



# The Responsible Travellers

[www.theresponsibletravellers.com](http://www.theresponsibletravellers.com)

## Ladakh: Community Volunteer Project & Silk Route Trek Trip Notes Grade B 16 Days



A trip to Ladakh is a journey back in time. The Ladakhi people have a great hospitable nature and here you will see first hand the landscapes and culture of "Little Tibet". Starting in Delhi we have a tour of the Red Fort before transferring to Leh. Here we then spend two nights and two days acclimatising to the altitude of this high plateau & meeting the local NGO representatives. After this insight to the community work in Ladakh we start our village project. This is an opportunity to live with a Ladakhi family and experience the typical everyday life of this remote Buddhist population. Following this we then take a short trek in the Sham region on the old silk route which is a low grade introductory trek. The trek with our camping crew will take us through remote villages and see the rugged landscapes of the high plateau of Ladakh. We complete our trek with superb site of the Lamayuru Monastery, one of the oldest in the region and a beautiful ancient building perched high up the hillside. A combination of social and physical exploration, this itinerary allows you to get to know Ladakh and get a deeper understanding of this fascinating and beautiful destination.

### **Day 1: Arrival in Delhi**

On arrival in Delhi you will be transferred to the hotel. The morning can be spent resting, then in the afternoon there will be a tour of 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: 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 the Himalaya and the 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 from the airplane there is a definite feel of being in a remote outpost with the sparse facilities at the airstrip terminal. Today we concentrate on acclimatising, so the day should be spent resting and enjoying the mountain views and maybe a walk to the market in the afternoon. Accommodation: Hotel Bed & Breakfast

### **Highlights:**

- Red Fort, Delhi
- 1 day Sightseeing in Leh
- 5 days Community Project with family home stay
- 5 nights fully catered tented camp trek on "old silk route"
- 6 Nights B&B Hotel
- Average daily walking: 4-5 hours
- Maximum Altitude 3750m
- Rtn flight Delhi - Leh



### **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. From here we have views of the Indus valley and the Stok Range, including Sok Kangri.

We then visit Tikse Monastery, a large monastery complex on top of a small hill with the village sprawled around below. Although, it was founded in the 15th century it is extremely well kept and maintained. Accommodation: Hotel Bed & Breakfast

### **Day 4-8 Community Project & Family Home stay**

Early in the morning you will be transferred to the project location. While working with local residents on the community development project, you are placed in a home stay to encourage integration and cultural exchange. You will gain an insight into the typical daily life of the Ladakhi people, whilst gaining and understanding for the environmental and social issues faced in this outpost and high desert plateau of India. This program allows you to collaborate with locals on a project that develops the community and improves the overall way of life. Typical projects include solar power installations, renovation of school buildings, and women's development workshops. After the arrival, greetings and introductions there will be a briefing and opening ceremony. Later in the day you will be introduced to your family and able to settle into your home for the week. Then the project work will commence. You do not need any particular skills, only a willingness to participate. You should be prepared that the facilities in rural Ladakhi homesteads are relatively basic compared with western standards. Food will be provided and safe water stations will be set up for participants to use. On the last day there will be a closing ceremony at lunchtime and then following farewells with your new found Ladakhi community, you will be transferred back to Leh.

### **Day 9: Free Day in Leh**

Today is a free day in Leh to enjoy the Tibetan Bazaars and restaurants in the town. You may also wish to walk up Namgyal Hill to Leh Palace and on to Tsermo Monastery for a magnificent vista across of the Leh Valley and snowcapped mountains. For those interested you also have the option to take a jeep ride to Kardung La – the highest motorable road in the world at 5602m altitude!

Accommodation: Leh Hotel B&B

### **Day 10: Likir (Lukhil)**

It is a short drive to Likir. We head 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. Continuing on past the dusty village of Nimu we will stop and visit the ancient fort at Basgo (Bago) which is perched on a Spur looking 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 one which was built by the King Jamyang Namgyal for his Muslim queen Gyal Khatun in the seventeenth century. After Basgo we leave the National Highway for about 30 minutes to Likir Village where we will meet our camping crew waiting with lunch. After lunch we can do a walk up to the very picturesque Monastery which is approximately an hour and a quarter each way. The most impressive feature here is the three storey high statue of Maitriya Buddha behind the main monastery building. There are also nice views to be enjoyed looking south, of the valley and the Zasker mountains.

Drive time: 2 hrs,

Approx. altitude – 3500m

Accommodation: Fully catered tented camp



### **Day 11: Likir to Yangtang**

We start our trek today with a descent after passing the stupa we cross the Likir Tokpo, and then climb to a couple of chortens and a small pond on the other side of the river. This is an example of the Ladakhi's irrigation systems, water is collected in the pond during the night from a small canal then distributed into the fields in the daytime. After the row of very old chortens we leave the oasis of the village and very gently climb up to a small pass called Poebe La. We descend from here for a while, then, leaving the trail follow the small path down the slope and cross Saspol Tokpo (river) at the base of Sumdo village. It is a steady climb from here following a narrow gully for about an hour to Charatse La from where we can see the village of Yangtang against the backdrop of the strikingly bare mountain behind it. The trail now gently winds around to the village and we continue for about thirty minutes to reach camp in the apricot orchards by the Wuleh Tokpo (river). In the afternoon we can visit the village and return with a slight detour back to camp, which is about two hours round trip.

Walking time – 4 to 5 hrs, Final altitude – 3600m

Accommodation: Fully catered tented camp





### **Day 12: Yangtang to Hemis Shukpachen**

After crossing the bridge over the Wuleh Tokpo we leave the main trail and climb steadily for an hour and a half up a gully to Sermanchen La. Here there is a nice view of the village Hemis Shukpachen with patches of pink and purple shades on the slopes behind. As we descend you may see lots of beautiful flowers. After a couple of very long mani walls we enter the village first passing some very old worn down chortens, before walking through the fields. Ladakhi women are usually seen irrigating the fields in the months of June and July. Shukpa in Tibetan means juniper and is used for purposes of incense and thus regarded holy. Just after the cluster of old chortens we cross the Hemis Tokpo and carry on through the village to the other side of the ruins of the fort to camp. True to the name the west side of the village is dotted with very old and big juniper trees. We can do a walk around the village in the afternoon and visit the nunnery. Ladakhis have adopted a very sophisticated irrigation system. All villages are connected by a canal from the main stream of which is 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 who maintains it by blocking and opening the sub canals as required through the day. Each householder is allotted with a time period with the diversion of the channels to their fields. 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.

Walking time – 4hrs, Approx. altitude – 3600m,  
Accommodation: fully catered tented camp

### **Day 13: Hemis Shukpachen to Tingmosgang (Temisgam)**

We begin with a very gentle climb out of the village up to a small pass, and as you do so, 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 trek. 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: fully catered tented camp



### **Day 14: Tingmosgang (Temisgam) to Wanla**

Our transport vehicles will meet us this morning to drive us to Lamayuru. As we approach our destination, we can see various colours of clay deposits that are a very impressive view.

It takes a small amount of imagination to see the ancient lake which left these deposits behind. The Gomba is very majestic standing on an eroded cliff over the small village overlooking this magnificent vista. This location was predicted by the holy man Nimagaon to be the site of a very important monastery. The monastery was first founded 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. For the special Lamayuru Festival departure, we shall spend the day at the monastery enjoying the masked dances and activities of the local festival – truly an amazing experience. Alternative itinerary for non festival dates: After visiting Lamayuru and exploring the whole monastery complex, we shall trek over a small pass Prinkit La 3725m then descend to Wanla at the foot of the Zanskar Mountains to camp. On the spur above the village sits the ruins of the ancient fort and monastery that we can visit in the afternoon. Walking time – 3½ hrs (alternative itinerary only) Approx. altitude – 3200m, Accommodation: Fully catered tented camp

### Day 15: Return to Leh via Alchi

Today we return to Leh. Following the Yapola River we once again drive along the gorge amazingly carved by the river, then cross the bridge on the Indus at Khalsi. We remain on the highway heading east passing through Nurla and Wuleh Tokpo, then just before Saspol re-cross 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, a strong reminder that the Islamic region was once Buddhist. Another outstanding difference about this site is that it is hidden down by the river rather than elevated like most monasteries. You will not miss the very intricate paintings on the Buddha and amazing mandala paintings on the walls. This religious enclave is now managed by the Likir monastery. There is the opportunity to visit the Saspol Caves on the way back to Leh. Not all of the caves can be accessed, however you can visit the very well preserved one with paintings on the wall which are also in Kashmiri style.

Accommodation: Hotel Bed & Breakfast



### Day 16: Depart Leh

You will take an early flight back to Delhi, to then connect to your international flight back home later in the day.

#### Recommended Extensions

We suggest the following extensions which can be added to the end of this itinerary:

- i) travel overland from Leh to Delhi
- ii) Visit Taj Mahal from Delhi

Please contact us at:

[info@theresponsibletravellers.com](mailto:info@theresponsibletravellers.com)

#### Independent & Bespoke Group Trips

This trip can be tailor made for either an independent trip or for your own group such as university and school study tours.

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)

*"We fully recommend*

*The Responsible Travellers to other organisations wanting to explore the Himalaya in a socially and environmentally conscious way"*

*Rod, Glasgow University*

#### More Information about volunteering

A volunteer holiday can be a great way to get to know the area you visit and get a much deeper understanding of the way of life and culture. We organise volunteer trips with local NGOs who have extensive experience working in the local region. These NGOs are our partners for all our charitable work – which is quite extensive as we donate 100% of our profits to charity. The projects are selected on the basis of sustainability and are always driven by local needs. In Ladakh the main areas of development work which we support are: renewable energy power, with over 300 days sunshine a year solar power is the favoured technology and there are a number of different initiatives from solar cookers to solar insulated house design; the second area is social development & education working with youth groups and women's alliances to improve facilities and provide opportunities. You can therefore be assured that the work undertaken is not just well meaning but is put into practise by professionals with the experience to ensure a sustainable and long lasting impact. Finally here's what one customer had to say: *"This has been the most culturally enriching trip I have ever been on with professional staff who are especially informative. Thank you for letting me immerse myself!"* Julie, Australia:

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# Additional Information

## What's included in your holiday?

- ✓ Carbon Balancing of international flights
- ✓ Internal flight return Delhi – Leh
- ✓ 6 night Hotel bed & breakfast accommodation
- ✓ 5 nights fully catered tented camp
- ✓ 4 nights full board family home-stay
- ✓ 1 days guided sightseeing, transport and entrance fees in and around Leh as specified in the itinerary
- ✓ Community Project management & co-ordination
- ✓ Funding for community project
- ✓ All transportation included in the itinerary whilst in Ladakh
- ✓ Porterage and guides fees
- ✓ National Park Entrance fees
- ✓ Charity Donation

## What's not included:

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

**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 £150. Please note when volunteering we are unable to guarantee a single occupancy.

## **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.

## **Quality 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).

## Administration & Practicalities

**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 70 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, griffin vulture, chukar and golden eagles in the mountains and Hoopoe, Rose Finches citrus wagtails in the valley.

### Baggage:

In Ladakh most treks will be using pack ponies in order to porter your luggage each day. You should use a Rucksack or Kit bag that is strong enough to withstand the rigors of transportation in the mountains. Suitcases or rigid bags can not be used as these are a difficult and awkward load for pack animals. The weight limit for your trek bag is 15kg. 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**