposits that are a very impressive view looking across, and you can make out with little imagination the ancient lake which created this landscape. The Gomba is very impressive standing on an eroded cliff above the small village overlooking this magnificent vista. It was predicted by the holy man Nimagaon that this should be the sight of a very important monastery. After draining the lake, it was first built during the reign of Rinchen Zangmo and was later declared a holy site by the Namgyal king in the 16th century. The gomba is called 'Yungdung Tharpa Ling' meaning place of freedom where even criminals sought refuge as they were safe from persecution.



After exploring the Monastery we return to Leh. On route we will stop and visit the ancient fort at Basgo (Bago) which is perched on a spur looking across the mountains and down onto the village. The Jamyang Lhakang here is listed amongst the most endangered UNESCO sites in the world. There are also a couple more chapels dedicated to the Future Buddha we can visit, the smaller one of which was built by the King Jamyang Namgyal for his Muslim queen Gyal Khatun in the seventeenth century.  
Accommodation: Hotel Bed & Breakfast



### **Day 8 – 9: Ladakh Festival**

We now spend the next two days based at our delightful family run hotel in Leh. Each day we shall visit the Ladakh festival for splendid cultural displays of local sport and dancing. The dances and dramas are spectacular with the local's dressed up in their traditional costumes. Equally impressive are the displays of archery, horse racing and polo. The exact details for each of these two days will depend on the festival schedule which is only issued two weeks before the start, but be sure you will be in for a great display!  
Accommodation: Hotel Bed & Breakfast

### **Day 10: Tso Khar**

Today we start our overland journey across the Ladakh plateau, down through the Himalayas and west to the Punjab. The first leg of this fascinating voyage is to drive south east of Leh parallel to the Karnak Range to the Samad & Rokchen region. We shall climb up to Taglang La – the second highest motorable road in the world! Descending the pass we shall take the left hand fork off the main road to reach our destination for the night. We shall be on the look out for marmots, blue sheep and even Kiang (Tibetan Wild Ass) throughout today. This area is famous as home to the local nomadic herders and at their headquarters of Tso Kar, we shall camp. This is a salt lake which provides the herders with an appealing product to trade with the merchants from other areas of Ladakh and beyond. We camp away from the lakeside so not to disturb the local wildlife.  
Accommodation: Fully catered tented camp



### **Day 11: Keylong**

Today we re-join the main highway to Manali and continue with the stunning scenery of coloured mountains. As we ascend towards Lachulung La, another pass we come across the most amazing landscape of wind eroded pillars and arches. This is a natural wonder and we shall no doubt stop here to enjoy the scenery. Once we have crossed the pass the descent is equally stunning with a series of twenty two hairpin bends! From the top of this section we start to see the Himalaya ahead and the scenery will begin to change from the dry arid coloured mountains of Ladakh to the fresh alpine environment of the Himalaya. This is truly a spectacular road to experience and an unforgettable part of the journey.  
Accommodation: Guesthouse Bed & Breakfast

### **Day 12 - 13: Manali**

Today is a shorter day with a journey through the Himalaya. We shall pass several waterfalls, which remind us we have now departed the dessert land of Ladakh. As we approach Manali we climb our final pass – Rothang La which is rather low at just under 4000m!

Manali is an alpine resort town in the Kulu Valley and here we will spend a couple of nights visiting the temples, Rohriech's Art Gallery and the Naggar Castle from where there is a beautiful view of the Kullu Valley and surrounding mountains.

Accommodation: Hotel Bed & Breakfast

### **14 - 15: Dharamsala**

Today we leave Manali along the Beas River to reach the hill station of Dharamsala. This of course is home to the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government in exile. The area called Mcleod ganj is the main Tibetan part of the town and here we shall spend a day visiting the Norbulinkha and Tibetan craft centre as well as the Dalai Lama's residence and temple.

Accommodation: Hotel Bed & Breakfast



### **Day 16: Amritsar**

The final part of our journey today once again sees a change of scenery and also a change in culture. We shall drive south to the northern plains of India to the capital of the Punjab State – Amritsar. "The pool of nectar of immortality" as it translates was founded in 1577 by the fourth guru of the Sikhs, Ram Das (1534–1581), and has remained the centre of the Sikh faith ever since.

Today we spend the afternoon joining the pilgrims on a visit to the great Golden Temple and surrounding complex. Martin Gray says "included in the top ten sacred places in the world. It is a place of both stupendous beauty and sublime peacefulness. The temple's architecture draws on both Hindu and Moslem artistic styles yet represents a unique co-evolution of the two." We shall listen to the chanting of the devotional prayers and hymns as we pass through this stunning temple.

Accommodation: Hotel Bed & Breakfast



### **Day 17: Departure**

Today you will be making your international departure and all airport transfers will be provided complimentary.

#### Independent & Bespoke

#### Group Trips

This trip can be tailor made for either an independent trip or for your own group.

You can select any departure date during May to September and adjust the itinerary if necessary to suit your needs.

please contact us at:  
[info@theresponsibletravellers.com](mailto:info@theresponsibletravellers.com)



To book e-mail: [info@theresponsibletravellers.com](mailto:info@theresponsibletravellers.com)

# Additional Information

## Administration & Practicalities

### What is included?

- ✓ Carbon Balancing of international flights
- ✓ 12 nights hotel bed & breakfast accommodation
- ✓ 3 nights fully catered tented camp
- ✓ 1 night guesthouse bed & breakfast accommodation
- ✓ Guided sightseeing & entrance fees in Delhi, Leh, Manali, Macleod Ganj, and Amritsar as specified in the itinerary
- ✓ All transportation included in the itinerary
- ✓ Internal flight from Delhi - Leh
- ✓ All staff, guide and porter fees
- ✓ 100% profit donated to Charity

### What is not included?

- International flights & airport taxes
- All meals other than those included above
- Incidental extra personal expenses
- Indian Tourist Entry Visa
- Single persons supplement
- Additional sightseeing not specified in the itinerary
- Travel Insurance
- Staff tips

Travelling alone.....and don't want to pay a single supplement? No problem, you will be paired up with someone of the same gender to share a room / tent. If you would prefer the privacy of a single occupancy the Single Supplement for this trip is £175.

### Thought of Funding raising for charity?

You may choose to take this opportunity to raise sponsorship for one of our affiliated charities. If you wish to do so please contact us at: [info@theresponsibletravellers.com](mailto:info@theresponsibletravellers.com) and we will forward details to you.

### First class staff & service levels

We are a highly credible tour operating organisation specialising in the Himalayan countries. All our staff are specially selected based on their experience, expertise and qualifications. We pride ourselves on a highly personalised service with quality of care. The trip Leader will be an experienced professional leader working full time in the Himalayas & Central Asia with many years of experience. He/she will have full mountain wilderness & first aid qualifications and will have received training from either Himalayan Mountaineering Institute, Nepal Mountaineering Association or one of the European Alpine Clubs. As a responsible employer we pride ourselves on hiring local staff and paying wages higher than most organisations. If you want to read more about our employment policy please go to: [www.theresponsibletravellers.com/our-ethics/employment-policy.html](http://www.theresponsibletravellers.com/our-ethics/employment-policy.html)

### Further Information:

If you have any queries regarding this trip, whether it is about preparation, the itinerary or general travel information please do not hesitate to contact us. If this trip is not for you perhaps you would like to contact us for details of alternative trips. All our trips and additional extensions can be viewed online at: [www.theresponsibletravellers.com](http://www.theresponsibletravellers.com) or write to us at [info@theresponsibletravellers.com](mailto:info@theresponsibletravellers.com).

**Insurance:** It is compulsory to take full holiday insurance which covers trekking to the maximum altitude of your trek/trip, and also covers full rescue and repatriation costs. You will need to provide a copy of your insurance details, including an emergency 24 hour telephone number to the trek leader before departing Leh. This should include any correspondence stating clarification of the required cover. If your policy documents are not available or prove to provide insufficient cover you may not be able to continue your trip. Please ensure that your policy also covers any extra activity outside of the stated itinerary you wish to do if you are extending your trip.

**Passport:** Passports need to be valid for a minimum period of 6 months from the date of visa application if you are applying in the UK and from the date of entry into India.

**Visa Details:** Visas are required to be purchased in advance from the Indian Embassy. A link to the website is below: <http://india.embassyhomepage.com>

**Money:** The local currency is Indian Rupees (approx exchange rate 80 IRS - £1 – subject to daily fluctuation) It is advised to take either sterling or US Dollars. Traveller's cheques and cash can be exchanged for local currency in Delhi. Credit cards are not generally accepted. in Ladakh. It is best to do your money exchange in Delhi.

**Flight Information:** This trip is land only and operates Delhi to Delhi. Given our clients come from a variety of locations around the world we are able to help you source flights but we do not purchase on your behalf. We also prefer to give you the option to add extensions or create a tailor made trip and therefore have the flexibility of flights at your own convenience. Please contact us if you want advice about flight options and how to purchase.

**Health:** Ladakh is a high altitude plateau and so you will be at 3500m and above during your stay here. It is important you are fit and healthy. We strongly recommend you visit your local GP and ask advice regarding any vaccinations required.

**Itinerary:** All that is possible will be done to ensure the trip follows the outlined itinerary. However, due to factors beyond our control such as local weather, politics and airlines it may be necessary to vary one or more of the days. If this does occur we shall do our utmost to ensure minimal impact to you.

### What to expect

#### Weather

Ladakh has 300 days of sunshine a year! During the summer months it is likely to be between 20-30 degrees during the daytime (depending on if you are at altitude) and lowering to 10 degrees at night. As Ladakh is in a rain shadow the precipitation is low, but you may get an occasional burst of rain.

#### Group Size

Due to the remote locations that are visited, we remain sympathetic to the local culture and environment by limiting our trips to a maximum of 12 places. This may be slightly smaller than other operators, and we believe it ensures the maximum enjoyment and fulfilment of our trip members and minimize the pressures on the environment. This also avoids the feeling of "herding" from being part of a large group. There is a minimum of 6 to operate the trek.

#### Wildlife

Ladakh is home to the wonderful Marmot, blue sheep, Argali, Kyang, (wild ass), Tibetan wolf and of course the elusive snow leopard. The birdlife includes lamagierer, ins and griffin vulture, chukar and golden eagles in the mountains and Hoopoe, Rose Finches citrus wagtails in the valley.

#### Baggage:

All your luggage will be transported for you, so during the daytime you will need to carry essentials such as water, camera, raincoat n a daypack or handbag. The limitation for luggage on the internal flight is 15kg for the hold and 10kg for hand luggage. Please see your airline for details of your international flight luggage allowances.

# More about us & Our Ethics.....

Here at **The Responsible Travellers** we take great pride in the fact that we are **doing the right thing** by you our customers, by our staff, and by the people, country and environment in which we operate.

We believe actions speak louder than words, over the next few pages you can read how our ethics are put into practice.



## Our Guarantee:

100% of profits are donated to Charitable Projects

- ✓ We pay the cost to Carbon Balance your international flight to the Himalayas
- ✓ Through a committed Environmental Policy we work to ensure minimal impact of our activities
- ✓ We have a simple and fair Pricing Policy with no extra fees charges – price us up against other companies!
- ✓ Have a fair and ethical Employment Policy which is committed to employing local staff and paying fair wages

*Are you ready for a change in the way you approach your holiday?*

**Before you go.... we start to take responsibility for your trip by carbon balancing your flights.**



The impact on climate change from the way in which we live today is a topic we have all heard about, and is under much debate from the world's scientific community. This is something that we can not and should not ignore. This is why when you go on holiday with "The Responsible Travellers", we commit as part of our Responsible Tourism policy to ensure your trip contributes towards renewable energy technologies in the Himalayas. Given the great "green debate", we have chosen to implement this policy in a way that ensures we know we are making a difference. For every traveller to the Himalayas we donate twice the amount it costs to purchase commercial carbon credits\*\* to either Nepal's Renewable Energy support programme BSP. Or Ladakh's Ecological Development Society depending on your destination. Travel with peace of mind with **The Responsible Travellers**

**Whilst you are there....** Our Employment and environmental policies demonstrate our continued sense of responsibility. Firstly, our belief in aid through trade and therefore the generation of local employment and how this is managed is at the very heart of our operation. This is why we have a 100% commitment to employing only local staff. Our customers benefit from this by being able to get closer to the culture and learn more from the experience in the Himalayas, travelling with those who are born and bred in the area. By employing this policy we are also ensuring that the local economy benefits as much as possible rather than commercial organisations. We take great pride in ensuring fair wages to all our local staff and protecting our porters from exploitation. Secondly, our environmental policy addresses waste management, water usage, and encourages and supports the use of renewable resources. In addition, we work closely with the Nepal Sustainable Tourism Development Unit and WWF to ensure the strongest commitment to the local environment. Read more at: [www.theresponsibletravellers/ethics.html](http://www.theresponsibletravellers/ethics.html)



**The choice is easy when you are...**

**After you've gone.....** The Responsible Travellers donates all profits from its travel operations to charitable projects in Nepal. We believe the most effective way to invest is with the help of specialist organisations. We work with our partners to find suitable projects and locations to invest and then all the funds go directly to the local project. Our partner charities and areas of investment include:



### Education

We believe all development starts with educating the people. We support community education programmes, child support programmes, and interest free loans for adult education through our beneficiary charity CHANCE Registered UK charity. 1107201..



### Community Development

We help communities to provide themselves with improved facilities and encourage this to be done in an environmentally friendly way. Our volunteer programs allow visitors to experience this first hand when they opt for a family home stay and participate in the community project holidays.



### Re-Forestation & Renewable Resources

Our third area of work involves working with BSP – the national biogas organisation in Nepal. The WWF estimate that only 29% of the original forest covers in Nepal still remains. Between 1990 and 2005, Nepal lost 1.2 million hectares of forest We work with BSP Nepal in order to help the communities develop Biogas – a renewable energy resource which provides clean fuel, stops deforestation, and offers far reaching health and sanitation benefits.



*To see more details of our charitable giving please go online to:  
<http://www.theresponsibletravellers.com/ethics/projects.html>*

Our commitment to **Doing the Right Thing** extends from investing in local charitable projects, to making sure that our customers also get a good deal.

To help you have a hassle free holiday, we provide a fair and simple **pricing policy**:

- ✓ We charge a fair price: to make sure the holiday is as satisfying as possible; we charge what we believe is a fair price, not what we can get away with – compare us to other companies!
- ✓ No extra land charges or hidden fees: To keep life simple we make a single charge
- ✓ No profiteering from single supplements: we charge a fair price based on cost & do not charge excessive premiums for single supplements
- ✓ No nagging for donations: We do not request charitable donations from you in order to justify our responsible tourism policy. We work hard on your behalf so you can just concentrate on having a great time!

**....Doing the right thing**