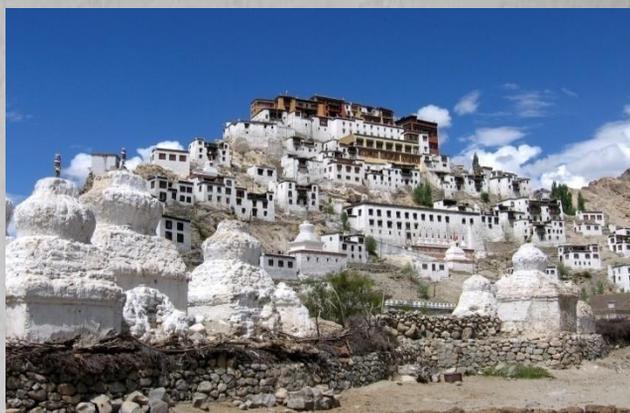


Ladakh – The Heavenly Kingdom

Tour Code LH

The beauty of the Himalayas extends beyond into the trans-Himalayan regions of India. Few people know that a part of India lies on the other side of the mighty Himalayas. This trans-Himalayan region is spread over Kinnaur, Lahaul-Spiti and Ladakh and is culturally closer to Tibet than the rest of India. This is a land of lamas and their ancient monasteries, of the rugged and barren beauty and of clear blue sky. The beauty of the region is to be seen to be believed. It looks like somebody has made these mountains using water colours. Barren, brown mountains which look stunningly beautiful...the most amazing scenery one could imagine. The land being so high above sea level, almost everything is the 'highest in the world' there. Indeed, Ladakh is one of the most stunning places on earth.



Thiksey Monastery, Ladakh

ITINERARY

Fly from UK regional airport to Delhi, India

Day 1 Arrive in Delhi

Arrive Delhi today. On arrival you will be received and escorted to your hotel (your room is available from 12 noon onwards). Two nights at the Claridges hotel

Day 2 In Delhi

Visit the medieval Jama Mosque followed by a walking tour through the spice and crafts market of Old Delhi. In the afternoon you will be taken to explore New Delhi – including Humayun's Tomb, Qutab Minar and drive past Lutyens' Delhi. Welcome dinner at a city restaurant (B,D)

Day 3 Fly to Leh, Ladakh

Early this morning you will be met and transferred to the airport in time to board your flight IT- 3351 (0845/ 1005 hrs) to Leh. On arrival in Leh airport this morning, you will be met and taken to your hotel. We advise that you spend the rest of the day in leisure so you quickly acclimatise to the high altitude. Evening visit to the 'Shanti Stupa' a magnificent white-domed structure, which offers spectacular views of the surroundings. His Holiness, the Dalai Lama inaugurated the Shanti Stupa in the year 1985. Three nights at the Kaal hotel with dinner (B,D)

Day 4 In Leh. Visit Thiksey and Shey Monasteries and Stok Palace Museum

After a leisurely morning, you will be driven to visit the Shey and Thiksey monasteries and walk around the village of Stok plus visit the Stok Palace Museum. Shey was the ancient capital of Ladakh and the palace was once the residence of the royal family. The palace is believed to have been the seat of power of the pre-Tibetan kings. Thiksey is one of the largest and architecturally most impressive gompas. The gompa has images, stupas and wall paintings of Buddha which are exquisite. The museum at the Stok Palace has an intriguing collection of Buddhist art, weapons, jewellery and artifacts, including thangkas painted with colours derived from crushed precious stones. Also on display are the ceremonial headdresses or 'peraks' of the erstwhile rulers of Ladakh. These headdresses are decorated with turquoise, lapis lazuli and coral and gold, making them an exotic sight. This evening you will be given a lecture on Buddhism by a Senior Monk (*Khempo*). Dinner at the hotel (B,D)

Day 5 Visit Hemis Monastery. Witness annual Hemis festival

This morning you will be taken to Hemis monastery for their annual festival or *Chham*. Hemis is the wealthiest, best known and biggest Gompa of Ladakh. The core event of the monastic festival is a highly choreographed ritual dance-drama known as 'Chhams', which is directed by the 'Chham-spon', the mystic dance master of the monastery. A select group of resident lamas of the monastery, dressed in brightly patterned brocade, robes, perform these dances in the courtyard of the monastery. They also wear masks representing various divinities, which are mostly found in the form of statues in the "Gon Khang", the room dedicated to the guardian divinities. All in all a very unique and unforgettable experience! Dinner at the hotel (B,D)

Day 6 Leh – Lamayuru – Alchi. Visit the monasteries of Ridzong and Lamayuru

We drive through the most spectacular high narrow mountain roads, sheer drops in steep gorges and jagged

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snow capped peaks as a backdrop to visit the monasteries of Ridzong and Lamayuru. Ridzong Monastery is a Gelugpa Monastery built approximately 120 years ago and is located high in the mountains. You will also visit the Thardot Choeling Nunnery – a nunnery with approximately 23 nuns to know and learn more about their life style. Lamayuru Monastery is perched on a steep rock mountain. It belongs to the Red-Hat sect of Buddhism and houses approximately 150 Buddhist monks. The monastery is made up of a number of shrines and has a very rich collection of thankas and magnificent wall paintings. Tented camp at Uley Ethnic Resort (B,L,D)

Day 7 Alchi – Leh. Visit Alchi, Likir and Basgo monasteries

Today we visit the Alchi, Likir and Basgo monasteries. Alchi' gumpa is situated on the banks of the Indus and is one of the oldest standing monasteries in Ladakh built in the 11 century and has some of the most vibrant frescoes on its walls. The name Likir means "The Naga - Encircled". The reason behind this naming of Likir Gumpa of Ladakh is that it stands surrounded by the bodies of the two great serpent spirits, the Naga-rajahs, Nanda and Taksako. The monastery was founded in the latter half of the 11th century. It belongs to the Yellow Hat Sect, founded by Tsongkhapa. Basgo is an ancient citadel complex and it is located in a very dramatic landscape. Overnight at the Kaal hotel, Leh. (B,L,D). Barbeque dinner

Day 8 Leh - Nubra

Today you will be driven to Nubra via Khardungla (at 5602 metres Khardungla is the highest motorable pass in the world). From Khardungla cross over to the other side for Nubra Valley (the total driving time would be 5 hours). The rest of the day will be at leisure. Popularly known as 'Ldumra' or the 'valley of flowers', it is situated in the north of Ladakh between Karakoram and Ladakh ranges of Himalayas. This evening you will be taken to the sand dunes at Hundar and may opt for a ride on the double humped Bactrian camel. Tented camp at the Organic Retreat (B,L,D)

Day 9 Visit Diskit and Samstangling Monastery

Diskit Monastery is the oldest and largest Buddhist monastery in the Nubra Valley. It belongs to the Gelugpa sect of Tibetan Buddhism. It was founded in the 14th century. Samstangling Monastery is 132 years old, founded by Lama Tsultim Nima, and made up of six chambers is one of the most beautiful monasteries in Ladakh. There are 100 resident monks including 40 novice monks taking education in Buddhist philosophy school of this monastery. We return to Leh (5 hours) via Khardungla. Two nights at the Kaal hotel with dinner at a city restaurant with a cultural performance (B,L,D)

Day 10 Leh - Pangong Tso - Leh

Today we have an day excursion to Pangong Tso via Chang la (3rd highest motor able pass) (5 hours one way). The lake is about 130 km long, 5-6 km wide, straddling across the border between India & China. The ochre hills of the Change-chenmo range surrounding it from the north provide a spectacular backdrop to the blue and green expanse of its brackish water. A day in Leh to explore the city at one's own pace is an alternative option (B,L,D)

Day 11 Leh – Delhi

Early this morning, you will be collected from your hotel and will be transferred to the airport in time to board your flight IT-3342 (0705 /0815 hrs) to Delhi. On arrival in Delhi, you will be met and taken to your hotel The rest of the day may be spent in leisure or free to explore the city on your own. In the evening you will be taken for a farewell dinner. Overnight at the Claridges hotel (B,D)

Day 12 Delhi.

Tour ends after breakfast this morning (B)

Cost £1995.00 per person in a twin room (excluding international flight to Delhi) Single supplement £335.00



Price includes –

- ▶ Tour accompanied from London by Patrick Syder
- ▶ Specialist local guides for the duration of the tour
- ▶ Domestic return flight Delhi/Leh with Kingfisher Airways
- ▶ All transportation by a/c coach and Toyota jeep in Ladakh
- ▶ Full sightseeing programme including all entrance fees
- ▶ Best available accommodation in Ladakh
- ▶ Quality four star hotel in Delhi
- ▶ All meals in Ladakh plus cultural evening. Dinners in Delhi
- ▶ Airport transfers
- ▶ Porter, hotel and restaurant staff gratuities
- ▶ Entrances to the Hemis Festival
- ▶ Entry Permits to Lamayuru, Nubra Valley and Pangong Lake
- ▶ All currently applicable taxes

Please note this tour involves long driving days, high altitudes, rugged terrain and simple accommodation

PLEASE NOTE – personal travel insurance, applicable visa fees, alcoholic drinks, guide and driver gratuities, Turkish Airline international and domestic flights are not included in the land tour cost (international flights start from £550.00 through Flight Centre UK)(Included meals denoted by B Breakfast, L Lunch, D Dinner)

Chham Dance, Hemis Festival, Ladakh,