

Gane & Marshall

TAILOR-MADE DESTINATIONS

Markha Valley Trail, Ladakh, Indian Himalayas



With easy accessibility from Leh, the bustling and colourful capital of Ladakh, the Markha Valley is the most famous trekking area and rightfully so as it is one of the most beautiful valleys in Ladakh. It offers the walker all that one would want to see in such a short time span – a real insight into the country known as Little Tibet, shepherds settlements, mountain passes offering stupendous views of the snow capped mountains, villages which are dotted like oases on this trail where you often cross paths with the local inhabitants.

Day 1: Depart from London to Delhi, India

Your flight to Delhi is not included in the cost. Please contact our London office for flight options. As ATOL licensed tour operators we are able to offer you a range of competitive fares to Delhi; and your holiday will be protected by our ATOL bond.

Day 2 Arrive Delhi. Sightseeing in Delhi

After landing at Delhi you will be met at the airport by our local agent, who will transfer you to your hotel 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 'take in some of Delhi's sights including the Red Fort, Old Delhi, the President's House and Parliament, and the Lotus Temple. Dinner & overnight at a local hotel in Delhi.

Day 3: Fly Delhi to Leh, Ladakh (3,200m)

After an early morning breakfast you will be transferred from the hotel to the airport, for the sweeping panoramic flight (included in your tour cost) to Leh (1hr). The flight takes you over the Greater Himalaya and lands at one of the highest airports in the world. You can hope to get excellent views of Stok Kangri as you fly-in. Once in Leh you will have gained an altitude of almost 3,200m and so can expect to feel the effects of the rarefied atmosphere. The expedition is tailored in a way that you have the first few days in your programme to relax and acclimatise. Flying straight up to 3,200m from sea level is not something you will do often in your lifetime! Today, you can take it easy & relax in the hotel and surrounding area. Ladakh's landscape, Leh's friendly people, and the laid back atmosphere of Leh town make it a quite place to visit. The region's landscape is rugged, situated amidst multiple-hued mountains on the fringe of the life-giving Indus River. After lunch, depending on how you feel, you can take a slow walk around the local bazaar in order to get used to the area, altitude and climate.

Your Financial Protection

All monies paid by you for the air holiday package shown [or flights if appropriate] are ATOL protected by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 3145.

For more information see our booking terms and conditions.

A memorable sight, the bazaar hosts traditionally attired women selling fruit & vegetables and spinning & knitting, whilst exchanging gentle banter between themselves and with passers-by. Overnight in Leh hotel.



Day 4: Leh sightseeing – 3-4hrs acclimatisation walk

Amidst starkly beautiful and majestic mountains, gradually merging into an oasis of green fields, Leh is situated on the banks of the Indus. With a population of 10,000 people, mainly Buddhist, some Muslims, and a very small Christian community, Leh bears the distinct stamp of its history as the commercial and cultural capital of Ladakh.

This morning you may take a sightseeing tour of the area beginning with Shey monastery. Until the 16th century it was the royal residence. Kings of Leh were supposed to be born in the monasteries. This Palace Monastery has the largest statue of Maitreya Buddha (Buddha to come) in Ladakh.

From there you can visit Thikse monastery, an imposing monastery and one of the finest examples of Ladakhi architecture.

The sightseeing will continue, if you so wish, to Hemis monastery, one of the oldest, richest, and most famous gompas in Ladakh. Built in 1630, it belongs to the red sect; and owing to its remote location, it escaped destruction during the Muslim incursions. Its popularity stems from the major annual festival held during the summer in honour of their Guru Padma Sambhava's birth anniversary.



Hopefully whilst visiting one of these beautiful monasteries you will have the opportunity to witness a Buddhist prayer ceremony. After returning for lunch we recommend the guided hike to visit Leh Palace, the Old Fort & Tsemo Gumpa. A miniature version of the Potala in Lhasa, Leh Palace is one of the major attractions in Ladakh. The palace was built in the 17th century and had nine storeys, but it is now dilapidated and deserted. It was the home of the royal family until they were exiled to Stok in the 1830s. The palace built for King

Singge Namgyal, now houses the Ladakhi branch of the Indian Government's archaeological conservation organisation. After this you will go on to visit Tsemo Gumpa. The Namgyal Tsemo Gumpa was built in 1430 by King Tashi Namgyal on Namgyal Tsemo Peak overlooking the town. The monastery contains a three-story high solid gold idol of Maitrieya Buddha (future Buddha also called laughing Buddha) and a one-storied statue of Avaloketesvara and Manjushri along with ancient manuscripts and frescoes.

The fort above this gumpa is in ruins, but the views of Leh from here are breathtakingly beautiful. If you are feeling capable after this, you can continue on to Sankar monastery and to the Japanese Peace Pagoda. Overnight in a hotel in Leh.

Day 5: Khardung La Pass (5,605m)

This morning, after breakfast, you will take jeeps (39kms / 1.5-2hrs) to Khardungla, the highest motorable road in the world where you will spend some time on the top for acclimatisation purposes (NB: cold winds blast across this point so please take warm clothes). Khardung La, La meaning pass in Tibetan (the local language), is the route between Leh and the Shyok and Nubra valleys. The

Khardung La can be termed the gateway to the Karakoram or the land of black gravel. The Siachen Glacier lies partway up the latter valley. Built in 1976, it was opened to motor vehicles in 1988. Maintained by the Indian Army's 14 Corps, the pass is strategically important to India as it is used to carry essential supplies to the Siachen. Khardung La is historically important as it lies on the major caravan route from Leh to Kashgar in Chinese Central Asia. Return to Leh for lunch and afternoon at leisure for you to explore independently the exciting town of Leh, now that you are becoming well acclimatised to the altitude.



In the early afternoon you will depart with your trek support team from Leh and drive straight to Chilling in time for setting camp and supper. The drive takes approximately two and a half hours. Chilling is a hamlet of very houses and the camp site is just upstream from them set in a pretty location where there are shade-giving trees. Just below the camp site the broad Zaskar River flows by at great speed. Overnight camping.

Day 6: To Rumbak (3,800m) – 2 to 2.5 hrs

Visit Spituk monastery (15mins from Leh)from where we drive (2 hrs) past the village of Zingchen to the end of the road head from where it is a short and easy walk to camp near Rumbak (3800m). – 2 ½ to 3 hrs. This area is also famous for blue sheep, snow leopards, tibetan wolves, wild dogs and red fox. Overnight camping.

Day 7: Rumbak to Ganda La Base Camp (4,000m) 4hrs.

Morning free. Continue on to the lovely little settlement of Yurutse. Follow a well defined path along the mountainside to a small valley and on to the base of Gandala our camp for tonight. A short walk to camp arriving by lunch. Overnight camping.

Day 8: Trek to Skiu Village via Ganda La Pass (4,800m) – 5-6 hrs

The trek starts today with the ascent to Ganda La Pass. This is a demanding uphill trek, affording you increasingly beautiful and exciting views. Allow two hours from Ganda La Base Camp to the top of the pass. On the way you can hope to see (and hear) the chukor bird, hares, and the playful marmots. The views from this pass are excellent, taking in the whole of the Indus valley with a fantastic view of Stok Kangri and other Himalayan peaks. On a clear day you should have an excellent view of the entire mountain range from the top (5000ms.) so if you are feeling up to it, you can take an extra walk (45mins) up the adjacent ridge for more great views from this higher point.



You then follow an easy descent towards the base of the mountain, through a dramatic gorge and on to the village of Skiu.

As you approach the villages you will see the willow trees used for housebuilding and crafts; and the apricot trees, which produce their cash crop each summer. In the fields, which are watered by ancient irrigation channels, a rich barley is grown and cattle and sheep graze. It is an almost idyllic scene. From the camping place at Skiu you should make a point of visiting the nearby

monastery and going onto the roof for the splendid views. Overnight camping.

Clearly this is quite a long and arduous day and you should be prepared for it at the outset, with

plenty of snacks, water and sun protection. The rewards are not only excellent views from the high pass but also a feast of flora, fauna and landscape. Overnight camping.

Day 9: Trek to Markha Village (3,800m) - 7 hrs

Crossing the Markha stream several times, this will be a fairly long day's walk of around 7 hours to reach the 30 or 40 houses of Markha Village (c.3800m). The trail passes through quite lush vegetation at the riverside, whilst the upper valley-slopes are uniformly brown and dry. En route we pass several more small monasteries, which are often quite difficult to pick out, high on the valley sides. There are also a number of well maintained chortens and prayer walls. On a hill to the north of Markha there is a small gompa which you can visit. Camp near the village of Markha.



Day 10: Trek Markha to Thachungtse (4,200m) – 5hrs.

We continue above Markha Village, trekking eastwards, deeper into the Markha Valley, to a good camping place at Hangkar or continue a little further to Thachungtse (4200m). In this high valley we are likely to see small herds of blue sheep (bharal) which often come right down to the river to graze. 5 hrs. Overnight camping.

Day 11: Thachungtse to Nimaling (4,700m) –4hrs

Leaving Thachungtse, we now have a good view of a prominent snow peak at the head of the valley. This is Kang Yatze, a 6400 metre high mountain which has a subsidiary summit at around 6100 metres. Continue gradually up to the high and wide open meadows of Nimaling (4700m) . - 4 hrs. The wide open pastures of Nimaling makes for a lovely place to relax and camp. For the more adventurous, there will be the chance to go a little further to climb the left shoulder of Kangyatze peak (6100m). Overnight camping.

Day 12: Cross Kongmaru La (5,100m) to Chuskyurmo

We trek up to the Kongmaru La (5100m) on a well marked trail which zig-zags across scree for the final 250 metres to the pass - 2 hours ascent. From the pass there are views north to the hills of the Eastern Karakoram and China, whilst the southern panorama is dominated by the shapely Kang Yatze. Descending, we enter a narrow gorge to our campsite at Chuskyurmo at 4000 metres. 5 hrs.

Day 13: Return Trek to Stok Village and drive to Leh – 4hrs

From Chuskyurmo, we descend to Shang through a stony gorge and again the never ending spectacular scenery. Your vehicles will meet you at the end of the trail for the drive to Leh via Hemis monastery, the largest in Leh. Allow 2 ½ hrs to the road head and an 1 ½ hrs drive to Leh. Overnight in a hotel in Leh.

Day 14: Fly to Delhi,

This morning you will fly back to Delhi for last shopping and excursions. Overnight in a Delhi.

Day 15: Fly to UK

Today you transfer to Delhi airport for your international flight home; or continue with extension in India.