

Ladakh: The Markha Valley

India



18 MIN AGE **15 DAYS** FLIGHT INC. **14 DAYS** LAND ONLY **TGR** TRIP CODE



Summary

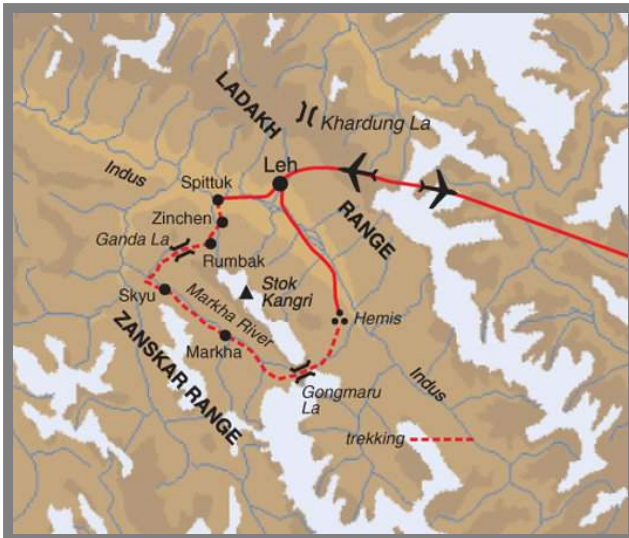
Ladakh remains one of the best places to experience the unique culture of the High Himalaya. As our trek follows the Markha River, we discover a landscape where lofty peaks of the Stok, Matho and Zaskar Ranges tower above the picturesque Ladakhi villages and verdant valleys below. From the highest pass, the Gongmaru La (5200m), we enjoy incredible views extending as far as Tibet, before descending to Hemis, Ladakh's largest and most famous monastery.

At a glance

- 7 days point-to-point walking
- Full portering throughout the trek
- Altitude maximum 5200m, average 3900m
- Group normally 4 to 16, plus leader and staff. Min age 18 yrs
- 6 nights en suite hotels and 7 nights full-service camping
- All breakfasts, 7 lunches and 7 dinners included

Highlights

- Visit remote villages on a classic Himalayan trek
- Explore colourful Buddhist monasteries in the Indus Valley
- Discover multi-coloured rock formations of the Ladakh Range
- Cross wild, barren mountain passes and trek through spectacular gorges
- Enjoy a sensational flight over the Himalaya



IS THIS TRIP FOR YOU?

This is a reasonably strenuous trek involving seven days point-to-point walking at quite high altitudes; maximum altitude 5,286m, average 3,900m. As such it has been graded as 'challenging' (activity level 5). Most days involve 4-6 hours walking, although there are a few longer days, and there are two passes over 4,900m.

Most of the trails are well made on sandy paths. There are a few river crossings. Daytime temperatures can be very hot, especially in the middle of the day as at these altitudes the sun is very strong. Nights will be cooler and cold at Nimaling.

This trek is for those who are willing to put in the necessary fitness preparation and like a good walk for around 6 hours a day. This is a fully supported camping trek with full portage (mules and ponies) throughout; you need only carry your day pack. You may find our Fitness Training Guide a useful reference: http://www.exodus.co.uk/assets/pdf/Exodus_WT_Fitness_Training_Guide.pdf

The transfer journeys at the start and end of the trek are both very short (less than an hour's drive).

As this trip spends considerable time at altitude, we ask you to refer to the altitude warning under the 'Practical Information' section below. We spend 3 days in Leh (3500m) before the trek to allow you to acclimatise before starting the trek.

Walking distances and hours stated within the itinerary are given as approximates only. Timings stated include lunch and photo stops and will vary depending on the pace of your group.

LAND ONLY ITINERARY

The entries in bold at the end of each day indicate the type of accommodation normally used and which meals are included. Please see the Accommodation section below for further information.

Day 1 (Day 2 Ex London) - Start Delhi.

We arrive in Delhi in the morning and transfer to our hotel. The rest of the day is free to relax and recover from the flight or for individual exploration of Delhi. Rooms in the hotel are usually available after mid day. Those who have made their own flight arrangements will join us at the hotel during the day.

Comfortable Hotel

Day 2 (Day 3 Ex London) - Fly to Leh (3500m).

A very early start today for the flight to Leh. We usually 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. If the weather is good and the flight goes on time we should be in Leh early. 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 (Breakfast)**

Day 3 (Day 4 Ex London) - Visit Shey and Tikse Monasteries.

Today there is a sightseeing tour to two of the major gompas in the area. We first drive to Shey, a former Royal Palace of the Ladakh kings. Inside is a small temple containing a 350 year old copper and gold statue of the Buddha. From Shey we drive (or we can walk across the fields) to Tikse, where we visit the monastery - perched on top of a hill - its red and white buildings can be seen for miles. A recently built temple contains a magnificent image of the Future Buddha. We return to Leh and the rest of the afternoon is free to explore. **Standard Hotel (Breakfast)**

Day 4 (Day 5 Ex London) - Acclimatisation walk.

Today we will have an acclimatisation walk round the Leh Valley. Set above Leh on the Namgyal Hill, are the ruins of the Old Royal Palace. From here a winding path takes us to Tsemo Monastery, from where we are rewarded for our efforts by magnificent views of the whole of Leh and its surrounding villages. Descending round the back of the palace we walk via Sankar to the recently built Japanese Peace Pagoda. This huge stupa overlooks Leh and we have stunning views of the town and the Stok range of mountains across the valley. (There is the chance today to make an optional jeep safari to the Khardung Pass; at 5,602m, one of the highest motorable roads in the world. The journey to the top of the pass and back takes roughly 4/5 hours in total and can be booked and paid for locally. Your leader will have details. (If you do the jeep safari this will be in the morning and you can do a walk in the afternoon). **Standard Hotel (Breakfast)**

Day 5 (Day 6 Ex London) - Rumbak Sumdo (3,879m).

By now we should be well acclimatised, and we take a short drive from Leh to Jinchen. We drive past Spittuk, the site of the first Gelugpa monastery in Ladakh. There should be time to visit the monastery with its commanding views over the Indus Valley. From here a new road takes us across the Indus towards Jinchen. We will drive as far as the road conditions allow and to where our ponies will be waiting. After they are loaded up we start our trek into the Jinchen Gorge at the foot of the Stok Mountains.



The trail is straightforward as we follow the Jinchen Nala upstream. The valley closes in around us and spectacular rock formations tower above us. An ever-changing panorama of fantastic coloured mountains surrounds us as we ascend the valley. We may have to cross the river as the stream forces the path closer to the side of the valley. Suddenly the valley widens and reveals the snow-topped peaks of the Stok mountains. Prayer flags on a wide pasture mark the junction with the trail leading to Rumbak village. Tonight's camp is below Rumbak village with stunning views all around - looking left towards Rumbak a fantastic multi-coloured toothy skyline ridge appears in the distance. We can visit the village this afternoon and maybe sample the local delicacy, salty yak buttered tea, in one of the many home stays.

Rumbak Sumdo is the site of one of the UV lamps donated by Exodus and installed by Niyamdro Dro (the French NGO we are working with on the safe drinking water project in the Markha Valley) and there will be the chance to see the UV lamp used for purifying water. For more details on this project see the Responsible Tourism section below.

Approximate walk profile: Jinchen to Rumbak Sumdo, 4-5hrs, 6.4km (4 miles). **Full-service Camping (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)**

Day 6 (Day 7 Ex London) - Base of the Ganda La (4,539m).

A short day today for acclimatisation. We head up the main valley to a watermill and a bridge, which we cross. The trail ascends the valley gradually and when the valley splits we take the right hand fork up past the one house village of Yurutse. Leaving the fields behind we ascend towards the Ganda La and camp tonight by a small stream below the pass. In the afternoon there will be an acclimatisation walk on the hills around camp.

Approximate walk profile: Rumbak Sumdo to base of Ganda La Pass, 4hrs, 5.5km (3.4 miles). **Full-service Camping (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)**

Day 7 (Day 8 Ex London) - Cross the Ganda La (4,970m) to Skiu (3,362m).

A long day today as we cross our first pass. The trail is clear as it zig zags towards the pass. As we climb the views become more and more spectacular. Behind us Stok Kangri dominates the skyline. Finally we reach the top of the Ganda La (4,970m) decked with colourful prayer flags and the views are worth all the effort. Ahead is the Zaskar Range and behind are the Stok Mountains. Far below in the valley are the fields of Shingo. As we descend keep an eye open for marmots and blue sheep, both of which seem to thrive in these desolate, high altitude spots. The trail to Shingo is easy and in the main season there is usually a tea tent here, which may sell cold drinks. From Shingo the trail takes us through a spectacular gorge with beautifully coloured and eroded rocks. We continue down the gorge all the way to the small hamlet of Skiu. We usually camp about 20 minutes beyond the village by the river.

Approximate walk profile: base of Ganda La Pass to Skiu, 7-8hrs, 17.3km (10.7 miles). **Full-service Camping (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)**

Day 8 (Day 9 Ex London) - Markha (3,753m).

A fairly long, but easy walk today, as we trek along the valley to Markha. The terrain along the valley is not demanding so there is plenty of opportunity to admire the magnificent scenery. The colours of the barren mountains of Ladakh are truly spectacular, pastel pinks, blues and greens shine in the brilliant sunshine and change colour dramatically as the sun rises and sets.

We follow the river all day today and will have to cross the river a few times and although bridges have been built in some places there will be some river crossings today. We will have lunch in Sara, where there is usually some welcome shade in a tea tent. Beyond the settlement of Chalak there is an impressive line of chortens and a huge mound of goat horns, which are placed on the chortens to ward off any evil spirits trying to enter the valley. Climbing up to a small col we descend again to the river and a mediaeval fort silhouetted on the hillside tells us that we have almost reached Markha. Just before Markha we will need to don our river crossing sandals for at least 2 river crossings.

Markha is only a small village and there will be time to explore the small monastery in the afternoon. Our camp will be on grazing flats near the village.

Approximate walk profile: Skiu to Markha, 8hrs, 20.3km (12.6 miles). **Full-service Camping (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)**

Day 9 (Day 10 Ex London) - Thachungste (4,251m).

Just beyond Markha the trail meets the Chacham Valley. We will have one or two river crossings this morning. Just after the river crossings is Tache gumpa, set way above us on the cliff face. There is time to visit the monastery, which is the most important in the valley and is affiliated to Hemis. Continuing up the valley we walk through Umlung village to Hankar where there are more impressive fort ruins and a small gumpa. We have lunch in Hankar at the Eco Cafe that we have helped set up and support as part of our Himalayan Community Support Projects. From Hankar the trail turns off from the main valley and now follows the Nimaling stream to Thachungste where we camp. We may be lucky and see Blue Sheep (a type of wild goat) high up on the grazing areas above the campsite.

Approximate walk profile: Markha to Thachungste, 7hrs, 15.2km (9.4 miles). **Full-service Camping (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)**

Day 10 (Day 11 Ex London) - Nimaling (4,854m).

A short but quite tough walk today to Nimaling. The trail climbs steeply to the plateau where the valley opens out. Ahead are spectacular views of Kang Yangtse, at 6400m, the highest peak in the valley. In this area there is no permanent habitation but during the summer months the shepherds bring their flocks of sheep, goats and dzos (cow-yak cross breeds) to graze on the high altitude pasture. The shepherds stay in stone shelters close to the grazing area for the whole summer and we can often buy yoghurt or local cheese from them. In the evenings the animals are brought down from the hills and it is quite usual to have hundreds of them wandering through the campsite. Look after your edibles! We should get to Nimaling by lunchtime and in the afternoon there is an optional walk up behind camp towards Kang Yangtse. This is well worth doing and highly recommended for the impressive close up views of Kang Yangtse, which at 6,400m is the highest peak in the Markha Valley.

Approximate walk profile: Thachungste to Nimaling, 4-5hrs, 7.2km (4.4 miles). **Full-service Camping (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)**

Day 11 (Day 12 Ex London) - Cross the Gongmaru La (5,286m).

A long day as we cross our second, and highest, pass of the trek. Our trail begins today by climbing to the Gongmaru La. It is a fairly long, steep ascent zig zagging to the top of the pass

at 5,286m, but the views from the top are worth the effort. Looking back we see Kang Yangtse, Dzo Jongo East and West and Regoni Malari. Ahead there are views across the Stok Range and down to the Indus valley. The descent is steep at first and we then enter a spectacular gorge and descend more gradually now with a few small river crossings. High up on the barren cliffs we may spot the elusive Blue Sheep which inhabit this area. Passing through Chuskurmo and Chokdo we continue our long descent to the village of Shang Sumdo. Today is a hard day due to the crossing of the high pass and the long descent.

Approximate walk profile: Nimaling to Shang Sumdo, 8-10hrs, 18km (11.2 miles). **Full-service Camping (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)**

Day 12 (Day 13 Ex London) - Visit Hemis Monastery, drive back to Leh.

Our transport should arrive this morning and we drive to Hemis Monastery. (Occasionally the road gets blocked in which case we walk down the jeep track to Hemis). Hemis was once the largest and richest of all the Ladakhi monasteries. A wander round the dimly lit temples containing grotesque yet beautiful masks and statues, will take us back hundreds of years in time. We then drive back to Leh and the comforts of a hot shower at our hotel. We should get to Leh for lunch and the rest of the day is free for last minute sightseeing or shopping in the bazaars. **Standard Hotel (Breakfast)**

Day 13 (Day 14 Ex London) - Fly to Delhi.

We fly from Leh to Delhi. The rest of the day is free for individual sightseeing in Delhi. **Comfortable Hotel (Breakfast)**

Day 14 (Day 15 Ex London) - End Delhi.

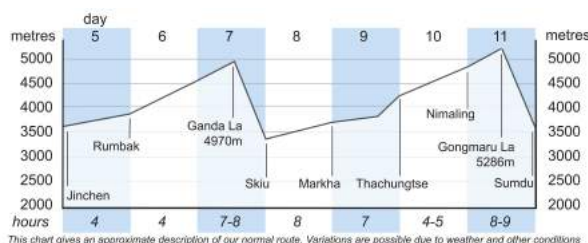
Those on the group flights will be transferred to the airport this morning for your daytime flight back to London; Land Only arrangements will finish after check-out from the hotel.

If you have the time and would like to discover more of India, we also offer a Kashmir extension or a Golden Triangle extension after the main tour - please see below for full details. **(Breakfast)**

For those on group flights, these depart in the afternoon and will arrive in the UK the same day.

ACCOMMODATION

In Delhi, we use a comfortable hotel, which has air-conditioned rooms with bathroom en suite. In Leh we stay in a simple hotel with bathroom en-suite.





The trek itself is on a full-service camping basis, meaning that our camp staff will erect and dismantle the tents for you, cook, and do all of the camp chores for you. You need only carry your day pack. Most of the camping on this trek is wild camping. We stay in two-person tents which have enough room inside for your kitbags. Sleeping mats and bags are not provided - please see the packing section.

We also have a dining tent complete with table and folding chairs, and at least one toilet tent (usually two) for use during the evenings. No running water is available whilst camping. You will be camping close to a river or stream and the camp staff will provide bowls of warm water (to wash with) whilst trekking.

All accommodation is on a twin share basis.

Single Accommodation

Single rooms and a single tent may be requested at a supplement of £240 (or approx. US\$410) for the whole trip. Single supplements are subject to availability and should be requested at the time of booking.

Extra Accommodation

If you require any additional accommodation in Delhi either before or after the trip, we can book this for you (subject to availability), provided you notify us at the time of booking. Payment for this must be made to Exodus or your agent, so that we can issue you with an accommodation voucher. Please note that a £5 (approx. US\$8) booking fee (or equivalent) is added to the invoice. For up-to-date prices please contact the Exodus office.

Key to Accommodation

We indicate in the itinerary what type of accommodation is provided on each day. The descriptions are guidelines only and are used to give an idea of the accommodation offered, rather than an exact description.

Comfortable Hotel, Lodge or Gite - good quality comfortable accommodation. Single, twin or double rooms with en suite facilities and added amenities which

may include air conditioning, Wi-Fi and swimming pool. Accommodation is chosen for its location and character, and typically meets local 3/4 star standards.

Standard Hotel, Lodge or Gite - reasonable quality standard accommodation in single, twin or double rooms, the vast majority with en suite facilities. Some properties have added amenities such as Wi-Fi, but facilities are generally simpler and meet 2/3 star standards. These properties are chosen for their value, location or character.

Full-service Camping - usually three-man tents for the use of two people in a private or public campsite with communal ablutions block and other amenities. Sometimes in a wild camp setting with toilet and dining tents. All communal equipment is provided, and camp chores such as pitching your tent and cooking are performed by our staff.

FOOD AND TRANSPORT

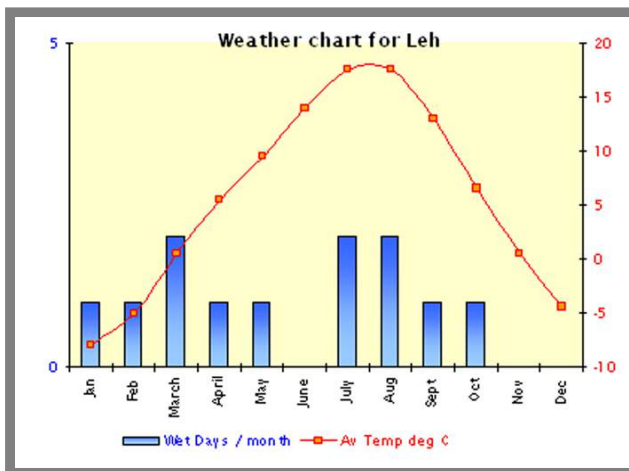
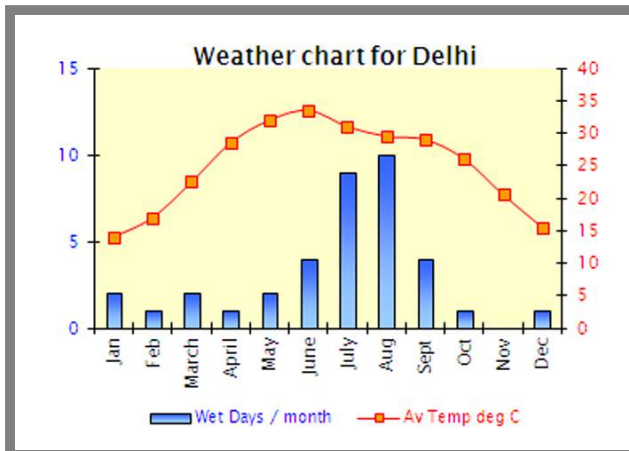
Food

All food is included, except main meals in Delhi and Leh. Please allow about £70 (approx. US\$112) for these.

Transport

Depending on the time of day, for transfers in Delhi we use either taxis or private buses (during busy times such as morning rush hour taxis are preferable to negotiate the busy narrow streets). In and around Leh and for the drive to Jinchon and from Sumdo we use a private minibus, jeeps or taxis. For the flights to and from Leh we use one of the airlines operating within India.

WEATHER AND SEASONALITY



Please Note: The above weather chart for Leh shows average temperatures only. Please refer to the paragraph below for further details of the temperature range.

Generally the weather is good in Ladakh during the summer time, with warm to very hot sunny days (up to 30°C/35°C+) with cooler nights depending on the altitude (it can reach freezing at Nimaling in September). There is, however, the possibility of rain, and you should be prepared for this. The sun is very strong at these altitudes and some of the days on trek can be extremely hot.

Ladakh, though technically part of the Tibetan plateau and classified as a high altitude desert, can and does occasionally experience the effects of the Indian monsoon. Although the departures are timed to coincide when the weather is normally good, you should remember that in any mountain area the weather is never wholly predictable and you should be prepared and equipped to deal with any differences in weather beyond the conditions described above. Delhi in the summer it is very hot and humid.

EXTENSIONS

Extensions are on an unaccompanied basis in the sense that there is no tour leader and no tour group as such but you will be accompanied by English-speaking local guides for the sightseeing tours and drivers where needed. Guides will not accompany you on any train journeys or domestic flights but you will be shown to the train/airport and met at the other end. Although some drivers may speak good English and be keen to impart local knowledge during journeys, they are not qualified guides and are not expected to do so.

Services may be shared with other Exodus clients if they have booked the extension on the same date as you. In the evenings you will be at your own leisure.

GOLDEN TRIANGLE EXTENSION

A visit to the incredible Taj Mahal and other great Moghul cities close to Delhi is an excellent way to start or end your stay in India. The following five-day extension starts and ends in Delhi and can be booked either before or after the main tour. The itinerary below applies when it is booked post tour.

The Taj Mahal in Agra was built by the Moghul Emperor Shah Jahan in memory of his beloved wife, Mumtaz Mahal, who died in 1631, and is one of the most beautiful sights on earth. Close by is the imposing Red Fort of Akbar with its beautiful courtyards and palaces and let's not forget the deserted royal city of Fatehpur Sikri. We also visit the Pink City of Jaipur, capital of Rajasthan, which is one of the most attractive and colourful cities in India.

Please note that the flights from Delhi to London are popular and if you wish to do the extension you should book early.

Please enquire with our Sales team for prices. A compulsory single supplement may be applicable. We need a minimum of two persons to operate this extension, otherwise a sole traveller supplement will be applied (this is in place of a single supplement not on top).

Day 14 - Taj Mahal and Red Fort, Agra

We set off from our hotel in Delhi this morning and drive to Agra (usually arriving by noon). The day is spent visiting the Taj Mahal and Red Fort. The Taj Mahal's shining white marble walls, inlaid with semi-precious stones, never fails to amaze a first time visitor. Close to the Taj is the imposing Red Fort of Akbar, third of the Moghul Emperors, whose mighty sandstone walls enclose the beautiful white marble Pearl Mosque and the palaces, halls, courtyards and fountains of his sons and successors, Jehangir and Shah Jahan. It is here that the latter spent his last years, imprisoned by his own son Aurangzeb. Please note that the Taj Mahal is closed on Fridays, in which case we will visit it tomorrow morning. **Comfortable Hotel (Breakfast)**

Day 15 - Fatehpur Sikri

A one-hour car journey brings us to Fatehpur Sikri, a magnificent abandoned Moghul city. This is an impressive and well-preserved citadel and served as Akbar's capital from 1571.



The mosque, designed to hold ten thousand worshippers, the palaces, residences and halls of audience are all of decorative red sandstone. The magnificence however, only lasted 14 years, as in 1584 Akbar left Fatehpur Sikri to secure his outlying territories, leaving this city much as we see it today.

In the afternoon you will continue by road to the 'Pink City' of Jaipur. This planned Moghul city of broad avenues is built of sandstone and was painted pink at a later stage. **Comfortable Hotel (Breakfast)**

Day 16 - Sightseeing in Jaipur

A full day sightseeing in and around Jaipur including the Palace of the Winds, the City Palace and the Amber Palace.

In the centre of Jaipur is the City Palace, formerly the residence of the Maharaja and now a fine museum containing rare manuscripts, paintings, royal garments and weapons. Close to the palace is one of the most intriguing sights of India, the observatory of Jai Singh. This is an assembly of immense astronomical instruments made of marble and brass set in a pleasant garden. We will also see Jaipur's impressive landmark, the Hawa Mahal, or Palace of the Winds.

A few miles from the main city is the splendid Amber Palace, rising above a lake. The imposing hilltop fort contains large courtyards and interiors with fine decorations, including inlaid alabaster panels and a Chamber of Mirrors. We can walk up the hill and through the massive gateway to the courtyard. Jaipur is a centre of many handicrafts, such as durries (woven rugs), carpets, printed cloth, semi-precious stones, leather ware etc., it will be difficult to leave a workshop without buying anything! **Comfortable Hotel (Breakfast)**

Day 17 - Return to Delhi

An early start, taking a packed breakfast with you for the return journey to Delhi by train. The train is scheduled to depart Jaipur at 0600hrs and arrive into Delhi at 1030hrs. Should you wish to spend longer in Jaipur, there is the option to drive back to Delhi instead - the journey by road takes about 4-5 hours. If you wish to return by road, please make this known to our representative upon arrival to India so that they can cancel your train ticket. **Comfortable Hotel (Breakfast)**

Day 18 - End Delhi

The extension finishes after breakfast. An airport departure transfer is included today, provided you have supplied your flight details to Exodus in advance. If you have booked a flight inclusive package through Exodus then the group flights are a daytime flight, arriving into London the same day. **(Breakfast)**

Accommodation

Accommodation is allocated on a single occupancy basis unless you are travelling with a partner or companion. We use good tourist class hotels in Delhi, Agra and Jaipur on a bed and breakfast basis. These are comfortable, all rooms have en suite bathrooms, and electricity and water supplies are reliable.

Transport

You will travel between the cities and sites using a mixture of trains and private vehicles (car or minibus, depending on how many people take part in the extension).

Spending Money

Breakfast is included throughout but you should allow about £50-£70 (approx. US\$80-110) for lunches and dinners. Please note museums often charge extra if you take in a video camera.

KASHMIR EXTENSION

The Vale of Kashmir is one of the most enchanting places on earth and a great way to spend a few days relaxing before your main tour. The following five-day extension starts and ends in Delhi and can be booked either before or after the main tour. The itinerary below applies when it is booked post tour.

Surrounded by the snow-capped peaks of the Indian Himalaya, dotted with emerald green valleys and beautiful lakes, Kashmir has attracted visitors since the time of the Moghul Emperors. Srinagar (meaning 'beautiful city'), is the capital of Kashmir and was founded in the 3rd century BC by Ashoka. The city sprawls round the Jhelum River and Dal and Nagin Lakes. The Moghul Emperors laid out beautiful gardens and then the British colonials discovered the wonderful climate of Kashmir and

it was the perfect escape from the heat of the plains. Prevented from building on land, the British built sumptuous houseboats on the lake. Today these beautifully carved floating hotels have become synonymous with a visit to Kashmir. What better way to relax than to sit on the veranda, sipping the delicately flavoured Kashmiri green tea as you watch the world float by.

Kashmir is famous for its handicrafts and you will see magnificent walnut wood carving, acquisitively painted papier maché, delicately embroidered shawls and of course the hand knotted silk carpets.

Please note that the flights from Delhi to London are often heavily booked and if you wish to do the extension you should book early.

Please enquire with our Sales team for prices. A compulsory single supplement may be applicable. We need a minimum of two persons to operate this extension, otherwise a sole traveller supplement will be applied (this is in place of a single supplement not on top).

Day 14 - Fly to Srinagar

Catch a flight from Delhi to Kashmir - the flight usually departs either late morning or early afternoon. You then transfer to the houseboat. In the afternoon there will be an introductory shikara ride round the lake. **Houseboat (Breakfast, Dinner)**

Day 15 - Visit the Moghul Gardens

Today we will visit the famous Moghul Gardens. To get there we will have a relaxing shikara ride. First we will visit Nishat Bagh ('Garden of Pleasure'). This garden was laid out by Asaf Khan, the brother of Empress Nur Jahan in 1636. Ten terraces rise out from Dal Lake and are bedecked with flowers and mighty Chinar trees. We continue on to Shalimar Gardens ('Abode of Love'), which were laid out by one of Emperor Jehangir's nobles. After lunch we have a boat ride back to our houseboat. **Houseboat (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)**

Day 16 - Visit the local market

In the early morning (about 5am) we will visit the early morning vegetable market where the men meet to buy and sell vegetables on the lake. A cacophony of noise and haggling ensues as each tries to out bargain the other. After breakfast the rest of the day is free for optional activities. You may want to visit the other two Moghul Gardens - Cheshmashahi and Peri Mahal or you can visit some of the craft workshops - including wood and papier maché makers. If you fancy a hike there is the chance to walk up to Shankaracharya Hill. Known as the 'Takht-e-eSuleiman', the temple, believed to have been first constructed in 371BC, stands above Dal Lake and you get great views of the whole of Srinagar from the top. **Houseboat (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)**

Day 17 - Fly back to Delhi

Transfer to the airport for the short flight back to Delhi. The rest of the day is free for individual exploration. **Comfortable Hotel (Breakfast)**

Day 18 - End Delhi

The extension ends after breakfast today. An airport departure transfer is included if you have supplied Exodus with your flight details in advance. If you have booked a flight inclusive package through Exodus then the group flights are a daytime flight, arriving into London the same day. **(Breakfast)**

Accommodation

All the houseboats have a living and dining room furnished in traditional British style with meticulously carved walnut furniture. All bedrooms have attached bathrooms with running hot and cold water, and each boat is looked after by a 'houseboy'. The best way to explore the lakes is by shikara, a comfortable gondola type boat.

Weather

The weather in Kashmir from June - September is usually hot and sunny. In July and August the daytime temperatures are between 24°C and 30°C. Mornings and evenings are cool and pleasant. It's a little cooler in June and September but still should be hot and sunny in the daytime.

Please note: The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Travel Advice Service advises British tourists on the potential dangers they might experience when travelling overseas. Exodus liaises closely with them and adheres to their travel advice. Although this extension adheres to the current FCO advice, please take note that the FCO advises against all travel to the nearby tourist destinations of Phalgam, Gulmarg and Sonamarg. It's important to note that these excursions may be available to book locally but Exodus still strongly advises against all travel to these areas.

JOINING THE TRIP IN THE UK

15 days, normally depart London Sat, return Sat

Itinerary Start

The group flight from London is an overnight flight departing the day before Day 1 of the itinerary.

Flights from London

We normally use the scheduled services of Jet Airways (depending on availability). As flight timings and schedules change regularly we recommend you call one of our specialist sales staff or your agent to confirm up-to-date timings. Please note timings may change at a later date and cannot be confirmed until approximately two weeks before departure.

Internal flights during the trip are with a local airline.

UK Regional Flights

The Flight Inclusive price is based on a London departure, but we are happy to tailor this to your local or regional airport. Please visit www.exodus.co.uk/regionaldepartures for a useful overview of the options available, and contact our sales team for expert advice.

If booking regional flights other than with Exodus, you must allow a minimum connecting time (in addition to the international check in time) of 1 hour at Gatwick, and 1½ hours at Heathrow; this is longer than the official minimum, but baggage handling is known to be subject to delays.

Free Transfers

Exodus offers free airport arrival and departure transfers on any flight for this trip: please see the Free Transfers section below for more details.

JOINING: DELHI

14 days, normally start Delhi Sun, end Delhi Sat

Itinerary Start

Your trip normally starts at our hotel in Delhi in the morning of Day 1 of the itinerary. Details of how to reach the start point are provided in the Final Joining Instructions - sent approximately two weeks before departure. Hotel check-in times are normally from around 12 noon.

Free Transfers

Exodus offers FREE airport arrival and departure transfers on any flight for this trip, so no matter which flight you choose to arrive on you will be met and transferred to your hotel. All those taking advantage of the free airport transfers must provide full flight details for both arrival and departure in advance; unless specified otherwise, the transfer will be to the Exodus start (or pre-tour) hotel; transfers to other hotels in the same city may attract an extra charge; transfers may be shared with other Exodus customers on the same flight, or on a flight with similar arrival times.

The cost of a taxi is likely to be about £10 (approx. US\$15) should you decide to make your way independently.

Full joining instructions including local emergency numbers will be sent to you as part of our Final Joining Instructions. If you do not receive these at least a week before departure, or require them earlier please contact our office or your travel agent.

Leh Flight Delays

Leh Airport can sometimes experience adverse weather conditions and fog which can occasionally cause flights to be delayed or cancelled. If booking your own flights we advise you to book your international flight home from Delhi departing no sooner than mid- afternoon/evening on the last day of the itinerary. Please also be aware that should you miss your international flight as a result of delays from Leh, your insurance may not cover you for any additional expenses incurred.

RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

Tourism can be a real help to local communities, providing income, positive cultural exchanges and a financial incentive

to protect their natural environment. Ours is a 'total approach' to responsible tourism, covering everything from the way we plan and operate our trips to the practices of Exodus as a company.

We have an excellent long-term relationship with the local operator who employ and train all leaders. We provide refresher training with a focus on Responsible Tourism, so our local leaders can educate our clients locally on helping to preserve the way of life in their area.

We ask that you use environmentally sound practices whilst in Ladakh:

Please note that many Indians are still traditional in the way they dress. Out of respect for the country we ask you to dress conservatively - no sleeveless tops. Although shorts are acceptable on trek only they should be very modest and reach the knees and for women a skirt or trousers are preferable.

Please bring bio degradable soaps and shampoos and when washing near a river use a washing bowl provided by the camp staff and do not pollute the rivers. Please do not bring any unnecessary packaging to India.

Monasteries are places of worship. Please be respectful when visiting monasteries and whilst taking photographs. Your leader will brief you on appropriate local behaviour.

Please try not to buy mineral water. You will be provided with boiled drinking water on trek but it is advisable to bring purification tablets/liquid to treat any non boiled water. In Leh high pressurised drinking water can be bought for less than Rs10 per litre, otherwise use a product such as Biox Aqua to treat water. Burnable rubbish will be burnt on trek. We ask that each trekker keep a rubbish bag for non-burnable rubbish and that you take it back to Delhi or UK.

Exodus Himalayan Community Support Projects in Ladakh:

Exodus started supporting this area in the Markha Valley in 2007, after the heavy rains in 2006 caused flooding throughout Ladakh, which destroyed many houses and caused loss of life and livelihood to many families. We rebuilt two houses and provided wire for the school in Hankar so they could build themselves a flood barrier. When Ladakh was hit by worse flash floods and mudslides in 2010, we set up a flood relief appeal to help support these communities.

Since 2011 we have been working with the Youth Association for Conservation and Development in the Hemis High Altitude National Park (YAFCAD) and a Niyamdru Dro, a French NGO, to provide the people of the Markha Valley with safe drinking water which they can sell to foreign trekkers instead of mineral water. We aim to sponsor as many water filters as possible and ask those villages without to boil water rather than selling bottled mineral water. The plan is eventually to ban the sale of plastic mineral water bottles along the popular Markha Valley trekking route. Exodus has funded the UV filters in Rumbak and Hankar which you will be able to see on this trek.

From 2014 we have been working with the local women's group in Hankar to start an Eco Cafe, which will sell locally

made handicrafts and food. In Leh we are helping a Donkey Sanctuary, which provides a home for old, ill or mistreated donkeys. In 2014 we also raised money for the villagers of Ranbirpura to build a Buddhist temple for their community. If you would like more details on any of these projects please ask your leader or e-mail Valerie Parkinson, the Asia Base Manager - valeriepark59@tiscali.co.uk

For full details of our Responsible Tourism Policy please visit:

<http://www.exodus.co.uk/responsible-travel/responsible-tourism-policy>

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Passports and Visas

All nationalities require a full passport that must be valid for 6 months beyond the intended length of stay. It is your responsibility to have the correct personal documents and to obtain your own visa, if one is necessary, in accordance with the regulations of the country you are to visit. The information below is primarily for UK passport holders, and other nationalities should check with their travel agent or the relevant embassies. We are not responsible for the actions of local immigration and customs officials, whether at points of entry or otherwise, and any subsequent effects.

Visas are required if you are British and for most other nationalities. Visa information changes regularly for India; for the latest information on applying for a visa please follow this link:

<http://www.exodus.co.uk/india-visa-info>

If your trip visits Ladakh, in the very north of India, or Sikkim in the north east, do not mention this on your Indian visa application. This can sometimes slow down or even cause the embassy to reject your visa.

Visa regulations can change without notice: please check the current regulations in good time to obtain a visa if one is required.

Vaccinations and Health

Travel health can often be something people forget about before going away, but a little preparation and knowledge can go a long way to help you stay fit and healthy while abroad.

There are no mandatory vaccination requirements for this trip.

Recommended vaccinations for this trip are: Polio, Tetanus, Diphtheria, Typhoid, Hepatitis A.

The risk of malaria on this trip is slight, but you may wish to consult your GP or travel health clinic for further advice.

Dengue fever and/or Chikungunya are known risks in places visited on this trip. Both are tropical viral diseases spread by daytime biting mosquitoes. There is currently no vaccine

or prophylaxis available for either, and therefore the best form of prevention is to avoid being bitten. We recommend you take the usual precautions to avoid mosquito bites.

The above information can change at short notice; as we are not qualified to answer all your questions about travel health we strongly recommend you contact your Medical Professional or a Travel Health Clinic at least 8 weeks prior to departure for up-to-date information.

Altitude Warning

This trip includes one or more nights over 3500m above sea level, where there is a genuine risk of being affected by Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS). If left untreated AMS can be life-threatening. We expect most clients to experience some mild symptoms of altitude sickness, such as headaches and shortness of breath while walking or sleeplessness. Our leaders are trained to identify symptoms of severe AMS and if a client requires extra care, arrangements such as rapid descent will be made immediately.

On some days this trip climbs faster than commonly published ascent rate recommendations. Based upon an assessment by our external safety and medical advisors and our risk assessment process, we consider the ascent rate is acceptable due to the additional safety measures that are in place for our customers. All our trips operating at high altitude meet our internal altitude safety standards that minimise the risk of serious incidents occurring whilst travelling at altitude.

A number of medical conditions or medications can reduce your body's ability to acclimatise. This may affect your performance and make you more susceptible to AMS. If you are worried about any pre-existing conditions, such as heart conditions, or your overall physical ability, you must seek medical advice prior to booking. The drug Diamox (also known as acetazolamide and normally only available on prescription) has been shown to aid acclimatisation in some individuals, and therefore may reduce the risk of AMS. Clients considering using Diamox should speak to their doctor about the drug, its side-effects and a prescription. Please note that while we endeavour to assist all our clients in achieving their goals, there may be times when your leader decides to delay or stop your ascent based on your overall condition, or the onset of AMS.

If you are not taking out Exodus Travel Insurance, make sure that your policy covers you up to the maximum altitude on this trip (if trekking in the Himalaya your policy should also cover the use of a helicopter for emergency medical evacuation).

Insurance - are you adequately covered?

You must have adequate travel insurance, and if you are joining a trip which goes to high altitude, you must check that you are covered up to the maximum altitude of the trip. If you are resident in the UK we strongly recommend Exodus travel insurance, which is specifically designed to cover all activities on your trip.

Local Time

GMT + 5 hours 30mins

Electricity

230/240 volts AC, 50 Hz. There are recharging facilities at all the hotels, the electricity supply is not 100% reliable but it is usually only off for short periods of time.

Group, Staff and Support

The group will generally be between 4 and 16 people. There will be a local leader and drivers and local guides where needed.

This trip will be led by an experienced local English speaking leader (on some departures this will be the ever-popular Valerie Parkinson). The leader will be supported by local guides, cook crew and pony men and as many helpers as the group size dictates.

In 2017 Valerie will be leading the 08th July (Ex London) departure. Valerie has been leading treks in Ladakh for 32 years now and her knowledge of the area is second to none. Spaces are limited so if you would like to travel with Valerie please book early. If, for any reason Valerie cannot lead this trips we will contact you immediately.

The minimum age of clients on this trip is 18 years.

MONEY MATTERS

Currency Information

The national currency of India is the Indian Rupee (INR), with an exchange rate at the time of publication of approximately 95 to the UK£ and 60 to the US\$.

Exchange rates are correct at the time of publication.

It is illegal to import or export rupees. Do not accept torn or (very) dirty Indian banknotes from banks or in change as they will almost certainly not be accepted as legal tender in India. Please ask for low denomination notes of 100 or 500 Rupees as 1000 Rupee notes can sometimes be difficult to use out of Delhi. You can change money back from Rupees into Pounds or Dollars at Delhi airport (before going through security), but you must produce an exchange receipt showing that you changed money in India.

You are advised to bring most of your money in cash as you may have difficulty changing travellers cheques outside Delhi. It makes no difference whether you bring Sterling or US Dollars. You should change your money on arrival at Delhi airport (the rates may not be very good here) or at the hotel in Delhi. It is possible to change cash in Ladakh. You will need approximately £100-£150 (approx. US\$175-255) for meals, entry fees and tipping for the whole trip.

ATM availability/Credit Card Acceptance/Travellers cheques

There are ATMs in Delhi. There are a couple of ATMs in Leh but please do not rely on these. We recommend you change all the money you need for the trip before leaving Delhi. Please do not rely wholly on ATM machines as often they are broken or run out of cash.

Credit cards are accepted in larger shops in Delhi and Leh.

Extra Expenses and Spending Money

Apart from the extra food you should allow approximately £3 (approx. US\$5) a day for drinks and incidentals, more if you enjoy a few beers, as these are comparatively expensive in India. Most monasteries in Ladakh charge a small entrance fee that goes towards the upkeep of the building. These may add up to about £8 (approx. US\$13) in total.

Whilst on trek there is not much to spend your money on, but in Leh and Delhi there is a wealth of souvenirs, trinkets etc.

India has very good opportunities for shopping, especially for locally made goods, and in Delhi local guides may well offer to take you to emporiums as well as workshops where these goods are made. Many people find this a great opportunity to buy local handicrafts, silk, jewellery and carpets. Guides will often assume that visitors will want to go shopping, it is very much part of the culture, however if you do not wish to go please make this clear to your local guide at the time.

Optional Excursions (approximate costs, depending on group sizes)

The half-day trip to the Khardung Pass costs about £15 (approx. US\$25 or INR1,500) per person with 4 people sharing a jeep. (Please note the Indian government will no longer issue the Khardung La permit to the following passport holders - Chinese, Korean or Taiwanese).

Tipping (leader and local staff)

Tipping is a tradition in India and you should allow approximately £40 (approx. US\$65 or INR4,000) for the whole trip for this. Your leader will advise you on tipping at the briefings. This amount does not include a tip for the leader, this is at your discretion.

WHAT TO TAKE

Essential Equipment and Clothing

- 3/4 season sleeping bag (liner optional)
- Sleeping mattress/thermaest
- 3 season jacket
- Strong walking boots (worn in)
- Lightweight waterproof jacket and trousers
- Trainers/sandals for the evening (and river crossings)
- Warm hat, Warm gloves
- Several pairs of walking socks (not too thick as it can be very hot in Ladakh in summer)
- A thermal layer
- Mid layer (fleece)
- T-shirts/shirts/base layers
- Light weight trousers
- Shorts (or skirt for women)
- Sunhat, sunglasses, sunscreen and lip salve with sun protection
- Daypack (at least 25 litres)
- Head torch
- Water Bottles (minimum 2 litres)

Plastic bags (bin liners) to line daypack and for packing clothing in the kitbag

Toilet paper

Small personal first aid kit

Please note that many Indians are still traditional in the way they dress. Out of respect for the country we ask you to dress conservatively - no sleeveless tops. Although shorts are acceptable they should be modest and reach to just above the knee and for women a skirt or trousers are preferable. You will be restricted to 12 kgs of luggage whilst on trek.

Optional items

Water purification

Trekking pole(s)

Hand washing gel

Biodegradable soap/shampoo

Duvet jackets and sleeping bags are available for hire from Trek Hire UK (<http://www.trekhireuk.com/>). Trek Hire UK can also provide a range of trekking essentials and accessories, from rucksacks to trekking poles. Please note that supplies are limited, and it is advisable to reserve any equipment as early as possible. For trips to Kilimanjaro, Nepal and Peru, certain items such as duvet jackets, sleeping bags and thick mattresses (mattresses not available in Nepal) can be hired through our local agents. These must be pre-booked through the Exodus office to ensure availability. Please call for details.

Baggage and Baggage Allowance

If you live in the UK or Ireland we provide an Exodus kitbag to pack your luggage in whilst on trek. Please note that if you book close to the departure date we cannot guarantee that your kitbag will arrive before your trip starts. If this is the case please use a suitable alternative. We regret it is not possible for us to supply kitbags for those who book from outside of the UK or Ireland.

At time of writing the standard weight limit for hold baggage on the recommended international carrier for this trip is 20kg. We recommend packing only one piece of checked baggage.

Internal flights in the destination country are subject to a weight limit of 15kg.

As advice about luggage allowances for both hand and hold luggage is subject to change, we suggest you check the airline's website for the latest information prior to your departure.

Reading List:

Journey to Ladakh by Andrew Harvey

Ancient Futures, Learning from Ladakh by Helena Norberg Hodge

Ladakh: Crossroads of High Asia by Janet Rizvi

Trekking in the Ladakh Trailblazer Guidebook

Birds and Mammals of Ladakh by Otto Pfister

The Snow Leopard by Deepak Dalal - a children's adventure story set in and around Rumbak.

Most of these books can be found in the bookshop in Leh.

JOIN THE EXODUS ONLINE COMMUNITY

Don't forget to visit the Community area on our website. You can view the range of Exodus videos and podcasts, read trip write-ups which have featured in the national media and take advantage of some special deals on travel gear and equipment.

In the Community Travel Forum you'll find the Departure Lounge where you can discuss your trip with fellow travellers before you depart. When you get back from your holiday remember to upload your images to the relevant trip page on our website. This helps other people see what our holidays are really like and you'll be entered automatically into our monthly photo competition.

To make full use of the Community you'll need to join My Exodus. It's free, registration is simple and easy, so what are you waiting for?

<http://www.exodus.co.uk/community>

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR ALL CLIENTS

In booking this trip you should be confident in your ability to participate in all activities described in these Trip Notes. If you have any doubt about your suitability you should call the Exodus office and ask to speak to one of the experts on this itinerary.

Although our leaders are well trained to deal with different capabilities, if they have any concerns about someone's ability to safely partake in an activity, or their impact on other people's enjoyment, we authorise them to take necessary action which, in some circumstances, may involve asking someone to miss that activity.

Although rarely enforced, by booking this trip you agree to section 16 of our Booking Conditions which clearly states that our leaders have the authority to do this. In these circumstances we will ensure anyone sitting out is safely provided for and offered alternative options where possible. Refunds will not be provided for activities missed and customers may be liable for additional costs incurred.

Exodus operates a 24 hour duty office for emergencies, which can be contacted on 0044 (0)1582 640 045.

Every time that you travel abroad you should take the time to read the warnings in the essential information in the brochure or at www.exodus.co.uk/about-exodus/essential-information?

Full joining instructions including local emergency numbers, and details of how to reach the start point, will be sent to you approximately 2 to 3 weeks prior to departure. If you do not receive these at least a week before departure, or require them earlier please contact our office or your travel agent.

The information in these Trip Notes is given in good faith. Where differences exist between the Trip Notes and our current brochure or website, the Trip Notes supersede the brochure and website. All holidays can be subject to unexpected changes;

in order to enjoy them you should be prepared to be flexible where necessary. Occasionally, as stated in our brochure, it may not be possible to follow the itinerary as planned. This may be for a variety of reasons - climatic, political, physical or other. In these circumstances we will make the best possible alternative arrangements that maintain the integrity of the original itinerary.

As fuel prices, airport taxes and exchange rates fluctuate, and airlines manage their rates to match demand, it is proving harder than ever to guarantee our Flight Inclusive prices. Although we endeavour to keep our website as accurate as possible, daily fluctuations mean that our Flight Inclusive price may be out of date. For accurate prices we recommend that you contact one of our Travel Experts, or your Travel Agent.

The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Travel Advice Service advises British tourists on the potential dangers they might experience when travelling overseas. We liaise closely with them and adhere to their travel advice. For up-to-date advice on all countries, please visit www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice. Should there be any change to advice prior to or during travel, we may have to cancel or curtail a tour at short notice, or re-route an itinerary part way through.

Please note, although this trip doesn't visit any FCO no-go areas, it does visit a region close to an area where the advice is not to travel. If joining this trip, or if planning any additional travel pre or post tour in the area, you should ensure you visit their website to familiarise yourself with the advice. Any independent travel to these areas is entirely at your own risk and is likely not to be covered by your insurance.

Prices and exchange rates were correct at the time of publication. The most up-to-date prices can be found on the Exodus website.

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HOW TO BOOK YOUR TRIP

1. Check availability

Go online to check availability, or contact us by phone or email.

2. Secure your place

You can provisionally hold a place on this trip, usually for between three and seven days.

3. Complete your booking and payment

When you're ready to book, go to www.exodus.co.uk for online booking, book over the phone or you can complete a booking form (available online or on request by calling us). We accept all major credit and debit cards, or you can pay by cheque. Book with confidence: Exodus is fully licensed and bonded as a tour operator. We hold Air Traffic Organisers Licence (ATOL) number 2582 issued and bonded with the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). We are also bonded to the International Air Transport Association (IATA) and we are members of the Federation of Tour Operators (FTO) and ABTA - The Travel Association. This means you can book your Exodus holiday with confidence, as all monies paid to us for your trip are fully protected.

Edition No. JC 01 2016