



## Trip Dossier for India – Indian Summer Hike

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Be adventurous and travel to Northern India for a walking holiday to visit the remote and dramatic landscapes of Ladakh - a unique part of the Himalayas which remains dry during the monsoon season and is in reality a high altitude desert. After flying over the Himalayas you'll experience the unique Tibetan culture, visit characteristic Buddhist Monasteries and the kids will have a chance to dress up in stove-pipe hats and felt turned-up boots! Then during five days of walking you'll meet friendly local people going about their simple lives in mountain villages. There's also a chance to go white-water rafting on the Indus River. As a total contrast there is the chance to extend your time visiting the Taj Mahal in Agra.

### Day 1 Fly to Delhi

Depart from London to Delhi by overnight flight.

### Day 2 Arrive Delhi; tour of Old Delhi

The flight arrives in Delhi in the morning. On arrival you will be met and transferred to your hotel. This afternoon you are introduced to the sight, sounds and colours of the old part of the city. Old Delhi pulses with the energy, hustle and bustle of thronged bazaars and is laced by a maze of narrow lanes which twist and turn between tall, leaning houses. It is crammed full of the sights, sounds and aromas of the Indian sub-continent. You will see the famous Red Fort, surrounded by shops and bazaars (built by the Emperor Shah Jehan – the builder of Taj Mahal), the Jama Masjid mosque, with its tapering minarets and wonderful marble domes. Amid the hustle and bustle of Old Delhi, a cycle rickshaw moves faster than a Ferrari. Take a ride on one and travel through the lanes of this marvellous old city and wander through the bazaar and learn to haggle. **Hotel with swimming pool (breakfast)**

### Day 3 Fly to Leh (3500m); explore the local markets

An early flight takes you beyond the reach of the monsoon to Leh, the capital of Ladakh. This has to be one of the most sensational scheduled flights in the world, taking you right over the top of the Greater Himalaya before dropping in a series of steep turns to land at the small military airport at Leh; flight time is about 70 minutes. Rich in history and culture, Leh is situated in a fertile valley north of the Indus River at an altitude of 3500 metres. The rest of the day is left free to rest to help adjust to the altitude. *Please note the maximum weight for luggage on board the aircraft is 20 kg per person.* **Hotel 3 nights (breakfast, lunch & dinner)**

### Day 4 Visit Shanka Gompa & Leh Palace (3500m)

This morning you'll take a tour to explore Shanka Gompa, Shanti Stupa and the stunning 16<sup>th</sup> Century Royal Palace. Take it easy today and enjoy the tour around town. Leh is very Tibetan; the national dress of 'stove-pipe' hats and felt boots with turned-up toes are much in evidence, and the children will get a chance to dress up. The Royal Palace, which dominates the town, is very reminiscent of the Potala in Lhasa and Tibetan Buddhist monasteries. Large *chortens* (Tibetan Buddhist dome-shaped monuments), prayer flags and mud brick houses with flat roofs are evidence of a dramatic culture change from the hot and frenetic rush of Delhi. But don't try to do too much on this first day! Look around the bazaars and if you're feeling really keen and strong, walk out to one of the villages just to the north. In the summer there are often polo matches at the polo ground in the old part of town. **(breakfast, lunch & dinner)**

### Day 5 Visit famous monasteries of Shey, Thikse & Hemis

Shey, 15 kilometres southeast of Leh, was once the capital of Ladakh. The Royal Family had to abandon their palace in the last century and it now lies in ruins but is crowned by a golden *chorten* spire with a colossal metal Buddha. Further down the valley you come across Thikse which rises up the rocky hills in a series of whitewashed *chortens* and monks' cubed cells and crowned by an ochre and red-painted temple complex. The next stop is Hemis, which has become known for its famous summer festival and monastery. Built in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, it is one of the most important monasteries in Ladakh. **(breakfast, lunch & dinner)**

### Day 6 Optional river rafting trip, Likir

This morning, there is an opportunity to enjoy an optional and easy river rafting trip (grade 2 – 3) down the Indus River. After lunch you'll drive to Likir where you can visit the Likir monastery, one of the richest in Ladakh. It also provides financial aid to many other monasteries. An amazing 40-foot high statue of Buddha adorns the entrance. Then it is time to set up camp ready for the start of the trek.

Your walk in the Sham area is relatively easy, and supported by one or two ponies in case the children need a break from walking. You will discover fascinating regions around the Indus Valley. During the trek we will cross



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some low passes such as Charaste la (3650m), Sarmanchan la (3750m) and Maptek la (3850m). The walk also provides an insight into Ladakh and its inhabitants living in rural villages. You will be able to interact with Ladakhi people busy working in the fields, grazing their animals or praying in the village *gompas* (monasteries). You will also get a chance to visit some of Ladakh's famous *gompas* such as Likir, Rizong, Lamayuru and Alchi. There is a lot to see and discover about the local people and their culture. **Camp (breakfast, lunch & dinner)**

## Day 7 Walk to Yangtang via Sumdo (3600 m)

This morning after breakfast you set off on your trek to Yangtang via the small village of Sumdo (it only has 2 or 3 houses). The walk is on a semi-metalled jeep road with hardly any vehicles passing by. Cross the small pass of Charaste La (3700m) to reach Yangtang. The fields of the village are visible from the top and before harvesting season it looks like an oasis suspended in the air (3 – 4 hours walk). You set up camp near the village school or at the riverbank. **Camp (breakfast, lunch & dinner)**

## Day 8 Visit Rizong Monastery (3400m)

Today you make a side trip to visit Rizong Gompa. The monastery is situated on a small hill nestling deep inside the valley and the area surrounding it is exceptionally beautiful (5 hours return walk). **Camp (breakfast, lunch & dinner)**

## Day 9 Walk to Hemis Schkpachan (3596m)

Today's trek to Hemis Schkpachan is a very easy and short trekking day, through a beautiful lunar landscape. You'll be crossing one pass, Phobe La (3550m). Then trek down to the river bank, cross the river and start climbing to left side. The beautiful village of Hemis Schkpachan, dotted with *chortens*, is visible from the top of the Sarmanchan La (about 3 hours). In the afternoon there is enough time to visit the beautiful Village of Hemis Schkpachan. **Camp (breakfast, lunch & dinner)**

## Day 10 Walk to Ang & Themisgam

Today's trek will take you to the unforgettable oasis of Themisgam and its vast fertile valley, one of the greenest places in Ladakh. After an hour's walk, you'll ascend towards Meptak La (3850m). You descend towards Themisgam, passing through Ang village en route. This afternoon you can visit Themisgam, monastery and village (4 – 5 hours walk). **Camp (breakfast, lunch & dinner)**

## Day 11 Walk to Khaltse & Lamayuru

To day you can either continue your walk from Themisgam to Khaltse via Bongbon La (3630m – about 3-4 hours walk) and later drive to Lamayuru from Khaltse. Alternatively, you can finish trekking at Themisgam and drive to Lamayuru via Khaltse. This afternoon you'll visit the region's most famous monastery at Lamayuru; it is very much the archetypal Ladakhi Gompa, perched on a hilltop with a small village at the base of the hill, overlooking the mighty Indus River. The *gompa* complex includes one of the oldest libraries in the region, which has extensive books and other literature on the Tibetan Kagyupa Sect. Also on display are some murals on the 11-headed and 1000-armed Avalokiteshwara image. There are also some rock caves, which are tastefully decorated with carpets, Tibetan tables and butter lamps. **Camp (breakfast, lunch & dinner)**

## Day 12 Drive to Alchi and return to Leh

A visit to Alchi Monastery is a must as it was constructed in the 11<sup>th</sup> century and is mostly in its original state. It is considered to be the oldest Monastery of Ladakh and is home to some amazing ancient wall paintings and wood sculpture, miraculously preserved for over nine centuries. The earliest murals are regarded as the finest surviving examples of a style that flourished in Kashmir during the "Second Spreading" and which luckily escaped the Muslim ravaging in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. If there is time you may be able to visit Basgo Gompa before returning to Leh. The rest of the day and evening are at leisure. **Hotel (breakfast)**

## Day 13 Fly to Delhi;

An early morning flight takes you back to Delhi. On your arrival at Delhi airport you will be met and taken to your hotel. The rest of the day is free to explore or for some last-minute souvenir hunting. **Hotel with swimming pool (breakfast)**

## Day 14 Fly to London

This morning you will be transferred to Delhi Airport for your international flight to London.

## Three-Day Extension to Agra and the Taj Mahal

It is possible to extend your stay in India and visit the famous Taj Mahal.



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## **Day 14 Drive to Agra and visit the Taj Mahal**

This morning a coach will be waiting to take you to Agra. This is about a five hour drive on India's best road and a great way to see the countryside from the comfort of an air-conditioned coach. Even though everyone knows the Taj Mahal from pictures, you cannot fail to be impressed as you pass through the doors and see the most famous and awe-inspiring monument to love in the world. It was built by the Moghal Emperor Shah Jahan as a memorial to his beloved wife. After visiting the Taj, you will also visit the Red Fort. This powerful fortress of red sandstone encompasses, within its 2.5 kilometre long enclosure walls, the imperial city of the Moghul rulers. It comprises many fairy-tale palaces, such as the Jahangir Palace and the Khas Mahal, built by Shah Jahan; audience halls, such as the Diwan-i-Khas; and two very beautiful mosques. **Hotel (breakfast)**

## **Day 15 Visit to Fatehpur Sikri. Return to Delhi**

Not far away from Agra is the abandoned yet perfectly preserved ghost city of Fatehpur Sikri. Built as his capital by the Moghul Emperor Akbar in the 16<sup>th</sup> century it was abandoned after only 15 years because the water supply dried up. The dry atmosphere has ensured its preservation and you will be entranced by the shifting colours of the rosy pink sandstone construction. This afternoon you'll drive back to Delhi after visiting Fatehpur Sikri. The evening is at leisure. **Hotel with swimming pool (breakfast)**

## **Day 16 Fly to London**

This morning you will be transferred to Delhi Airport for your return flight to London. Arrive in London early evening.

## **Six-Day Extension into Rajasthan**

If you have longer, you can visit the Taj Mahal and journey deeper into the colourful state of Rajasthan

## **Day 14 Drive to Agra and visit the Taj Mahal**

This morning a coach will be waiting to take you to Agra. This is about a five hour drive on India's best road and a great way to see the countryside from the comfort of an air-conditioned coach. In order to see the Taj at sunset you will first visit the Red Fort. This powerful fortress of red sandstone encompasses, within its 2.5 km long enclosure walls, the imperial city of the Moghul rulers. It comprises many fairy-tale palaces, such as the Jahangir Palace and the Khas Mahal, built by Shah Jahan; audience halls, such as the Diwan-i-Khas; and two very beautiful mosques. Then it will be time to visit the Taj. Even though everyone knows the Taj Mahal from pictures, you cannot fail to be impressed as you pass through the doors and see the most famous and awe-inspiring monument to love in the world. It was built by the Moghul Emperor Shah Jahan as a memorial to his beloved wife. **Hotel (breakfast)**

## **Day 15 Fatehpur Sikri to Bharatpur**

Not far away from Agra is the abandoned yet perfectly preserved ghost city of Fatehpur Sikri. Built as his capital by the Moghul Emperor Akbar in the 16<sup>th</sup> century it was abandoned after only 15 years because the water supply dried up. The dry atmosphere has ensured its preservation and you will be entranced by the shifting colours of the rosy pink sandstone construction. Not far away is Bharatpur, a walled town full of life with traditional markets, mosques and temples. However, the main attraction here is the Keoladeo National Park and you have the opportunity to make an optional visit there this evening to observe the birdlife at dusk. **Hotel (breakfast)**

## **Day 16 Keoladeo Bird Sanctuary; Jaipur**

Today you'll climb aboard a cycle rickshaw to explore Keoladeo. This is India's most famous bird sanctuary and home to an abundance of wildlife. As well as a wealth of exotic birdlife you may also see black buck, deer, boar, chital, lizard and python. Later on today you drive to Jaipur, capital of Rajasthan. **Hotel (breakfast)**

## **Day 17 Jaipur**

Known as the "Pink City", Jaipur, is the third city in the Golden Triangle; Delhi and Agra making up the other two corners. The "Pink" refers to the old quarter, a reddish colour wash applied to the old palaces of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A full day tour will enable you to visit the magnificent City Palace, part of which is still occupied by the royal family, and the Observatory, a centre for medieval Indian astronomy with an impressive 27-metre-high sundial. You'll also visit the Amber Fort which dominates the hills about 10 kilometres to the north of the city. With its natural defences, high walls and series of gates, the fort is full of Moghul influence that you will recognise from your visit to Fatehpur and Agra. **Hotel (breakfast)**

## **Day 18 Return to Delhi**

This morning is free for you to explore the bazaars of Jaipur, known for textiles, jewellery and precious stones. This afternoon you will drive back to Delhi (about 5 – 6 hours). **Hotel with swimming pool (breakfast)**



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## Day 19 Fly to London

You will be transferred to Delhi Airport for your return flight to London.

*This itinerary includes our group flights from London. If you are making other flight arrangements, please refer to your Confirmation Invoice and Joining Instructions for details of the start of the trip. Please remember international flights and trip dates do occasionally change, so please always purchase flexible tickets. Each itinerary is planned many months in advance. Consequently there are factors over which we have no control and which could make changes necessary. We will always endeavour to keep you informed of any such changes in advance.*

**Is this right for your family?** This trip is designed for active kids from the age of eight and up. The walk in the mountains is pony supported for children, with short walking days (2 to 3 hours initially, building to around 4 or 5 hours). There is always a vehicle on hand a short distance away in case of emergency. The maximum altitude reached is 3,850 metres. Expect hot days and cold nights – rainfall is unlikely. Camping equipment is provided, but please bring a 4-season sleeping bag (or hire locally for £2 per day).

**Altitude Warning** This trip goes to a relatively high altitude where there is a risk of being affected by Acute Mountain Sickness. Our itineraries are designed to enable everyone to acclimatise to these altitudes, but you should be aware that you may still be affected. Although rare, a number of medical conditions can also reduce your performance at altitude and make you more susceptible to AMS. If you are worried about any pre-existing condition (i.e. heart problems) or unsure of your physical ability, we recommend that you seek medical advice prior to booking.

**Climate** This tour coincides with the best walking season in Ladakh, when you can expect clear sunny days, but colder nights. Ladakh is a high altitude desert which is not affected by the monsoon and receives very little annual rainfall. You do need to be prepared for rain as, in any mountain region, this can occur without warning. During summer the maximum temperature increases from 20°C to 38°C in July and August. The relative humidity is low and ranges from 31 to 64% Due to longer winters, the agricultural season is short and spread over from April to September. The best time to travel to Ladakh is June to October. Warm gear is essential, especially for evenings and nights.

Average monthly climate in Leh.

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
<b>Max °C</b>	-2	2	8	13	17	22	25	25	22	15	9	2
<b>Min °C</b>	-15	-12	-6	0	3	7	10	9	5	-1	-6	-11
<b>Rainfall (mm)</b>	51	59	51	43	34	29	77	99	87	64	34	43

**Accommodation** In Delhi and Agra you will be staying in good hotels, with a swimming pool. In Leh, which is far less developed than Delhi or Agra, the accommodation will be a neat and clean Medium category Hotel with all private facilities. All the rooms will be on a twin share basis and you will be expected to share with your children. On trek you will be using 2/3 person tents.

**Food and Drink** The food will be a mixture of traditional Indian and 'Indianised' Western, with non spicy food available for children whose tastes are less adventurous. We advise that you drink only hot or bottled drinks to avoid stomach upsets. Mineral water is available for purchase on most days, but you should take some sterilising tablets for purifying un-boiled water when you need to fill up your water bottle during the day. Iodine tablets or "Lugol's iodine solution" (available from British chemists, and needed at the rate of 5 drops per litre of water) are preferable to chlorine as a water sterilizer, as they are more effective against amoebic cysts. A supply of powdered fruit juice is a useful luxury to take away the taste of the sterilising tablets. Vegetarians are usually well catered for as very little meat is used on the trek and there is plenty of vegetarian food available in the towns and cities.

### Local Costs

A bottle of mineral water (500ml)	£0.50
A large bottle of mineral water (1 litre)	£0.80
A can of coke (soft drinks)	£0.40
A carton or bottle of fruit juice	£0.60
A bottle of beer ( Large 650 ml)	£2.00
Tea or coffee	£0.50
A light lunch time snack – sandwich for example	£2.00
A two course meal* - excluding drinks	£5.00



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**Currency** The unit of currency is the Indian Rupee (INR) at the time of writing UK £1 = INR76.39 and 1US\$ = INR46.07 (Dec 2009). Sterling Travellers' Cheques are no longer as readily accepted in banks and larger hotels and we recommend that you change money at the airport or make use of ATMs. Credit Cards are accepted in larger hotels and some souvenir shops.

**Tipping** is a recognised part of life and although at your discretion you will be expected to reward service. Please remember that tipping should be a way for individuals to thank staff for good service. As a guideline each person should allow £2-£3 per day to cover the tips for the local trekking staff. In addition to this, with your permission, your tour leader will collect a Tipping kitty of approx. 500 rupees (approx. UK£7.00) to cover tips for hotel staff, bell boys, porters, drivers monument guides etc. Tipping in restaurants is generally around 10% of the total bill. Please also remember that your tour leader works hard and for long hours to make your holiday run smoothly, a suitable reward for good service would be £1-£2 from each person, per day. It is usual to collect this between yourselves as a group and present it to the leader on completion of the tour.

**Language** While each state has its own regional language, Hindi and English are widely spoken.

**Time** India is GMT + 5 ½ hours (Indian Standard Time) & 4 ½ hrs in summer (end of March to October)

**Cultural considerations** As India is a predominantly Hindu country, with the Buddhist religion predominant in Ladakh, we do ask all participants to take this into consideration, especially in the way they dress in the cities, monasteries and villages. It is expected that both women and men will cover legs and shoulders in religious palaces, although, as India becomes more westernised, even the local people are becoming more relaxed about this. On trek, shorts are acceptable for walking, but both men and women should wear trousers or a long skirt when staying in the villages.

Please do not simply look at other tourists and feel that what they wear is correct – you will never know what the local people think of them. To gain respect from the locals you should show that you are in turn trying to respect their culture. If in doubt at any time, please consult your group leader.

### **Visas and passports**

You must obtain a visa before travelling to India, please allow plenty of time for your application to be processed. Passports should be valid for 6 months.

### **Health**

Vaccinations are recommended against Hepatitis A, Typhoid, Tetanus, Polio, Diphtheria and Malaria tablets should be taken. Please consult your GP for further advice.



## Clothing & Equipment List for India – Indian Summer Hike

Although western standards are generally becoming more accepted, Indians generally remain very traditional in what they wear. Out of respect please dress conservatively, no sleeveless tops. While shorts and skirts are accepted in the main tourist areas, both should be knee length or longer. Arms and legs and occasionally ladies heads, should be covered when entering religious buildings. The following list of clothing and equipment is intended to be fairly comprehensive and experienced travellers may well take a good deal less luggage than we recommend.

CLOTHING	NUMBER PER PERSON	Check	EQUIPMENT	Check
Walking Boots	1 pair		Sleeping bag (4 season)	
Trainers or Strong Sandals	1 pair – all purpose wear		Sleeping bag sheet – optional	
Socks	2 thick and 2 thin		Soft-sided bag 50 – 80 litres	
Waterproof Jacket	1 lightweight		Lightweight Daypack – 25 litres	
Waterproof Trousers	Optional		A variety of large plastic bags	
Underwear	3+		Sunglasses	
Thermal Underwear	Optional – but light and useful if you feel the cold		Personal First Aid Kit	
T-Shirts	5+		Large Water Bottle	
Long Walking Trousers or Skirt	3+		Water Purifying Tablets	
Short Trousers	2		Neutralising Tablets	
Long Sleeve Shirt	2+		Torch and Batteries	
Track Suit Bottoms or Similar	Optional		Camera, Film and Accessories	
Thick Fleece	Recommended		Reading Material	
Warm windproof jacket	1		Washing Kit – “dry” hand-wash & wet wipes	
Thin Fleece or Sweatshirt	1		Towel or Sarong	
Sunhat / Baseball cap /	Essential (styled to shade face, ears and neck)		Bicycle Helmet – recommend for kids riding ponies	
Warm Hat and gloves	Recommended for cold nights		Loo Kit (in small bag) loo paper/tissue	
Swim Wear	1		Walking pole(s) – optional	

Please note: due to weight restrictions on board the light aircraft to Leh, luggage must not weigh more than 20 kg per person.

ITEM	Check	ITEM	Check
Passport/ Visa			
Air Tickets		Universal Travelling Adapter	
Money/Travellers Cheques		Binoculars	
Cash Cards/Visa		Sweets & snacks for the journey	
Insurance Documents		Biodegradable soap	
Trip Information and Itinerary		Earplugs	
Money Security Belt/Pouch		Guide Book & map	
		Sunscreen – lots of it	
		Insect Repellent with high DEET content	

For details regarding hand luggage restrictions please visit [www.baa.com](http://www.baa.com)