



THE MARKHA VALLEY TREK

The Markha Valley Trek in Ladakh is one of the most varied and beautiful treks in the Himalayas. It has giant rock pinnacles, beetling cliffs, narrow defiles and prayer-flagged passes. The route takes us high into the Himalayas crossing over two passes, the Ganda La (4850m) and Kangmaru La (17,409ft/5,306m). The trail leads us past hilltop monasteries, elaborate Tibetan "chortens" (shrines) and "mani" (prayer) walls. You may well spot Himalayan Blue Sheep, Ibex and, if you are lucky, the rare snow leopard. The views are spectacular and towards the end of this trek you will be able to see the snow capped peaks of Tibet and the Karakorum range of mountains.

After the trek you will have time to relax in Leh, the capital of Ladakh, before your flight back to Delhi.

Duration: 16 Days

Grade: *Strenuous

***GRADE:** This trek is graded strenuous and will be enjoyed by the fit enthusiast who has had some prior trekking experience in the Himalayas.

HOW THE TREKS ARE ORGANISED: All food supplies, camping equipment and personal belongings are carried by porters and/or pack horses. A camp crew is designated to oversee all cooking arrangements.

DAY BY DAY ITINERARY

Day 1: ARRIVE IN DELHI Arrive in the early morning and after clearing customs you will be met by our representative who will be holding a placard and transferred by taxi to your hotel. In the afternoon there is a guided tour of Delhi.

Delhi basically is 7 cities all merged into one and laced together by the new city of the British Raj, designed by Lutyens & Baker. It was one of the boldest expressions anywhere in the world of British Imperial ambitions and has endless sightseeing possibilities. In the afternoon we will tour Old Delhi, visiting the Raj Ghat memorial at the site where Mahatma Gandhi was cremated, the Red Fort, once the most lavish fort and palace of the Mughal Empire and the Qutab Minar, or tower of victory rising five storeys and impressively ornate.

RED FORT. This imposing monument to the rule of Shah Jahan was begun in 1639 and completed in 1648, taking its name from the red sandstone used in its construction. It is said to have cost 10 million rupees to build, much of it spent on the opulent marble royal palaces within. Here the Emperor exercised his divine authority in the Halls of Public and Private Audience - seated in the latter on the fabulous gold-canopied Peacock Throne that was inlaid with a vast number of sapphires, rubies, emeralds and diamonds.

Day 2: FLY TO LEH.

Early morning transfer by taxi to board the Jet Airways flight 9W 609 to Leh departing at 05:40hrs and arrive Leh (3521m) at 06:55hrs. On your arrival you will be met and transferred by private transport to your Hotel. Rest of day at leisure.

Day 3: AT LEISURE IN LEH.

A day to acclimatise before your trek. The main bazaar is close by and there are many shops and good restaurants. Overnight Hotel.

LEH The capital of Ladakh, has long been a remote and fascinating outpost. Its situation in the upper Indus Valley made it an important crossroads for pilgrims and traders. Pilgrims continued from here along the Indus Valley to Mt Kailash and Tibet, while traders would set off with their caravans over the Karakoram pass to the markets of Yarkland, Kashgir and central Asia.

Day 4: GUIDED TOUR. Today we will drive in jeeps to see some of the largest monasteries and palaces in the Indus valley.

THIKSE GOMPA (17 km from Leh)

The 500-year-old Thikse monastery, perched on a hill high above the Indus, has the largest contingent of monks in Ladakh. On the right of the entrance to the main courtyard a new chapel houses an enormous 15 metre high seated Buddha figure. About 100 yellow-cap monks belong to the gompa.

SHEY PALACE (14 km from Leh)

The old 'Summer Palace' of the kings of Ladakh was built about 550 years ago by Lhachen Palgyigon, the first king of Ladakh. It stands next to the remains of a larger construction on the east side of a hill, which runs south-east towards the Indus. From the palace you can see over the fertile Indus plain northeast to Tikse Gompa and over the Indus to the Zanskar mountain range. The old Shey palace has the largest golden Buddha statue in Ladakh in its Monastery.

Overnight hotel in Leh.

DAY 5: DRIVE TO SPITOK, TREK TO ZINGCHEN (10,500ft/3,200m) 1 hour's drive time.

SPITOK GOMPA

Spitok Gompa was built about 500 years ago by Gyalpo Bumde, although one temple, dedicated to Mahakala was built about 900 years ago. About 125 yellow-hat sect lamas are considered Spitok Lamas, but at least half of them live and pray at Spitok's dependent monasteries at Sankar, Stok and Sabu.

The trek begins from Spitok by crossing a bridge and walking west of the River Indus. We follow the trail for 3 hours until the Indus enters a narrow gorge at its confluence with the Zinchen. From here its a gradual ascent through the Zinchen Valley, before we reach the small village of Zingchen.

Day 6: TREK TO YURUTSE. (12,960ft/4150m). 7 hrs.

The trail from Zinchen ascends gradually all the way along the Rumbak Nala until you reach Rumbak, the largest village in the Zingchen Valley. You then follow a trail passing cultivated fields and scattered houses until you reach the village of Yurutse. Camp overnight.

Day 7: TREK TO SKIU. (9,900ft/3,018m). 8 hrs.

A gradual ascent followed by a steep climb gets you to the Ganda La (15,910ft/4,971m). From the pass we are treated to fine views of snow capped mountains merging into the distant ranges of the

Karakoram. The trail descends steadily to Shingo, the head of the Skiu Valley and continues down into Skiu village. You enter the village confronted by towering rock faces. Camp overnight.

Day 8: TREK TO MARKHA VILLAGE. (12140ft/3,793m). 6 hrs.

Today is a pleasant walk along one of the loveliest sections of the Markha valley. En-route we will pass several monasteries perched high on the hillsides above us and the path is dotted with Chortens and prayer walls. Camp overnight.

Day 9: TREK TO HANKAR. (13,078ft/3,986m). 7 hrs.

From Markha the country changes and the warm, relatively heavily wooded section of the lower Markha is left behind. The camp below the twin villages of Lower and Upper Hankar is distinctly cooler than at Markha Village. Camp overnight.

Day 10: TREK TO NIMALING. (15,490ft/4,840m). 8hrs.

From Hankar the trail climbs steadily up the narrow valley. The Nimaling plain is a broad meadow, reaching upwards to the base of the ice-clad Kang Yatse, 21,500ft/6,553m. The Nimaling meadows provide pastures in the summer for yaks, sheep, goats and horses from villages further down the valley. It is not unusual to see the occasional wild sheep or wolf. Camp overnight.

DAY 11: REST DAY.

A time to relax at Nimaling and enjoy the wonderful scenery. For the more energetic, we would recommend a walk to the base camp of Kang Yatze, the highest peak in the Zanskar range. Camp overnight.

Day 12: TREK TO CHOGLDO. (1250ft/4,000m). 7-8 hrs.

Today you cross to the north of the Markha, on a well marked trail, climbing to the top of the highest of the three passes, the 17,409ft/5,306m Kangmaru La. To the north there are spectacular views of the eastern Karakoram. The trail descends steeply to the head of the Martselang valley past the sulphur springs of Chyushkarmo before reaching our campsite at Chogdo.

Day 13: TREK TO MARTSELANG. DRIVE TO LEH. 4 hrs trek.

After an easy decent along the left bank of the Martselang river, we reach Martselang village where transport will be waiting to take us on a 2 hour drive to Leh. Overnight Hotel.

Day 14: AT LEISURE IN LEH.

A chance to relax and do any last minute sightseeing. In the evening there will be a farewell party with the camp crew. Overnight Hotel.

Day 15: FLY TO DELHI. Transfer to the domestic airport to board 05:40hrs Return flight to Delhi. Arrive Delhi at 06:55hrs and you will be met and transferred by taxi to your hotel. Late evening transfer by taxi to board your return flight home.

Day 16: FLY DELHI – LONDON.

TREK NOTES:

A "strenuous" trek at high altitude.
17 day trip, London to London. 8 Days Camping with full portage.
Maximum altitude 5,306m. Average 3600m.

TREK LEADER: Sunder Khampa. Sunder speaks English fluently and for many years he has been leading treks for Embassy personnel based in Delhi.

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: Entry fees to monuments of historical importance.

ACCOMMODATION: En-suite. twin sharing. Delhi The Park Hotel: This 4 star property is a 10 minute walk away from Connought Place, in the centre of town. Facilities include en-suite accommodation with swimming pool, bar and restaurants as standard. Nalagarh (3 star) In Manali we use Bannons Lodge. (3 star) Elsewhere we use the best available Guest House and Lodge accommodation.

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.** (*Subject to availability) 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.

*Dining tents are heavy to carry and are only provided for a minimum of 4 people. For under 4 people a smaller tent will be provided.

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 5:00pm. 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.

LEADERS: Sunder Khampa will Lead this trek for a minimum of 4 people Under 4 will be led by our English speaking Sirdars.

WEATHER: In August it can be quite hot during the day (up to 30°C) at lower altitudes. At night it can drop to freezing at higher altitudes over (11,000ft

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.