

dalai lama himalayan trek india



This unique expedition combines awesome Himalayan trekking with a visit to India's exiled Tibetan community. The challenge begins and ends in Dharamsala, where the Dalai Lama and the centre of the Tibetan Community are situated, at the heart of the world's highest mountain range.



Your expedition follows the Uhl River trekking in the shadows of the world's highest peak, through rhododendron and evergreen forests, taking in Hindu settlements and isolated Buddhist monasteries along the way. Trek on mountain trails only trodden by the local Tibetan Community and Tibetan nomads with their goats, be greeted by the friendly faces and smiles of the Tibetan people and see how you can help Charity Challenge give back to the communities of this area.

You will learn about Tibetan/Buddhism and the issues it faces today, and see how Tibet is preserved in India through the practising of traditional Tibetan arts and crafts at the Norbulinka Institute.

You will also have the option to take a 2-day extension and explore the Taj Mahal – one of the greatest monuments to love ever built – as well as the Keoladeo National Park and Fatephur Sikri.

Day 1: International Travel

Meet at the Airport for your flight to Delhi, India. Our Charity Challenge representative will be there to assist you with check-in.

Day 2: Delhi to Dharamsala

You will be met at the airport by a Charity Challenge local agent and leader who will transfer you to your hotel where you will be able to freshen up and rest before some sightseeing in Delhi. You will have a chance to look around India's bustling capital, with its labyrinth of streets and markets, crowded with exotic produce and a bewildering mix of people. You can spend time shopping, or take in one of Delhi's many sights, including the Red Fort, Jama Masjid, Qutab Minar and Raj Ghat. You will also be able to take an optional cycle rickshaw tour around Old Delhi, allowing you to experience a more interesting and colourful side to the city. After dinner you will catch the overnight air-con sleeper train to Chakki Bank, near Dharamsala.



Day 3: Dharamsala

This morning your train will arrive early at Chakki Bankand and transfer (approx 3hrs) to Dharamsala. The city has been the centre of a vibrant Tibetan community since the 1950's and is home to the Dalai Lama. You can explore the temples and monasteries of Dharamsala, often called 'Little Lhasa in India', with a giant prayer wheel in its centre and many strings of multi-coloured Tibetan prayer flags fluttering in the wind.

You will take a clockwise/kora walk around the Dalai Lama's temple and residence where there will also be a discussion on Tibetan Buddhism and the issues it faces today. You will visit the Dalai Lama's working monastery, home to many practicing monks. The Tibet Museum, which explains the history of Tibet, will conclude your tour. Overnight in hotel in Dharamsala with great views overlooking the Kangra Valley.



Day 4: Dharamsala to Bir

The morning is spent exploring Dharamsala, where you will be able to visit the many and varied shops or take a walk to the Bhagsu Waterfall. The rich cultural heritage, both Buddhist and Hindu, add to the memorable images of a visit to the mountains. You will then transfer to Bir, at the foothills of the Himalayas. You will be welcomed at the Dream & Adventure centre and guesthouse and have time to relax in the grounds of the tea plantations. A home away from home, the centre has maps and information on the area, as well as a library that is well stocked with books & games. Tasty home-cooked food is served, using herbs and vegetables grown fresh from the garden. We will take a walk around this interesting Tibetan village and see some of the local monasteries. Overnight in the Dream & Adventure centre.

Day 5: Bir

You will have this day to explore the picturesque Tibetan colony of Bir, host to the annual World



Paragliding Championships. It is a beautiful village, where a centuries old lifestyle remains much unchanged. You may take a warm-up walk to Ahju Fort in order to get your legs stretched and ready for trekking. The remnants of the 17th century fort, formerly a look-out point for the Maharaja's kingdom, affords a spectacular panoramic view of the area. From here you will be able to visit the amazing Sherab-ling Monastery, with beautiful intricate thangkas and a gold-plated, jewel encrusted 3-storey high Buddha. Additionally, you will have the opportunity to attend a puja, or prayer ceremony, with the local monks from Choling Monastery. The sights and sounds are a feast for the senses, with the colourful thangka paintings and deep red robes of the monks, accompanied by throat chanting, horns, trumpets and drums.

Finally, you will meet your trekking team and be fully briefed about the challenge ahead. Overnight in the Dream & Adventure centre. You can leave belongings here while you trek and collect them on Day 10.

Your trek will take place on mountain paths. Most days will involve 1-3 ascents and descents with as much time to stop and rest. Please consult your Fitness Training Advice – training is essential.



**Day 6: Trek to Majaj – 17km (approx 6-7hr trek)
Maximum altitude 2500m**

Your amazing 5-day trek begins, centred around the Uhl valley and river, home to brown & rainbow trout, and situated in the shadows of some of the world's highest peaks. To start, you trek upwards through oak and rhododendron forests towards Haribag Pass (2,500m), an ancient trading route. You will then pass by the village of Barua, where you will stop for a picnic lunch in beautiful meadows beside a shepherd's encampment, with great views of the mountains and surrounding peaks. Crossing the pass you head down to Majaj, a favourite spot for bird-watchers and nature-spotters alike, with a water-spot that is visited at sunset. This area is well known for its diverse Himalayan wildlife and birdlife, including the Himalayan griffin vulture, Monal, Golden Eagle and the Lammergeier. A lucky few may see Thar, Musk Deer, Forest Leopard, Puma and Himalayan Black and Brown Bear. Monkeys may also amuse and join us on parts of our journey. You will celebrate the first day of the trek around the campfire. Overnight in a tented camp.



You will be well looked after in tented accommodation (allowing us to minimise our impact on this fragile ecosystem). Woken with tea every morning by your cheerful team, you can gaze at snow-capped summits glinting in the early morning sun. In the evenings you will be able to witness the famous Himalayan sunsets, the distant peaks turning from white to crimson as the sun drops below the horizon. And at night, watch the bright stars meandering above the mountains. Overnight in a tented camp.



**Day 7: Trek to Shanag – 18km (approx 6-7hr trek)
Maximum altitude 2700m**

Today's trek is along a beaten track frequented by shepherds and local people. You will cross the Sun Pass (2,700m) and go through La Paz village. There will be a chance to stop and interact with the children from a local school which we support here. You will then follow the Thadkot River through terraced fields and a picturesque valley, passing a number of small, traditional hamlets along the route. The agricultural system is worked by hand or bullock and you will get to see just how much effort and hard work is required of the local villagers in order to toil their land.

**Day 8: Trek to Bahrua – 21km (6-7hr trek)
Maximum altitude 2300m**

You will cross 3 passes today as the path winds around the mountain, with spectacular views of the Shivalik Mountains and the plains towards the Punjab en route. To the North stands the mighty snow-capped Dhauladhar range with towering peaks including Mun (15,500ft), Riflehorn (15,000ft), Slab (15,220ft), Arthur's Seat (15,070ft) and many more. The alpine pastures around the pass are strewn with a wide variety of wild flowers and medicinal plants, which the gaddi shepherds collect during their summer migration. Highest point 2,300m. Overnight base camp in an old colonial hunting lodge, used many years ago by the British and the Maharajas; a beautiful spot.



Day 9: Rest Day / Optional 10km Trek (4-5 hours)

Maximum altitude 3050m

Today is a rest day, though there are optional short walks for those who wish to explore further. Those after an added challenge will be able to climb a nearby peak, boasting excellent views of the Himalayas from the top (approx. 5hrs). From here you will be able to see the entire route of the trek. We will make a small fire and cook our lunch at the top of the viewpoint. Or, if you prefer, you can relax amongst the exceptional backdrop of some of the world's most stunning views. Overnight in base camp.

Day 10: Trek to Bal – 19km (5-6hr trek & transfer to Dream & Adventure Centre)

Maximum altitude 2300m

The last day of the trek takes you to Bal via Shilpadhani, allowing time to reflect on an amazing journey through the world's highest and most spectacular mountain range. Shilpadhani is a beautiful small village perched on a steep slope and surrounded by thickly wooded pine trees and lush green fields. You will see ancient stone mill-houses, where the power of the river is harnessed to grind wheat and grain. Some of the inhabitants are the Gaddis, legendary Himalayan shepherds who lead a nomadic life.

Following the trek, you will return to the Dream & Adventure Centre. We will have a celebration meal and party, congratulating ourselves on a challenge well done. Overnight in the Dream & Adventure Centre.

Day 11: Dream & Adventure Centre to Baijnath Temple and Norbulinka Institute to Delhi

After a relaxing morning, you will travel to Norbulinka Institute. En route, we will visit Baijnath Temple, a Shiva temple built in 804AD. It is an ancient and important pilgrimage site, famed for its intricate stone carvings. The Norbulinka Institute was established to teach & preserve traditional Tibetan art & crafts, such as woodcarving, statue-making, thangka painting and embroidery. There is also a beautiful temple here set amongst Japanese gardens with wooden bridges across tiny streams and waterfalls; it is a beautiful and peaceful place, with a small café. You will then catch the overnight air-con sleeper train to Delhi.



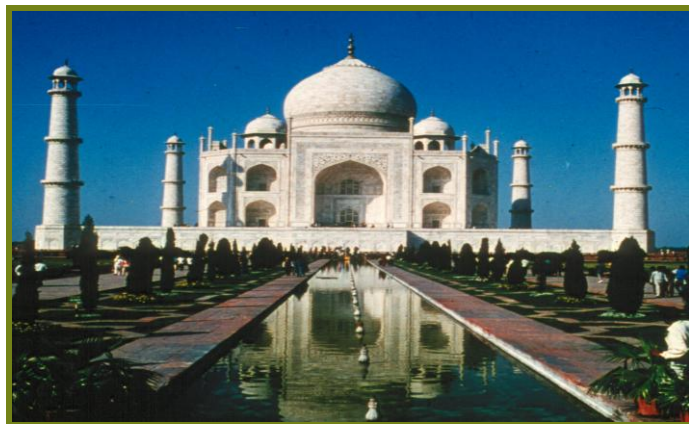
Day 12: Return UK

Arrive Delhi this morning and after a final group breakfast and a chance to freshen-up, you will transfer to the airport for your return flight. Arrive at Heathrow today.

Optional extension:

Taj Mahal, Fatehpur Sikri & Keoladeo National Park.

- Visit the Taj Mahal one of the most awesome and extravagant monuments ever built.
- Visit the inner citadel of Fatehpur Sikri.
- Full day bird-watching safari in Keoladeo National park.



To find out more information, visit the Trek to the Home of the Dalai Lama challenge page on our website or click on "extensions" in your member's area.