



THE DALHOUSIE TREK

Introduction

Himachal Pradesh is a small state tucked away between the steamy plains of North India and the massive ranges of the Great Himalaya to the north. Given its location the geographic spectrum of the state is vast, ranging from the rolling Shivalik foothills to the massive 6000m peaks of the Pir Pinjal. Not surprisingly, there is a wildlife diversity to complement this, with sub-tropical forests, temperate woodlands and alpine meadows in close proximity. Similarly, given its strategic position between the

former Northwest Frontier, the sub-continent and the Tibetan plateau the region has long been a melting pot of diverse cultural and spiritual influences.

The Dhaula Dhar range forms part of the outermost Himalaya and rises dramatically from the low foothills to stark peaks of over 5000m. These mountains are the traditional stronghold of nomadic traders and shepherds. The Gaddis are charismatic folk of Aryan descent who raise flocks of sheep and goat between the foothills and the high grazing meadows bordering Ladakh and Tibet. The Gujjars are hardworking Muslims who tend buffalo herds, selling much of their milk based produce to the sweet makers in the plains. The steeply sloping flanks of the Dhaula Dhar provide winter homes for these traditional traders as well as a base for their families who make a good

living from the land in their absence. In recent years, the lower hills have become home to many of the followers of the exiled Tibetan leader, the Dalai Lama. Thankfully, Himachal Pradesh has escaped the notice of mainstream trekkers and is still an unspoilt part of the Himalayas with most of the local customs, cultures and landscapes still intact. Outside the main tourist destination of McLeod Ganj, foreign groups are rarely seen.

Route Profile

The trek takes us from the small hill station of Dalhousie to the bustling town of McLeod Ganj near Dharamsala. From Dalhousie we traverse the remote ridges and valleys that flank the Dhaula Dhar peaks to the north. Following remote trails and crossing numerous small jots or passes we finally reach the base of the Indrahhar Pass that leads into the Chamba valley. From the top of the pass the views of the surrounding Himalaya are stunning.

Although not high in altitude, the trails are often indistinct and steep. Sometimes there are snow patches to cross on the north facing slopes. The latter part of the route is less taxing but the ascent of the pass (optional) is tough and requires some experience of altitude. The camp staff are all local to the area and this adds to the enjoyment of this trek (it is one of their favourites). There are also very sure-footed and always available to give a helping hand across rivers or slippery paths. A great trek for those who wish to get away from it all and experience the nomadic shepherd lifestyle!

ITINERARY

Day 1: ARRIVE DELHI, SIGHTSEEING THEN TRANSFER TO OVERNIGHT TRAIN. The flight arrives around midnight. You will be met and transferred by taxi to your Delhi hotel (for information on Delhi hotels please see the notes at the end of the itinerary). You check out at midday and in the afternoon we provide transport and an English-speaking guide to take you on a sightseeing tour of Old and New Delhi. The heat, dust, sights and sounds of India's frenetic capital are quite an initial culture shock! This is followed by an evening (approx. 19.00 hours) transfer to the railway station to board the express train to Pathankot, travelling in air-conditioned sleeper compartments. The express is due to depart at 21.00 hours.

Day 2: ARRIVE PATHANKOT, DRIVE TO DALHOUSIE. The train arrives at 07.20 hrs. A two and a half hour taxi ride takes us to Dalhousie (2400m) You break your journey to have breakfast

en-route. A short walk from this small hill station takes us to our first campsite for the night (2540m). Camping.

Day 3: TREK TO FOREST GLADE. Approximately 6 hours walk. A good day of walking along the upper ridges of the Dhaula Dhar, at about 3000m with views of the Pir Pinjal, the Great Himalaya and the Kashmir ranges. Camp.

Day 4: TREK TO NAURI. Approximately 5/6 hours walk. Continuing through Gujjar territory, we trek further along the ridge before descending to a sheltered summer settlement of rough stone huts in the Nauri valley. Camp.

Days 5/6: TREK ALONG SHEPHERD PATHS. Approximately 6/7 hour days. Now heading into the realms of the Gaddi shepherd we start to traverse some of the more difficult nomad trails through wild forest and jungle. Two tough days of steep ascent and descent on rocky and narrow trails, through an area that is home to leopard and black bear. Camp.

Day 7: TREK TO RHELLA. A great day of vigorous trekking as we follow the path to Kareri Dal, (3200m) a beautiful grazing meadow set below the stark peaks of the Dhaula Dhar range of mountains. Crossing Jari Jot we make a rough descent, sometimes on snow, to our campsite at Rhella below the peaks. Camp.

Day 8: REST DAY. A well-earned rest day to relax around the campsite, dip in the invariably icy river or explore the surrounding ridges and valleys. Camp.

Day 9: CAMP IN FOREST GLADE. In the morning a good climb brings us to Deepe, an impressive minor pass with views to the west and east. Following a narrow trail through the forest we then arrive at our campsite with views to the plains of North India. Camp.

Day 10: CAMP NEAR LAKA RIVER. A relatively easy day as we use the larger trails that connect the Gaddi villages in this area. The half-day walk brings us back to civilisation and small village settlements. Camp.

Day 11: TREK TO TRIUND. Approximately 5 hour walk. We climb steadily all day to the spectacular ridge of Triund (3150m) set high above the Kangra valley. An enjoyable day of walking, the trails being good and the chi (tea) shops well stocked! Camp.

Day 12: OPTIONAL TREK TO THE INDRAHAR PASS. Approximately 9 hour walk A pre-dawn start for those attempting the Indrahhar Pass (4380m). A

long day, the steep climb up the pass follows the well worn path of the Gaddi, who cross this pass every year to reach the summer grazing in Lahoul. For those remaining in camp, a day to relax and explore the ridge. Camp Triund.

Day 13: TREK TO DHARAMKOT. Approximately 4 hour walk. A leisurely day as we retrace our steps down to Dharamkot, the forested home to the Butterworth family. Bucket showers, tea and biscuits, then a well-earned beer on the verandah. Camp.

Day 14: SIGHTSEEING IN MCLEODGANJ. Approximately 1 hour walk. Back to the real world, as we visit McLeod Ganj for shopping, lunch and sightseeing. McLeod Ganj is home to the exiled Dalai Lama and many of his Tibetan followers. Overnight the Hotel Tibet.

Day 15: TRAIN TO DELHI. Approximately 3 hours drive time. After an early lunch we drive to Pathankot to board the 18:15hrs evening sleeper train to Delhi.

Day 16: ARRIVE DELHI AND TRANSFER BY TAXI TO YOUR HOTEL. Arriving early morning, (at 5am) there is time for some last minute souvenir hunting and exploring in Delhi. Late evening transfer to the airport to board your return flight home.

Day 17: FLY TO LONDON. Early morning flight to London.

ACCOMMODATION:

DELHI: We use the **Siddarth Hotel**, a comfortable 4-star hotel. Facilities include swimming pool, bar, coffee shop, restaurants room service and it is fully air-conditioned. This hotel is a 20 minute drive away from Connought Place.

MCLEODGANJ: Hotel Tibet. Basic clean comfortable accommodation and friendly service in one of the best local hotels.

WEATHER: The best weather in this part of Himachal Pradesh is from late Autumn to Spring with warm sunny days and pleasant nights. It can be quite hot during the day (up to 25°C) at lower altitudes and at higher altitudes (over 10,000ft) the temperature can drop to -1°C at night. In late March/April there is the added attraction to many of rhododendron in bloom.

TRAIN TRAVEL. Train travel is by air-conditioned carriage. Bedding is normally provided free of charge on the train (sheets, pillows and blankets)

IMPORTANT NOTE: Whilst every effort is made to keep to the above itinerary, clients will hopefully appreciate that this is adventure travel in a remote mountain region. **Given the nature of these treks there will quite likely be changes to the itinerary in terms of anything from on the spot choice of camp site to the day that a rest day is taken.** Weather conditions, road conditions, vehicle breakdowns off the beaten track, local availability of porters, can contribute to the need for changes. Your trek leader will do everything in his/her power to see that you are inconvenienced as little as possible in such events. **Timings given are approximate.**

Meal Plan: B&B in Delhi and elsewhere. Full board on Trek

NOT INCLUDED: Air travel*. Alcohol, bottled water or soft drinks. Entry fees to monuments of historical importance. The Taj Mahal is closed to the public on Fridays.

TRANSPORT: Transport is by private car/coach with an English speaking driver.

SPENDING MONEY: You should allow about £4 a day for incidentals and tips, perhaps a little more if you enjoy a few beers as these are comparatively expensive in India.

INSURANCE: It is a condition of joining any of our tours that you hold adequate insurance cover. This must include medical and personal accident insurance.

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TRAVEL ADVICE: Essential India is constantly in touch with the UK foreign Office and their advice is followed instantly and to the letter. Our base for many of our workshops is in the State of Himachal Pradesh in Northern India. With friends and family still living there we are kept well informed of any local political developments. Himachal Pradesh has continued to remain unaffected by events in Kashmir. Essential India will travel whenever possible, provided it's safe, enjoyable and in our clients best interests.

RECOMMENDED READING: The Lonely Planet India Travel Guide and Rough Guides Travel To India.

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EQUIPMENT PROVIDED. We provide 'A' frame or dome tents which have room for two people plus all of your equipment. There is also a dining tent, a toilet tent exclusively for our group use, and a kitchen and staff tent. There are camp chairs or stools, a kerosene/gas lamp or candles for reading in the dining tent at night, stainless steel crockery and tableware and foam sleeping mats. **We strongly recommend you bring your own karrimat or therma-a-rest as well.** The staff complement of cooks and assistants are always in attendance. They put up and take down the tents, make the tea, cook the food, wash the dishes, load the porters and carry a load of their own. They work extremely hard and are always willing to help. If you want to join in putting up tents and taking them down, you are free to do so, but it is not expected.

A TYPICAL DAY ON TREK

Soon after dawn you are served tea or coffee while still in your sleeping bag. A few minutes later a washing bowl of hot water is placed outside your tent. You can wash inside or outside the tent. Once dressed you can pack your kit-bag and day-pack in preparation for the day's hike, and place these outside the tent. The camp staff will take down the tents. While this is happening, breakfast is served. In the Himalaya breakfast usually consists of cereals and/or porridge with milk, eggs, usually served with chapatis, (unleavened bread that is cooked on a hot iron plate) or pancakes with honey or jam. There is always plenty of tea and coffee. **The camp will be being struck while you are eating, and you will need to be packed and out of your tents before breakfast.**

You can take a leisurely breakfast breakfast will the staff prepare loads for the porters or pack animals. If you have not filled up your water bottle the night before ask the cook to fill your bottle with boiled water. You may also collect a packed lunch, although usually you may have a cooked meal at the lunch stop. Departure from camp could be from any time between dawn and 9.00am, depending on the days itinerary, but generally you will start walking at around 8.00am.

Depending on the length of the day's walk, you will walk for three or four hours before stopping for lunch. The lunch stop will last for about an hour.

You usually arrive at the next camp site by 4:00pm. Camp may already set up by the time you get there, and tea/juice and biscuits will be ready to welcome you. Supper will be ready soon after dark, and will be served in the dining tent or in some instances, around the camp fire. Camp fires will only be made if dead wood is available. The standard of cooking on trek is usually surprisingly good, with the style of cooking being a compromise between local and western food. Menus vary, but typically we start with soup. The main course is often a rice based meal with meat stew or mild curry, plus separate vegetable and salad dishes. A sweet dish is provided after the meal. Our meal is finished with tea, coffee or hot chocolate. Sometimes a bottle of local spirit is provided by the camp staff, but we advise clients to buy plastic half bottles from duty free. However, you should only drink alcohol when you feel acclimatised. After dinner, the usual practise is for your water bottle to be filled with hot water and used as a hot water bottle for your sleeping bag and for drinking water the next day.

We would like you to enjoy the serenity of the unhurried atmosphere that exists in these wilderness regions. Our day to day camp routine on your trekking adventure is geared to allow you to make the most of your holiday.

Important: Before you travel please check your **Tour Voucher** and **Arrival Information** for the latest joining instructions. This will be sent to you upon receipt of final payment.

All itineraries are subject to change without prior notice.