

Ladakh to Kashmir Overland Journey



adventure
associates

A BOUTIQUE ADVENTURE ACROSS THE GREAT INDIAN HIMALAYA

EXPEDITION MANUAL



Welcome

Jammu and Kashmir, often referred to as J & K, is a state of the Republic of India, and is made up of three divisions – Jammu, the Kashmir Valley and Ladakh.

Located between the Karakoram and Himalaya mountain ranges, Ladakh is a fascinating land punctuated by high passes, snow-shrouded peaks, impressive gorges, centuries-old trade routes and glacial tributaries carved by the mighty Indus River. The name is derived from *Ladags*, which means the land of high passes. Historically nomads and traders were able to move across Kashmir and Ladakh as they pleased, however, this ended with the development of new borders following conflict between Pakistan and India and India and China during the 20th century. Ladakh is a deeply Buddhist region and shares its heritage with neighbouring Tibet. Leh is the capital and is the cultural heartland with many gompas, forts, and monasteries. First opened to tourism in 1974, western visitors to Ladakh are still relatively rare in comparison with the other well-known Himalayan kingdoms of



Spring brings colour to the Himalaya

Nepal and Bhutan. Over time, Ladakh has managed to retain its strong Buddhist identity despite various Islamic conquests which have swept through the region throughout history, and is dotted with some of the most impressive, remote and ancient monasteries to be found anywhere in the Himalaya.

The Kashmir Valley, or Vale of Kashmir, is one of the most verdant and fertile regions of the Himalaya. It is flanked by the Pir Panjal range to the south and west, and the main Himalaya range to the east. From the late 1980's, Kashmir was disrupted by political unrest, however, foreigners are now travelling back to this beautiful region and commercial tour companies are operating here once again. Srinagar is the summer capital of the Kashmir Valley. The old city is a labyrinth of alleyways and mosques, and has a distinctly Central Asian feel. Dal Lake lies to the east, a complex maze of waterways with many houseboats moored on the banks of the river. Kashmir is famous for its houseboats and a visit would not be complete without a night or two spent on the lake where one can while away the hours. Each morning at dawn, a flotilla of shikaras paddle out into the backwaters to form a floating market where mainly fresh produce and flowers are bought and sold. Beyond the lake are the Moghul Gardens, another highlight of a visit here. Kashmir is also famous for its distinctive embroidery and carpets, and there are great shopping opportunities to be had in some of the tourist emporiums in the town.



PROPOSED ITINERARY

One of the best ways to experience the stunning panoramas, rich history and Buddhist culture of the Indian Himalaya is by travelling overland. With roads allowing access to some of the remotest parts of Ladakh for only four months of each year, we cross high mountain passes and traverse rugged landscapes to explore a stunning wilderness punctuated by ancient monasteries, prayer flags and rustic villages. From Leh, we take in the splendours of Shey Monastery, Thiksey,

and Hemis before journeying across the world's highest motorable pass, the Kardung La (5359m), to the remote Nubra Valley. From here we backtrack to Leh and then continue our journey by road to Kashmir, one of the most beautiful regions of the Himalaya, where we spend two nights on-board our eco luxury houseboat moored on the mirror-calm waters of Dal Lake. Here we experience the uniqueness of life on the lake underneath the unforgettable vista of the Pir Panjal range.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- 15 breakfasts, 7 lunches, 12 dinners
- Adventure Associates escort & English speaking local guide
- Twin share accommodation in 5 star hotels where available including; Oberoi
- Delhi, Span Resort in Manali, The Grand Dragon in Leh and Sukoon eco luxury houseboat in Kashmir
- Private airport to hotel transfers
- Private air-conditioned group transportation
- Professional and experienced drivers
- Rickshaw ride in Delhi
- Shikara ride on Dal Lake
- Morning floating vegetable market, Dal Lake

- First Aid medical kit
- Iconic morning floating vegetable market Dal Lake

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- International airfares & taxes
- Fees for excess baggage
- Other meals or sightseeing not mentioned in the itinerary
- Personal items such as laundry & phone calls
- Medical expenses
- Drinks & alcoholic beverages
- Personal travel insurance
- Visa costs

The Gelugpa (Yellow Hat) order is the youngest school of Tibetan Buddhism



LADAKH TO KASHMIR OVERLAND JOURNEY

B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner

Day 1 - Join Delhi

Welcome to India, on arrival you will be met by a representative of Adventure Associates and transferred to the 5 star Oberoi Hotel.

Day 2 - In Delhi

After a leisurely breakfast we embark on a sightseeing day in Delhi. Pulsing with energy and colour, Old Delhi is laced by a maze of narrow lanes, which twist and turn between tall buildings. We'll witness the hustle and bustle of crowded bazaars and experience the full sights, sounds and aromas of the Indian sub-continent. In Old Delhi we pass the famous Red Fort, surrounded by shops and bazaars, the Jama Masjid with its tapering minarets and wonderful marble domes and Chandni Chowk, a busy market where we have the opportunity to take a rickshaw ride. In complete contrast to Old Delhi,

New Delhi stands in formal splendor. It is a city of wide boulevards that offer ever-changing perspectives of architect Edwin Lutyen's landscaped city. It is also a city known for its formal parks, magnificent Parliament Building, the Rashtrapati Bhawan (the official residence of the President of India in the 330 acres of land) and India Gate. We'll also visit Qutab Minar, a 72.5m tower dating back to the thirteenth century, and Humanyun's Tomb, which was built in the sixteenth century and is considered to be the architectural forerunner of the Taj Mahal. **B**

Day 3 - Drive Delhi to Chandigarh

After breakfast we drive 260k from Delhi to Chandigarh. Located on the edge of the Siwalik Hills, the outermost rim of the Himalayas, Chandigarh became the state capital of Punjab in the 1950's after the former capital, Lahore, became a part of Pakistan. On arrival we'll explore the Nek



Qutab Minar, Delhi



The unique Nek Chand rock garden

The sixteenth century Humanyun's Tomb

Chand Rock Garden, often described as a fantasy land. The garden is filled with objects created by Nek Chand, a former roads inspector who worked for the Chandigarh engineering department. There are hectares of sculptures and ceramic objects. The work has received international acclaim and is lauded as non-mainstream 'outsider' art. Chand is often found in his gardens, and is happy to speak to visitors about his works. We travel to the outskirts of Chandigarh to visit Sukhna Lake. **B, D**

Day 4 - Drive Chandigarh to Manali (1970m)

After breakfast we set out for a fairly long day travelling 295 kilometres. We expect the drive to Manali to take approx. 8-9 hours, however the views are breathtaking as we follow the winding road through gorges and ascend toward the mountains. **B, D**

Day 5 - Manali & the Kullu Valley

The Kullu Valley is one of the most picturesque areas in the west Himalaya

and is surrounded by snow-capped mountain ranges, alpine meadows and conifer forests. Manali is a trading town, and important gateway for travellers entering Ladakh. Today we explore the town and Hadimba Temple. **B, D**

Day 6 - Drive Manali to Keylong (3440m) (126km)

After breakfast we continue along the Manali - Leh Highway to the fertile Bhaga Valley. Keylong is the administrative centre of the Lahaul and Spiti district of Himachal Pradesh. It is the only town between Manali and Leh and the obvious place to break our journey for the night. **B,L,D**

Day 7 - Drive Keylong to Sarchu (4290m) (110km)

Sarchu (also known as Sir Bhum Chun), is a tented camp along the Leh-Manali Highway, situated on the boundary between Himachal Pradesh and Ladakh. It lies between two high passes, Baralacha La and Lachulung La - at an altitude of 4,290m. **B, L, D**



The Old Town, Manali



Sarchu camp en-route to Ladakh

Rugged landscapes along the Manali - Leh Highway



Day 8 - Sarchu to Leh via Taglung La (5328m) (230km)

Today we cross the Taglung La (5328m) pass nestled high in the Zaskar range, it is truly spectacular and one of the highlights of our trip. Nestled in a side valley north of the Indus, Leh is dominated by the nine story Leh Palace, and the old town is a labyrinth of alleyways and traditional old houses. **B, L, D**

Day 9 - In Leh

Following breakfast we spend the day exploring the spectacular monasteries of the Indus Valley.

Hemis. Built on a green hillside surrounded by spectacular mountains, Hemis is the biggest and most important monastery in Ladakh. Built in the seventeenth century by Chapgon Gyalshas and has enjoyed the patronage of the royal family ever since. The monastery contains gold

statues and stupas decorated with precious stones and many priceless old thankas (ceremonial religious paintings).

Thiksey. An imposing monastery dating from the fifteenth century, stands on a crag overlooking the flood plain on the east bank of the Indus. Its twelve storeys are painted deep red, ochre and white. The layout of the monastery complex resembles the Potala Palace in Lhasa.

Shey

On the east bank of the Indus River sits the beautiful Shey Monastery. Up until the sixteenth century it was the royal palace. There is a 17.5 metre blue haired Maitreya Buddha of copper, brass gilded and studded with precious gemstones.

In the late afternoon we'll return to our hotel, the rest of the day is at your leisure. **B, L, D**



A young monk breaks from study



Traditional dancers, Ladakh festival

The Tibetan Buddhist tradition of sand painting



Day 10 - To the Nubra Valley via Kardungla Pass (5359m) (120km)

We journey across the world's highest motorable pass, the Khardungla Pass, and at the top there is time for a photo opportunity. On the other side of the pass lies the Nubra Valley, the 'Valley of the Flowers', a region blessed with a climate conducive to producing crops of grains and fruits, with apricots and apples in plentiful supply. The majority of the population is Buddhist, and the area has a distinctively Central Asian feel.

Our destination is the village of Diskit, and we arrive by afternoon. The rest of the day you are free to explore Diskit and Hunder Villages. If time permits we may also take a one-hour camel safari in the sand dunes between Diskit and Hunder. **B, L, D**

Day 11 - Nubra Valley to Leh (120km)

After breakfast we explore the impressive Diskit Monastery. There are

around 100 monks in residence and the gompa is more than five hundred years old. Opposite the monastery is the statue of Jampa (Maitreya) Buddha standing at an impressive 32 meters. In the afternoon we return to Leh via the Kardungla. **B, L, D**

Day 12 - Leh to Kargil (215km)

En-route to Kargil we visit Alchi Monastery, and the beautiful ancient Monastery of Lamayuru. There are approximately three hundred monks registered under the administration of this great monastery. Have your camera at the ready, as this is one of the most picturesque monasteries in the entire Indian Himalaya. **B, L, D**

Day 13 - Kargil to Srinagar (205km), via Zojila Pass (3528m)

After breakfast we continue to Srinagar via the Zojila pass (3528m), stopping to visit Sonmarg (2740m). Sonmarg means 'meadow of gold' and this region is a



Summer crops of the Nubra Valley



Camel Safari, Nubra



The Zaskar range

Thiksey Monastery complex



trekker's haven boasting challenging trek routes, frozen turquoise lakes and impressive glaciers. It is a lush contrast to the arid high altitude desert of Ladakh. On arrival in Srinagar we board our luxury houseboat, where we spend two highly enjoyable nights. Set among floating gardens of flowering lotus in a secluded corner of Dal Lake, with views of the misty Pir Panjal Mountains, fairytale hilltop forts and temples, Sukoon has been sensitively restored to seamlessly blend the old-world charm of a traditional houseboat with modern comforts. **B, D**

and carpets and there are great shopping opportunities to be had in the tourist emporiums in the town.

Early this morning we take a boat to the floating vegetable market, an age-old tradition and well worth the early rise. We'll see locals trading fresh vegetables and flowers as the sun rises. After the market we return to our houseboat for breakfast and then explore Shalimar Bagh, Nishat Bagh and Sankracharya Temple, and in the evening we take a boat ride on Dal Lake. **B, D**

Day 14 - In Srinagar

Srinagar is the summer capital of the Kashmir Valley. The old city is a labyrinth of alleyways and mosques. Dal Lake, a complex maze of waterways, lies to the east and beyond are the Moghul Gardens. Kashmir is famous for its distinctive embroidery

Day 15 - Fly Srinagar to Delhi

After breakfast we transfer from our houseboats to the airport for our flight back to Delhi. This evening we enjoy our final group dinner. **B**

Day 16 - In Delhi, trip concludes

After breakfast we transfer to the airport for onward arrangements. **B**

Kashmiri delights



Floating vegetable market Dal Lake



Muslim shrine Hazratbal, Srinagar

Please note: The proposed itinerary is just a guide and changes could be made due to events out of our control, EG domestic flight schedule changes, hotel availability and road conditions.

LADAKH TO KASHMIR HOTELS WE USE

The hotels that we use on this journey have been hand-picked for their central location, local cuisine, outstanding service and most importantly their authentic character and charm. Where possible the standard is 5 star or 'heritage'. Heritage hotels are usually old forts or palaces, which have been converted into luxury accommodation, offering the most authentic experience with modern amenities. During our road journey there are no towns between some points on the Manali to Leh highway, therefore our stop in Sarchu is spent in a deluxe camp where you will be accommodated in comfortable tents with queen size beds and private bathroom. In Kashmir we use the eco luxury Sukoon Houseboat, a very special experience that is loved by all of our travellers.



Day 7 Sarchu deluxe camp



Days 8,9 & 11 Hotel Grand Dragon



Hotel Grand Dragon Suite



Days 1, 2 & 15 The Oberoi New Delhi



Oberoi New Delhi Suite



Day 3 JW Marriott Hotel



Day 10 Hotel Stendel



Day 12 D-Zojila Residence



Days 4 & 5 The Span Resort



Days 13,14 Sukoon eco luxury Houseboat

INDIA'S GOLDEN TRIANGLE EXTENSION

Whilst in India you should make the most of your time, there are many things to see and do. We love to tailor-make private itineraries to suit your needs. Our Golden Triangle itinerary is a popular add-on to our Ladakh to Kashmir Overland Journey, which can be taken before or after your tour.

India's Golden Triangle is a fascinating journey to India's three most popular destinations. From the hustle and bustle of Delhi to the architectural marvel of the Taj Mahal and the rich heritage of Jaipur, this tour encompasses the best of north Indian heritage and culture. Explore the splendid opulence of Rajasthan's forts and palaces, wander the museums and market places of the pink city and relax in stunning luxury in heritage class hotels. One of the many highlights of the tour is that all the accommodation has been chosen for authentic Indian heritage, lavish appointments, and outstanding service.

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Welcome to India! On arrival you will be met by a representative of Adventure Associates and transferred to the 5 star Oberoi Hotel.

Day 2 - In Delhi, sightseeing

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in the 330 acres of land) and India Gate. We'll also visit Qutab Minar, a 72.5m tower dating back to the thirteenth century, and Humayun's Tomb, which was built in the sixteenth century and is considered to be the architectural forerunner of the Taj Mahal. **B**

Day 3 - Drive Delhi to Agra

After breakfast we take the 4-hour drive to Agra and check in to the Grand Imperial Hotel. In the afternoon we proceed to Agra Fort, a UNESCO World Heritage site, also known as Lal Qila, Fort Rouge and Red Fort of Agra. It is about 2.5 km northwest of its more famous sister monument, the Taj Mahal. The 380,000-square-metre (94-acre) fort has a semicircular plan, its chord lies parallel to the river and the walls are seventy feet high. Double ramparts have massive circular bastions at intervals, with battlements and other fortifications. The fort can be more accurately described as a walled palatial city, and was built by Muhammad Akbar using red sandstone. Agra Fort worked both as a strategic military point as well as the royal residence.

In the afternoon, time permitting, we enjoy the Tajganj Heritage Walk where we will have

an opportunity to explore the town. The Colonial Walk aims to raise visitors' awareness of the city's Colonial architecture and heritage monuments. Personalised, educative and imaginative, the tour highlights the vast range of architectural styles, planning elements and ornamental details, tracing the social and cultural history of the city. Overnight we stay at The Grand Imperial. **B**

Day 4 - Agra - Taj Mahal - Fatehpur Sikri - Jaipur

Viewing the Taj Mahal at sunrise is well worth the effort of a very early morning rise. Described as the most spectacular monument ever built for love, the Taj Mahal is the great pride of India. One of the legendary Indian poets, Rabindranath Tagore, described its beauty as "a teardrop on the face of eternity". It was built by Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan as a memorial for his beloved wife, Mumtaz Mahal, who died after giving birth to their fourteenth child in 1631. Around 20,000 workers devoted day and night to construct this magnificent monument. Designed by the Iranian architect Khan Effendi, only the best marble was transported from Makrana in Rajasthan, and the precious stones



The iconic Taj Mahal

came from Afghanistan, Persia and Central Asia. Specialists were brought in from Europe and other Asian countries to produce the exquisite marble screens and pietra dura made with the thousands of semi precious stones. It is said that Shah Jahan also wanted to build a black Taj Mahal as a tomb for himself on the opposite side of the river Yamuna, though sadly he could not afford this grandiose plan.

Fatehpur Sikri is located approximately 40kms west of Agra. Built by the Great Mughal Emperor Akbar during 1570 and 1585, it is an ancient red sandstone city and one of the finest examples of the culmination of Hindu and Muslim architecture. Fatehpur Sikri Mosque is said to be a copy of the Al-Masjid Haram in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, and its design derived from Persian and Hindu architecture. Overnight Alsisar Haveli, Jaipur. **B**

Day 5 - Jaipur - Sanganer - Jaipur

This morning after breakfast we drive to Sanganer, 16km from Jaipur, it is famous for its handmade paper industry and textile printing

industry. Here we will visit a pottery making village, a block printing workshop and handmade paper unit.

In the afternoon we enjoy a sightseeing tour of Jaipur. The Hawa Mahal, or Palace of the Winds, is perhaps the most recognised landmark in Jaipur and was built as a screen so that the women of the royal household could observe street festivities whilst unseen from the outside world. Constructed of striking pink and red sandstone, it is located on the edge of the City Palace which now houses a museum in all but a single section, which is still home to members of the royal family. We will also visit the Central Museum. Overnight Alsisar Haveli. **B**

Day 6 - Jaipur - Amber Fort - Samode

After breakfast we drive to Samode via the sprawling Amber Fort. One of the finest examples of Rajput/Mughal architecture, the fort was built in the 16th century, and stands as a testament to the glory of the fierce Kachawaha Dynasty that ruled over the region from the twelfth to

the eighteenth century. Constructed by Raja Man Singh I in 1592 and completed by Sawai Jai Singh I, the fort is constructed of red sand stone and white marble. In contrast to its imposing exterior, the interior walls of the palace depict painted scenes with carvings, precious stones and mirror settings. In the foreground is Maota Lake, which provides a breathtaking setting. We then drive for approximately one hour to Samode and our accommodation at the stunning Samode Palace. Exclusive and discreet, Samode Palace has been host to royalty, celebrities, artists, and the discerning traveller. In the evening you may choose to have a cocktail on the terrace garden to the accompaniment of folk musicians or indulge in a gentle healing massage at the spa... or perhaps just sink into the lavish bed in your room. **B**

Day 7 - Samode - Delhi

Following breakfast we make the 4-5 hour drive back to Delhi and transfer to the airport for onward arrangements. **B**



Amber Fort, Jaipur

OUR EXPEDITION LEADERS

VIKAS CHAUHAN

Born and raised in the Himalayan region, Vikas has been working as an adventure tour leader and guide for over a decade. He has completed a Masters in Tourism from a renowned university in North India, and completed courses in the field of adventure and mountaineering such as Basic and Advance Mountaineering courses, Leadership Development, Basic and Advance First Aid courses and Outdoor Wilderness courses.

Vikas has a comprehensive knowledge of adventure travel, having ventured to almost every corner of the country, and has an intimate knowledge of our off the beaten track itineraries. Well loved by our travellers, he is also a keen observer of wildlife and birds, and is a very knowledgeable interpretive guide. According to Vikas, introducing our guests to the places and the customs, culture and tradition and educating on the historical significance of these places is very important to create a memorable experience. When not in the field Vikas spends his time developing and innovating new projects as part of the Adventure Associates team.



JULIE ANDERSON

Julie is our Himalaya specialist, having worked, travelled and climbed in the Himalaya for over 25 years. Her passion for the mountainous regions of the world and the local people have inspired her travels to far flung corners of the globe such as Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan, Ladakh and Pakistan. A keen rock climber and sometimes mountaineer she has also travelled extensively in the USA, Canada, Europe, China, Middle East, Africa and Mexico. On the rare occasion when she's not climbing and travelling, Julie loves to craft new and adventurous itineraries to remote destinations. It's on these adventures that she loves to share her passion, knowledge and spirit of adventure with our travellers.



A curious young monk



JAMMU & KASHMIR AT A GLANCE

GEOGRAPHY

Location: Jammu & Kashmir is a state of India located mostly in the Himalayan Mountains. It shares international borders with China in the north and east; the line of control separates it from Pakistani-controlled territories in the west and northwest.

Area: 222,236km² (85,806 square miles)

Climate: Varies from subtropical to mountain desert depending on altitude

Capital: Jammu (winter) Srinagar (summer)

Other main towns: Kargil, Leh

National anthem: "Jana Gana Mana"

PRACTICALITIES

Time Zone: GMT + 5 ½ hours

Electric voltage: 240v

Currency: Indian rupee (R's)

Weights & measurements: Metric

International dialing code: +91

Driving side: Left

HUMAN STATISTICS

Population: estimated 13million

Life expectancy: 65.8 (male). 68.1 (female)

Literacy: 83%

Official language: Urdu. English, Hindi, Ladakhi and Kashmiri are also widely spoken

Religion: Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism

ECONOMY

Main exports: Agricultural produce, handicrafts

Gross Domestic Product: US\$12.6 billion

National Airline: Air India

Major sports: Hockey & ice hockey, polo, water sports, skiing

Flag: Orange, white & green horizontal stripes with a chakra in the centre



Diskit Monastery, Nubra

Crossing into Kashmir via the breathtaking 3528m Zojila Pass



THE COUNTRY

GEOGRAPHY

Greater Kashmir includes territories administered by India, Pakistan and China. Jammu and Kashmir is a state of the republic of India, and comprises three divisions, Ladakh, Jammu, and the Kashmir Valley, which are divided into 22 districts named after their major towns. The state has 2 principal cities, Jammu and Srinagar.

The landscape varies from barren deserts to subtropical pine forests to alpine meadows, with the Indian Himalaya mountain range covering a vast part of the state. The 70km long Siachen Glacier is the longest in the Himalayas and the major rivers Indus, Chenab and Zaskar carve valleys and gorges through rock to irrigate the land. It is a wildly beautiful region of India, much of which is mountainous. The highest peaks are Nun (7135m) and Kun (7077m), in the Suru Valley.

CLIMATE

The state of Jammu & Kashmir has a varied climate due to its size and variation in altitude and topography.

Ladakh is a high altitude desert. The winters are long and very harsh, with months of snowfall and temperatures as low as -28 degrees celsius. The region usually receives very little precipitation, and even more so over recent years. This is thought to be due to climate change and raises concerns regarding availability of water in the future. Contrary to this, there have also been dramatic and unexpected cloudbursts, where floods wash away villages and threaten homes and lives. The summer is the best time to visit Ladakh, when daytime temperatures sit comfortably in the mid 20's with cooler evening temperatures.

Kashmir has a subtropical climate with the hottest summer temperatures in the high 20's and night time temperatures seldom dip below 5 degrees. Spring time months can tend to see some rainfall, and September can be prone to some post monsoon storms and hail.

WILDLIFE

Jammu and Kashmir has the greatest diversity and concentration of wildlife of any state in India.

One of the most elusive and admired is the Snow Leopard. The protection of Snow Leopards in Ladakh is spearheaded by the Snow Leopard Conservancy India Trust, a local NGO founded in 2000, and supported by the Australian Himalayan Foundation. The core components of the conservation program are scientific research including surveys, and initiatives with the local villagers such as building predator proof livestock enclosures to encourage continued co-existence between the snow leopard and local people.

There are three national parks in J & K, the Hemis NP in Ladakh, the Dachigam N P near Srinagar, and the Kishtwar N P in Kishtwar.

The Hemis National Park is the largest in India with a land area of 4,400km². Bounded to the north by the Indus River, the park is home to some 16 species of mammal, including the Tibetan wolf, Eurasian brown bear and smaller numbers of shapu and ibex. There are 73 types of birds including birds of prey such as the golden eagle and Himalayan griffon vulture. The official bird of the state is the rare black necked crane, which can be spotted around Tsokar Lake and Tso Moriri in Ladakh. The Kashmir valley is a prime spot for bird watching, especially in and around Dal Lake in Srinagar, where there are many aquatic species.

CULTURE

J & K is rich in diverse culture, and it's one of the main reasons to visit. Kashmir is famed for its handicrafts, in particular for its valuable pashmina shawls and silk carpets. Kashmiri carpets are hand knotted on a loom, this type of carpet making was introduced from Persia, and the highest quality carpets are made from wool or a mixture of wool and silk.

Each region has its own distinctive style of music, Ladakh's music is similar to that of Tibet, and the Kashmir valley takes its inspiration from Persia and

central Asia. Kashmir also has a rich literary past, with well-known fine works of poetry in Sanskrit, Urdu, Hindi, English and Kashmiri.

Although there is not a major film industry in Kashmir, any Bollywood film devotees will know that many scenic areas in Kashmir have featured in the most popular Bollywood productions.

The national sport of J & K is polo, and games draw large crowds at Drass and also at the 3,350m high polo ground at Gulmarg, which is also home to India's premier ski field. Adventure sports are also very popular in Kashmir, and the terrain lends itself well to trekking, mountaineering, mountain biking and white water rafting. In winter ice trekking and ice hockey are popular in Ladakh and Zaskar.

THE PEOPLE

LADAKHIS

The population of Ladakh is just over 250,000, and although some Ladakhis work in the tourist industry, most of the people rely on farming crops and herding sheep and goats. Ladakhis are a mix of various ethnic groups including Tibetans, Monpas and Dards, many are descended from Mongoloid tribes from the Tibetan Plateau and are predominantly followers of Buddhism.

KASHMIRIS

Mostly concentrated in the Kashmir Valley, the Kashmiri community is thought to include ancient immigrants from Afghanistan, central Asia, Iran and Turkey. Most are followers of Islam, however, there are some Kashmiri Hindus. Village communities rely on agriculture, such as fruit, and saffron fields, and those in the cities make their money from handicrafts and business activities. Kashmiri families often run hotels, restaurants and shops.

RELIGION

The main religions in Jammu and Kashmir are Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism, however there are also other faiths such as Zoroastrianism, Sikhism and Christianity.

Somewhere in the region of 67% of the total population is Muslim and mostly reside in the Kashmir Valley. The early religion of Ladakh and Zaskar was the animistic Bon, the worshipping of spirits and mountains, and Buddhism was introduced to Ladakh even before it arrived in Tibet. Just under 30% of the state's population is Hindu, mostly concentrated in the Kashmir Valley and Jammu. Jammu is known as the City of Temples and many religious festivals are held here.

CUISINE

One of the highlights of a trip to India is undoubtedly the cuisine; the many rich flavours and spices used in Indian cookery ensure that you will never be bored with the wide range of dishes available.

The basis of any Indian meal is grain - rice in the south and roti (bread) in the north. These are generally eaten with dhal (lentils), sabzi (vegetables) and chatni (chutney), depending on availability meat or fish may be added. The diversity and potential of Indian food knows no bounds and is limited only by the geography of the region. As you travel around India the flavours change with every place visited.

The Muslim population generally eat a richer diet than the Buddhist population of J & K. Wazwan is regarded by Kashmiri Muslims as a core element of their culture and identity. A Wazwan is a multi-course meal in the Kashmiri Muslim tradition and treated with great respect. Its preparation is considered an art. Almost all the dishes are meat-based (lamb, chicken, fish, but never beef). It is considered a sacrilege to serve any dishes based around pulses or lentils during this feast. The traditional number of courses for the wazwan is thirty-six, though there can be fewer. The preparation is traditionally done by a vasta waza, or head chef, with the assistance of a court of wazas, or chefs.

In Ladakh the local diet is largely vegetarian, with Tibetan Thukpa, a soup with noodles, and momos, steamed dumplings, filled with vegetable or cheese, featuring heavily. In and around Leh food options are quite varied, however in smaller villages or remote areas the food is limited to local produce.



GENERAL TRAVEL INFORMATION

TRAVEL INSURANCE

Our expedition travels to a remote corner of the globe where medical evacuation may be difficult and very expensive. **We strongly advise you to purchase travel insurance that covers you for emergency evacuation, full medical cover, trip cancellation and lost luggage.**

Where a trekker requires hospitalisation or medical treatment including evacuation, all costs associated with this are the full responsibility of that trekker.

If you are arranging your own travel insurance please check that your policy (particularly if it is issued by your credit card provider) covers you for the destination that you are visiting and covers any pre-existing medical conditions.

Adventure Associates can provide you a quote with our recommended travel insurance partners.

MEDICAL CHECK

Given the remote areas we are trekking to, we ask you to visit your doctor for a medical clearance. We also advise to have a dental check and a visit to the TM+VC travel doctor for all your required inoculations <https://www.traveldoctor.com.au>

VISA

Most nationalities require a visa to enter India. Information on how to apply for your visa can be found on the Indian Government visa website <https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/visa/index.html>

****Please ensure your passport is valid for six months beyond the end of your trip.**

MONEY MATTERS

India's currency is 'Rupee', abbreviated as 'INR'. One Rupee is equal to 100 paise. Coins are in various small denominations of 10, 25, 50 Paise (these are rarely in circulation these days) & 1, 2, & 5, Rupees. Notes (Bills) are in denominations of 10, 20, 50, 100, 500, 1000 & 2000 Rupees.

There are ATM's easily available as well as moneychangers in New Delhi, and Leh. Both USD and AUD are easily changeable.

Obviously the amount you need, will depend upon the level of personal expenditure, but as a guideline we recommend approx. INR3000 per day to cover meals which are not included.

You can change any left-over rupees for AUD or USD at the airport exchange counter in Delhi, providing you can show official exchange receipts into rupees. For this

reason please remember to keep your receipts when you change any money.

VALUABLES

Please try and leave any non-essential valuables at home (jewellery) as they are not appropriate for an adventure tour. Money belts worn underneath clothing are useful. Do not take all your money with you when out sightseeing. We advise utmost caution at popular tourist spots and at airports. Please do not leave any luggage unattended at any time. Adventure Associates is not to be held responsible for the loss or theft of any jewellery, cash, etcetera. We recommend you bring with you only what you consider necessary.

SPENDING MONEY

India can be a very cheap place to travel, but if you insist on western levels of comfort and buy books, souvenirs and alcohol, you can quickly spend a lot of money. Your trip is all-inclusive, with just a few meals in Delhi not included and so you should not need to budget for too much unless you want to do a lot of shopping. On trek there is not much opportunity to buy souvenirs, however you may like to buy chocolates, juices or soft drinks where available. For meals in Delhi A\$25-30 per person per day should be plenty, on trek A\$10 per day for any extras should also be more than enough.



SHOPPING

There are many shopping opportunities to be had in India. In Delhi you can find just about anything from woodwork, to brassware, jewellery, leatherwork, pottery and ceramics, antique attar (essential oil), beautiful textiles and rugs, and various handicrafts. Leh has a wonderful bazaar and you can find many traditional Ladakhi and Tibetan crafts, as well as Kashmiri carpets and the popular pashmina scarfs and shawls. Be prepared to bargain with shopkeepers, haggling is a part of the culture! There are many bazaars, shopping complexes, government and State Emporiums and Tibetan refugee co-ops, (no haggling here as prices are fixed), which will satisfy even the most avid shopper.

INTERNET & PHONES

All hotels in India have telephones and Internet connections, but not always wireless connections. Unfortunately Leh does experience Internet outages from time to time, and these can last for a few hours or a few days.

Check with your carrier about international roaming options for your mobile. If you are using a smart phone for Internet, check the cost of roaming with your service provider. The data charges can be excessive.

ELECTRICAL CURRENT

In India voltage is 240 volts AC, 50 cycles, though some areas also have DC supplies. Visitors are advised to check the voltage before using electrical appliances. Socket sizes vary, so take a set of plug adapters – available from most electrical stores. The most common adaptor needed is adaptor type D, which has three round prongs.



TIPS / GRATUITIES

It is usual to tip the waiters, porters, guides and drivers but not mandatory. Tips are not included in the bills, whether of hotels, transport companies or any other suppliers. It is to be remembered that tipping is a sign of gratification for good service, and therefore please view the below guidelines as the middle ground, which can be adjusted depending on the level of service you feel you have received.

Tour Leader: INR800 per day

Driver: INR500 per day

Hotel staff: INR100

It is customary for trekkers to tip the trekking crew at the end of a trip. Traditionally there is a hierarchical distribution. Your Trek Leader will assist you with the tipping process, and can work out the split. We pay our staff well, however tipping is customary and a sign of your appreciation and recognition for the hard work of your crew.

For a trip of this sort and length we ask that you budget AU\$100 per person. The distribution is much easier if you bring rupee notes rather than dollar cash.

WATER

It is safer to drink bottled or mineral water while in Delhi & Leh and during the road trip you will be supplied with a bottle of mineral water each day. Be wary of ice blocks, peeled fruit and salads unless served in better class hotels and restaurants.

WASHING

In most of the hotels in which we stay a clothes-washing service is available.

GIFTS TO THE LOCALS

Please do not give money, presents, or sweets to children. If you wish to make a contribution we suggest bringing along: educational material (pens, markers, note-books, colour pencils, rubbers and chalks), soccer balls and children's clothes. In consultation with your local guide, we will organise where it's best to distribute these items.

TIME CONVERSION

India is 5 ½ hours ahead of GMT/UTC, 4 ½ hours behind Australian Eastern Standard Time (EST), and 10 ½ hours ahead of American EST. The local standard time is known as IST (Indian Standard Time) or sometimes known as 'Indian Stretchable Time'

TRAVELLER'S TIP

Start your adventure with an open mind and resolve to take any itinerary changes in your stride – relax and enjoy your opportunity to visit the Himalaya and its people. Areas we visit are extremely interesting, however, some parts remain remote and tourism infrastructure is often largely undeveloped. Please understand that delays and variations to the itinerary, transport, hotels and food standards, may occur.

The stunning and remote Nubra Valley



PACKING LIST & CLOTHING SUGGESTIONS

For most of your tour, you will be travelling in warm conditions so light clothing that is easy to care for is ideal for daytime tours. However, some places may be cool in the early mornings and during evening walks, especially when you are at higher altitudes. Although this tour has no extended trekking, there is one spent in a camp, and investing in some technical outdoor clothing such as thermal layers, good quality warm socks, walking pants, a beanie and gloves will make your trip more comfortable. We also suggest that you pack a good quality insulated jacket or a jumper, and a waterproof jacket to protect against wind and rain. Comfortable walking shoes are essential, as most excursions require moderate activity and the walks are at a leisurely pace, comfortable sturdy walking shoes with good support are adequate. Another consideration is the intense sun at altitude; sunglasses are essential, a sunhat, and a sufficient supply of sunblock. You will also need a small backpack to carry your camera and personal items, as well as a head torch.



EQUIPMENT LIST

To follow is an equipment list of items you will need to bring, please make sure you arrive in Delhi with everything you need so as not to spend your limited time searching for items you may have forgotten.

Please go through your list carefully.

CLOTHING

- Pair of good quality walking shoes
- Waterproof / windproof rainjacket
- Warm jacket such as a fleece (polypropylene) synthetic is ideal
- Thermal layer 1 thermal top is sufficient- wool options such as Icebreaker or Smartwool brand are popular, work well and look good.
- Comfortable walking/hiking pants
- Collared button down long sleeve cotton shirt – good for sun protection
- Woollen hat or beanie



- Light gloves
- 2 x warm good quality socks
- 2 x light walking socks
- Underwear
- T-shirts
- A few sets of street clothes for travel and going out for dinner
- Sun hat & sunglasses



OTHER EQUIPMENT

- Cotton sleeping bag liner/ sheet (for use in tented camps)
- Daypack to carry personal items such as camera, drink bottle, jacket etc. 25-35 litres is ample
- Headtorch or hand torch plus spare batteries – Very handy staying in camps during the road journey
- Trekking pole(s) or walking stick if required – there is no extended walking on this tour however there are stairs/inclines to go up and



down to access some of the monasteries and on some of the day walks, poles can be handy at these times

- Bathing suit – some hotels have swimming pools

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

- Personal toiletries
- Reading material
- Personal first aid kit
- Medication – It is your responsibility to bring an adequate supply of any regular medications with you
- Sunglasses
- Sunblock
- Camera and camera equipment/ spare batteries and memory cards
- Notebook & pen



Srinagar city on water
PHOTO BY JÁNOS DEMETER



Monks dance at the Hemis Monastery



PERSONAL FIRST-AID KIT

The following suggested supplies and medications are intended to handle the problems that happen most often on a trek. Please talk to your doctor to modify the kit for your individual preferences and allergies. We will carry a group first aid kit, but you should have your own supply of these frequently used items. You can purchase some medicines in India without a prescription.

- Sunscreen factor 30 or above
- Lip Balm with sunscreen protection
- Throat lozenges such as Strepsils
- Assorted Band-Aids or similar plasters
- One course of broad-spectrum antibiotics such as Cephalexin, Noroxin or Ciprofloxacin. Should you have an allergy to a particular antibiotic please make sure you bring a course that is safe for you to take.
- Loperamide (Imodium) for diarrhoea



Promethazine (Phenergan) 25 mg or other anti-nausea medication

- Decongestant (Actifed, or Drixoral)
- Anti-inflammatory drugs (such as ibuprofen)
- Paracetamol (acetaminophen)
- Cold & Flu tablets
- Alcohol hand sanitiser – to disinfect your hands before eating & toileting
- Any personal medications



Diskit Monastery, Nubra Valley



PHOTOGRAPHIC TIPS & SUGGESTIONS

We expect that everyone will bring some kind of camera be it a mobile phone or a professional SLR camera with all the bells and whistles. Remember to take extra memory cards and some spare camera batteries with you, as it can be expensive or inconvenient to purchase these whilst travelling in India.

Be careful with photographs or video recordings. Ask your local guide first if it is appropriate to take photographs or to make video recordings in communities and especially in religious sites such as monasteries and temples etc. Avoid close up shots, and never remunerate people with money for a photograph.

Below are a few simple tips and suggestions that may help you get sorted before you go. Whatever camera you bring it is possible to get good images.

- Get to know your camera, make sure it is working correctly and that you understand all its main functions.
- Read and bring the instructions manual. Download

an electronic version onto your laptop.

- Remember to pack the battery charger.
- Have some way of keeping your camera equipment dry and safe from dust. Lightweight nylon dry bags work well and are available in many sizes.
- Tripod and Monopod: A quality tripod is invaluable for the serious photographer. However they can be big, heavy and cumbersome to carry during our walks. A monopod is lighter and can be used as a walking stick for support.
- If you bring an SLR camera a good zoom lens for wildlife photography will be handy. 200mm – 300mm is a good focal length. (Remember that on an SLR camera with a 1.5 crop-factor sensor a 200mm lens is equivalent to a 300mm lens on full frame sensor).
- We recommend that you carry all photography equipment, cords, chargers and storage devices in your carry-on luggage in case your main luggage is left behind somewhere.



Beautiful soft light to enhance your photographic memories



SUGGESTED READING LIST

Leh has some wonderful bookshops where you can find all sorts of reading material, maps, postcards, and also relax with a cup of coffee!

GUIDEBOOKS

Bradt Guide Kashmir: A travel guide for Jammu and Kashmir. Author: Sophie & Max Lovell-Hoare

Lonely Planet India: A comprehensive guide to general travel information. Author: Lonely Planet

Trekking in Ladakh: An essential guidebook to trekking in Ladakh. Author: Radeck Kucharski

TRAVEL WRITING/MEMOIRS

A Long Walk in the Himalaya: A trek from the Ganges to Kashmir. Author: Garry Weare

The Snow Leopard: An unforgettable spiritual journey through the Himalayas. Author: Peter Matthiessen

Into the Heart of the Himalayas: A heartfelt mosaic that takes the reader step-by-step through the textural richness of the Himalayas. Author: Jono Lineen

Ancient Futures: A moving portrait of tradition and change in Ladakh, Ancient Futures is also a scathing critique of the global economy and a rallying call for economic localization. Author: Helena Norberg Hodge

Buddhist Himalayas, people faith and nature: Invites the reader on a journey to a far away exotic land. Author: Matthieu Ricard, Oliver & Danielle Follmi

HISTORY

Freedom at Midnight: The story of the eclipse of the British Raj and the birth of an independent India and Pakistan. The fabled India of the maharajas, with their palaces and harems, their gold-caparisoned elephants and glittering private armies. Author: Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre

India after Gandhi: The history of the World's largest democracy. Author: Ramachandra Guha

WILDLIFE, FLORA & FAUNA

A Photographic field guide to the Birds of India: The only comprehensive photographic field guide to the birds of the entire Indian subcontinent. Every species – some 1,375 in all – is covered. Author: Bikram Grewel

The Mammals of India: A systematic and cartographic review is a major definitive work on the mammals of India. Author: Anwaruddin Choudhury

NOVELS

A Suitable Boy: A must read – A love story, but at the same time, a story of India, newly independent and struggling through a time of crisis. Author: Vikram Seth

A Fine Balance: Set in the mid 1970's, is a subtle and compelling narrative about four unlikely characters who come together in circumstances no one could foresee – A masterpiece of illumination and grace. Author: Vikram Seth

Shantaram: A novel of high adventure, great storytelling and moral purpose, based on a true story of eight years in the Bombay underworld. Author: Gregory David Roberts

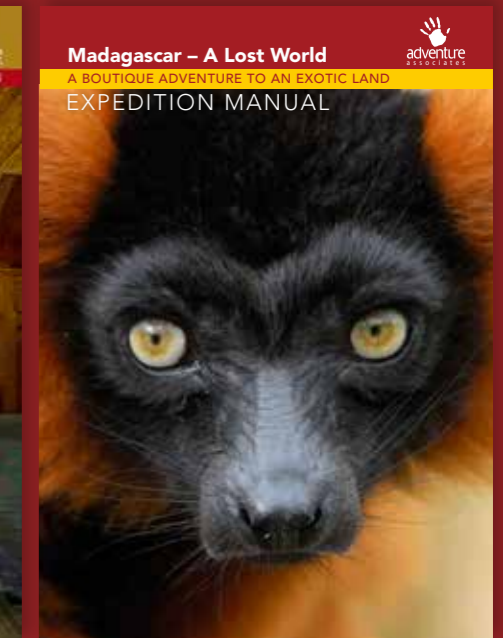
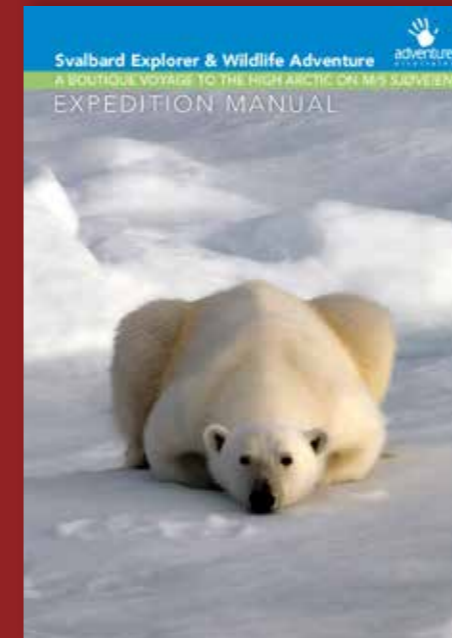
A selection of these books can be bought online from the following online book stores:

nhbs books – Everything for wildlife, science & environment:
https://www.nhbs.com/browse/search?q=india&hPP=30&idx=titles&p=0&is_v=1

Book Depository:
<https://www.bookdepository.com/search?searchTerm=India&search=Find+book>



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