

LADAKH VILLAGE EXPERIENCE



Prayer flags in Ladakh



HIGHLIGHTS

- Shakti offers a rare opportunity to discover the compellingly beautiful and remote region of the Indian Himalaya staying in Village Houses that combine an honest and sustainable approach with sophisticated simplicity and style.
- Shakti's Village walks in both Sikkim and Kumaon and the mountain retreat, 360° Leti have now been joined by a third village experience and a unique river journey in Ladakh.
- Staying in these houses offers the visitor a rare chance to experience an unchanged rural way of life in the homes of the Ladakhi people.
- As the terrain in Ladakh is very different to that of Sikkim and Kumaon, journeys between the houses here will be on foot, by river raft and by vehicles with stops at un-spoilt Buddhist monasteries en route.



LADAKH VILLAGE EXPERIENCE

Total number of days	10 days
Grade	Gentle
Accommodation	2 nights hotel & 7 nights in Shakti Village Houses
2011 price ex Delhi	Two to three people: £2,495 per person Four to six people: £2,095 per person Reduced rates of £1,595 for children aged between 3 to 16 years applicable for groups of two to three people (£1,395 for groups of four to six people).
Minimum group size	2
Dates	Private departures from May 15 th to Sept 30 th <i>This itinerary is flexible and can be tailored to your requirements.</i>

SHAYOK RIVER JOURNEY EXTENSION

Total number of days	3 days
Accommodation	2 nights at Shakti river camps and 1 night at Shakti Village House
2010 price ex Delhi	Two to three people: £1,185 per person Four to six people: £795 per person



Reduced rates of £595 for children aged between 3 to 16 years applicable for groups of two to three people (£395 for groups of four to six people).

THE FOLLOWING IS INCLUDED IN THE PRICE OF THE TRIP

- All internal transport and transfers.
- Twin share rooms in all accommodation.
- Village Houses will always be private i.e just for your party
- Bed and breakfast in Delhi, all meals elsewhere.
- All trekking arrangements including permits and fees, TMC guide, porters and cook.
- Return train from Delhi to Kathgodam (A/C sleeper class).

THE FOLLOWING IS NOT INCLUDED IN THE PRICE OF THE TRIP

- International flight to/from Delhi (from £400).
- Travel insurance.
- India visa up to 6 month (£30).
- Lunch and evening meals in Delhi and Leh.
- Personal clothing & equipment please see Appendix for suggested kit list.
- Tips.
- Other items not listed in “What is included”.



YOUR COMPLETE FINANCIAL PROTECTION

In accordance with "The Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992" all passengers booking with The Mountain Trekking Company Ltd ("The Mountain Company") are fully protected for the initial deposit and subsequently the balance of all monies paid to us, including repatriation if required, arising from cancellation or curtailment of your travel arrangements due to the insolvency of The Mountain Company.



For further information about our financial protection insurance with International Passenger Protection please see Appendix 2.

PARTICIPATION STATEMENT

Participants should be aware trekking, mountaineering and travelling in a developing country are activities that involve a risk of personal injury or death. As a condition of booking you must accept these risks and be responsible for your own actions and involvement.

Adventure travel requires an open and flexible attitude. You may experience extreme conditions, unpredictable weather and last minute changes to the itinerary beyond our control. Lack of acclimatisation to high altitudes could also be a risk factor. Our itineraries allow optimum time for acclimatising although it is possible that some individuals might be slow acclimatisers.

The majority of our trips visit remote areas where you are away from normal emergency services and medical facilities. In case of a serious injury requiring hospitalisation, it has to be accepted by you, evacuation could take up to several days and may impede your ensuing recovery. Helicopters are the most usual means of evacuation, however they are not always available or they may be hindered by poor weather and flying conditions.



INTRODUCTION

A Village Experience in the Indian Himalayan state of Ladakh staying at Shakti home stays and rafting on Shayok river.

Shakti offers a rare opportunity to discover compellingly beautiful and remote regions of the Indian Himalaya, combining an honest and sustainable approach with sophisticated simplicity and style. Continuing on the Village walks concept pioneered in Sikkim and Kumaon, Shakti's third village experience in Ladakh has been adapted to local conditions. The traditional architecture of Ladakh is grander in style than in other Himalayan regions; therefore these village houses have been renovated to a higher level of sophistication but without compromising on the authenticity and charm.

Staying in these houses offers the visitor a rare chance to experience a rural way of life in the homes of the Ladakhi people. As the terrain in Ladakh is also very different to that of Sikkim and Kumaon, journeys between the houses here will be on foot, by river raft and by vehicles with stops at Buddhist monasteries. After the Village Walk you undertake the Shayok River Journey in the remote Nubra valley.

DETAILED ITINERARY

It is our intention to keep to the day by day itinerary detailed below, although there might be some flexibility due to local conditions or other factors beyond our control. If this is the case the trek leader will do everything possible to work out the changes to the itinerary in order to minimise your inconvenience.

Day 1. Arrive Delhi and join the tour at the hotel.

A driver will be sent to collect you on your arrival at Delhi airport and to bring you back to the hotel. Please provide travel plans on booking and we will arrange the pick up and transfer.

Day 2. Fly to Leh, drive to Stok village.

Early this morning you will be collected from your hotel in Delhi and driven to the airport in time to check-in for your flight to Leh, which will take around an hour.



On arrival at Leh Airport, please proceed to the arrivals hall (via baggage collection and the foreign registration counter where foreigners must register themselves) where your guide will be waiting for you. You will then be driven to our village house in Stok, around thirty minutes from the airport.

The charming village of Stok (3650m/11972ft) lies at the foot of Stok Kangri which at 6,120m (20,073ft) is not Ladakh's highest mountain, but one of its most beautiful. The village is home to Ladakh's royal family and their Tibetan style palace watches over the village's unspoilt vernacular architecture, apricot orchards and barley fields.

Shakti has renovated an impressive Tibetan style house on the edge of the village and we recommend that you do very little on your first day whilst you get used to the altitude.

After a delicious lunch prepared by our chef, we would recommend that you spend the afternoon reading on the roof terrace whilst soaking up the gorgeous rural Ladakhi scenery. Dinner will be served in the traditional Ladakhi kitchen downstairs.

Overnight: Stok Village House – Double/twin Room (Fully Inclusive)

Day 3. Walk around Stok village including the Palace and Museum.

Today we would again advise a fairly leisurely pace as you will still be acclimatising. This morning your guide will take you on a gentle walk to explore Stok village, further to a one hour walk to Stok Palace, you will visit the Palace and Museum before continuing for forty-five minutes to the picnic lunch site.

A further ten minute walk takes you to the Heritage House which you will visit before walking for forty-five minutes back to the village house. Cars will be on stand-by so that any of the walks can be done by vehicle, depending on how you are feeling and acclimatising. This evening we have arranged for the village Goba (Village Head) to give you a talk (subject to availability).

Overnight: Stok Village House – Double/twin Room (Fully Inclusive)



Day 4. Drive to Thiksey monastery for morning prayers then drive to Sakti for picnic breakfast and then to Hemis Gompa.

For those who are prepared to get up at around 5am, we would recommend starting early and driving for one hour to Thiksey monastery to experience the early morning Buddhist prayers (you would need to leave at five thirty). Built around 600 years ago, Thiksey monastery is one of the finest examples of Ladakhi religious architecture.

The monastery consists of twelve levels ascending the hillside crowned by the current lama's private residence. Below the monastery proper are chapels and houses stretching down the hillside where one hundred monks of the Yellow Hat Buddhist sect reside. As part of the visit, we have arranged a private audience with the Rinpoche (head priest) of Thiksey. After the monastery visit, drive to Sakti, a local village, for a picnic breakfast around twenty five minutes away.

After breakfast, either relax under the poplar trees or go on a one to two hour walk in the surrounding area, before continuing to Hemis which is 45 minutes away. Belonging to the Red Hat sect, Hemis was built in 1630 and is Ladakh's largest monastery is an impressive and intriguing experience. Your guide will show you around providing you with an insight into Buddhism and a glimpse into the monks' way of life.

If you are lucky enough to be here during the annual festival (in June or July each year) you will experience dancing, a colourful pageant and an annual bazaar where people come from all over Ladakh to buy and sell wares.

After you have visited the monastery and the museum, you will drive to Matho for a picnic lunch. After lunch drive back to Stok with the option to visit Leh bazaar en route. Very quickly developing and somewhat a wash with backpackers and tourists, Leh's busy central bazaar is worth visiting (especially if you want to pick up any souvenirs) but is perhaps not essential to a Ladakh itinerary.

Overnight: Stok Village House – Double/twin Room (Fully Inclusive)

Day 5. Drive to Karu and then raft to Choglomsar, then drive to Taru village via Phyang Monastery and a picnic lunch.

After breakfast you will be driven for forty-five minutes to the rafting point on the Indus river at Karu for a two hour raft to Choglamsar. We have deliberately not



used the term white water here as the rapids here are no more than grade two making this is more of a float than anything else. Please note that this trip will only be available from mid June to mid September.

On arrival at Phey, you will be driven for thirty minutes to Phyang monastery in the village of the same name. The monastery belonging to the Dingung order sits in the middle of the valley floor with the village surrounding it, with many of the houses clinging to the steep sides of the valley.

Continue by road for twenty-five minutes to the picturesque village of Taru which is at an altitude of 3770m (12,366ft) situated at the top of a narrow valley. Our village house in Taru is another traditional Tibetan style building, though it is a little more modern than the one at Stok. The house sits at the edge of the village with stunning views over the mountains, traditional buildings, fields and orchards. You will have the rest of the afternoon at leisure to explore the village with a member of the family and your guide or to simply relax at the house.

Overnight: Taru Village House – Double/twin Room (Fully Inclusive)

Day 6. Drive to Umla then walk to Nimoo village.

After breakfast, you will drive to the start point of your walk on the Umla road around twenty-five minutes away. The walk is through quite a barren valley which the guide will bring to life for you. Around two and a half hours after you start, you will descend into the village of Nimoo (3700m/12,136ft).

Nimoo is a large village situated 36km west of Leh along the Indus valley at the confluence of the Zanskar and Indus rivers. The village is characterised by impressive mountain scenery, and is considered exceptionally fertile in Ladakhi terms - lush green fields and apricot, apple, and walnut orchards abound.

This is arguably the most impressive of the three Ladakhi houses that Shakti has renovated in Ladakh and like the Stok house, it has a large ground floor with a first floor built in a 'C' shape around a courtyard. We have paved the courtyard and the roof terrace above with local grey slate – a perfect place to soak up the ever present sun whilst reading a book or enjoying a meal or drink on 'the rooftop of the world.'



Spend the rest of the day at leisure enjoying lunch served in one of the orchards that surround the house or for the more active, you may like to take a walk up the valley to Nimoo monastery accompanied by your guide and a picnic hamper.

Overnight: Nimoo Village House – Double/twin Room (Fully Inclusive)

Day 7. Walk around Nimoo village with the house owner the drive to Chilling village. Raft or drive back to Nimoo for a talk on Buddhism or a cooking lesson.

This morning before breakfast you will be taken on a two hour walk of the village of Nimoo by the owner of our village house who is also the village Goba (head of the village), Chinglo, (villager in charge of water distribution) and Ladakhi medicine man. You will get a fascinating insight into rural Ladakhi life and will also get the chance to try your hand at archery whilst on this walk.

After breakfast, you will drive up to the entrance of the Zanskar canyon. Then drive up to the village of Chilling, around one and a half hours from Nimoo. Chilling is a settlement that is traditionally home to metal smiths and is the only village in Ladakh that has provided copper, bronze, tin, silver and iron work to Leh through the centuries. You will get the chance to see the local metal smith at work before enjoying a picnic lunch.

After lunch you will have the option of rafting (or driving) back through the Zanskar canyon to Nimoo (mid June to mid September, Grade Four Plus*) or to return by car. This afternoon, there is the opportunity to have a Ladakhi cooking lesson and this evening we have arranged for you to have a talk on Buddhism by a Khempo (Buddhist preacher).

Overnight: Nimoo Village House – Double/twin Room (Fully Inclusive)

Day 8. Raft or drive from Nimoo to Alchi followed by a drive to the Monastery. Drive back to Nimoo visiting Lekir Monastery en route.

Either spend a day at leisure at Nimoo house or go on a walk in the surrounding area with a picnic hamper. For those who are feeling more active, we can arrange a day trip to the famous monasteries at Alchi and/or Lekir, rafting one way (directly from Nimoo to Alchi (mid June to mid September, Grade Four Plus) and returning by car.



Situated 69kms from Leh and around one and a half hours drive from Nimoo, Alchi is the only monastery in Ladakh to be built on flat ground. The temple was founded in the 11th century and is particularly interesting for its Indian and Kashmiri influences. Founded in 14th century by Lama Dhwang Chosje, a great champion of meditation, Lekir monastery belongs to the Yellow Hat sect. After visiting the monastery you will drive back to Nimoo, one and half hours away.

Overnight: Nimoo Village House – Double/twin Room (Fully Inclusive)

Day 9. Drive to Leh airport, fly to Delhi.

Early this morning, you will be collected from Nimoo and transferred to Leh Airport in time to check-in for your return flight to Delhi.

On arrival at Delhi airport you will be met by our representative and driven back to your hotel. We will organise a day's sightseeing for you either today or Day 1 at the beginning of the trip depending on your flight arrival/departure details.

Day 10. Transfer to airport for flight back home.

DETAILED ITINERARY OF SHAYOK RIVER EXTENSION

Day 9. Drive to Pangong Lake and onto Shayok River Camp.

After an early breakfast, you will be driven for around five to six hours from the Nimoo village house over the Chang La Pass (5300m or 17,384ft) and onto to Pangong Lake (,4420m/14,500ft). Pangong is a 130km long lake that is bisected by the India-Tibet border. The lake was a part of the Tethys sea (that separated India and Asia before the Himalaya were formed) that was lifted up in its entirety. As such this stunningly beautiful turquoise hued lake contains oceanic fish and seagulls.

After a lunch by the lake shore, continue on by road for four to five hours to Shakti's Shayok River Camp (3000m/9840ft), which is the starting point of your river journey. Please note that you can miss out Pangong Lake and just drive straight to Shayok in five to six hours. However, we feel that all this driving in one day is fully worth the effort to see Pangong Lake.



The Shayok river valley was one of the traditional Silk Routes where traders would use rafts made of animal skins to cross the river. The scenery is dramatic as the river cuts through a wide valley between the Karakoram and Ladakh ranges. Though we will use river rafts, the water here is not more than grade two rapids, which does not qualify as white water rafting.

The first night of your river journey will be spent at our exclusive Shayok River Camp. Accommodation will be in dome tents, though Shakti's usual standard of food and service will make up for the simplicity of the accommodation.

Overnight: Shayok River Camp – Double/twin Tent (Fully Inclusive)

Day 10. Raft to the Nubra River Camp.

After breakfast at the camp you will board the raft for your first days rafting. The first part of the trip takes you through incredible scenery of high altitude desert, snow-capped peaks and dramatic rock formations. After two hours, you will stop for a picnic lunch by the side of the river. Further to another two to three hours of rafting, you will stop at our second camp (3280m/10758ft) in the Nubra valley near the village of Deskit.

Deskit is famous for its sand dunes that are far more reminiscent of the Sahara than the Tibetan plateau and come complete with a resident population of the double-humped Bactrian camels. The camels are left over from a time when the Nubra valley was on a major trade route to Central Asia and for those who want a camel ride, this can be arranged.

Overnight: Nubra River Camp – Double/twin Tent (Fully Inclusive)

Day 11. Raft to Hunda, visit Disket Monastery and drive to Nimoo.

After breakfast you will continue rafting to Hundar (optional), before driving back to Deskit monastery for a visit. You will then begin the four to five hour drive back to the Indus valley and after you have driven over the world's highest motorable road, the Khardungla (5385m/17,662ft) you will arrive in Nimoo in the late afternoon.

Overnight: Nimoo Village House – Double/twin Room (Fully Inclusive)

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Day 12. Drive to Leh airport, fly to Delhi.

Early this morning, you will be collected from Nimoo and transferred to Leh Airport in time to check-in for your return flight to Delhi.

On arrival at Delhi airport you will be met by our representative and driven back to your hotel. We will organise a day's sightseeing for you either today or Day 1 at the beginning of the trip depending on your flight arrival/departure details.

Day 13. Transfer to airport for flight back home.



ETHICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Mountain Company is committed to adopting a responsible attitude to the areas we visit. We are guests of the communities visited and with some thought and care we can ensure that everyone benefits from the experience.

We work closely with the International Porter Protection Group (www.ippg.net) who we support as a Camp 1 sponsor- we abide by their 5 guidelines for porter protection.

We also work with other organisations such as Climate Care (www.climatecare.org), Tourism Concern (www.tourismconcern.org.uk), Friends of Conservation (www.foc-uk.com) and Kathmandu Environmental Education Project (www.keepnepal.org).

We have developed a Responsible Tourism policy which aims to ensure that The Mountain Company and its clients act in a way that is socially, environmentally and culturally sound; please refer to Appendix III in this Trip Dossier.

The Mountain Company has joined the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Know Before You Go campaign. The aim is to make sure travellers are properly prepared before travelling overseas. The best way to get the FCO latest advice is to visit their website at: www.fco.gov.uk/travel.





PRACTICAL INFORMATION

ACCOMMODATION

Village Houses

The three village houses are built in traditional Ladakhi fashion using sun baked mud bricks and wooden beams made of local poplar and willow. This is then plastered with a traditional mixture of white clay and water giving the houses their white colour.

Though we understand that the more adventurous traveller is looking for something that is both original and real, we also realise that they want a certain level of comfort and luxury in which to experience that. As such, we have totally renovated the houses using local craftsmen and materials and though accommodation remains simple, we think that the levels of comfort will surprise you.

All three village houses can accommodate up to six people in three bedrooms which can be configured as either doubles or twins, all of which (bar one at Taru) have en-suite bathrooms. Please note that some of the en-suite bathrooms are shared between two bedrooms. Each bedroom contains a wood or 'chettai' mat floor, a chest of drawers, a clothes rack and Tibetan carpets.

Each house has a living room with traditional Ladakhi cushion seating and coffee tables as well as a small library of books and games. Each of the houses also contains a traditional kitchen/dining room as well as a roof terrace and large sun terrace furnished with wicker furniture and 'ladakhi' gazebos for shade. The village houses can only be taken privately and will be exclusive for your group.

River Camps

On the Shayok River journey, accommodation will be in imported dome tents with inflatable mattresses with good quality linen, pillows, duvets and blankets. There will be a dining tent and two communal western style loos as well as two shower



tents and a sink with running water per tent. The simplicity of accommodation will be made up for with our usual standard of food and service.

CLIMATE

Ladakh is a high altitude desert with little rainfall and as such sunshine is almost guaranteed. It is extremely dry (making it feel warmer than it is) and the main change in seasons is down to temperature.

By late May, Ladakh's cold winter should finally be over and spring brings pleasant clear days with average highs of around 20°C, nights can still however be cold dropping well into single digits.

By June, both the days and nights are getting warmer with maximum temperatures of up to 35°C on hot days in July and August. By September the temperatures are cooling off with those of the first half of October being similar to those in late May.

ACTIVITIES

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GUIDING

All of our guides come from one of our three regions, Kumaon, Sikkim or Ladakh and have an intimate knowledge and passion for the Himalaya. They all speak



English extremely well (generally as a first language). They will accompany you for your entire experience with Shakti from start to finish.

Please note however, that on some occasions if 360 Leti is fully booked, we will only have two or three guides there and you may be taken on walks by the hostess or one of the other staff members.

ALTITUDE AND ACCLIMATISATION

The altitude of the Village experience ranges between 3650-3770m (11,972–12,366ft). The altitude of the Shayok River Journey ranges between 3000-5385m (9840-17,662ft).

Please note that most people experience symptoms of AMS (Acute Mountain Sickness) when they ascend too quickly over and above heights of 2400m (7,800ft). If you are flying into Leh from Delhi, you should expect to experience some mild symptoms of AMS.

Symptoms often manifest themselves 6-10 hours after ascent and generally subside in 1 to 2 days, but they occasionally develop into more serious conditions. Symptoms include headache, fatigue, stomach illness, dizziness, and sleep disturbance. These symptoms are exaggerated by over-exertion and to manage this, we recommend that you do nothing on the first day and rest and relax without overexerting yourself.

You should also avoid alcohol both the night before flying and until you are acclimatized. You should also take it quite easy on the second day and drink lots of water and eat regular light meals. The more you rest and the better you treat yourself, the milder the symptoms will be.

Some people take Acetazolamide (sold under the brand name Diamox) to alleviate these symptoms, though you should always seek medical advice before doing this. Please note that we are not doctors and though our staff is trained in first aid, you should always consult a doctor before travelling to a high altitude area.



FOOD SERVICE

At Shakti Ladakh, the food is prepared by the Shakti chef accompanying you. Breakfasts are western orientated with fresh juice, fruit, muesli, yoghurt and porridge with a choice of both Western and Indian egg dishes and breads.

Lunches tend to be cold and are western orientated whilst dinners are very much and Indian affair. Each Shakti Ladakh experience will be accompanied by a guide, a service person, a chef and an assistant chef. For bigger groups, we will send a second service person.

At Shakti we only use purified bottled water for drinking, ice etc and all food is prepared according to strict western standards of hygiene. Please communicate any allergies or specific food requirements at the time of booking.

DRINKS

At Shakti Ladakh, we serve purified bottled water, freshly squeezed orange juice at breakfast, tea (herbal, English style, Darjeeling and Masala Chai), coffee (freshly ground coffee in a French press), Nimbupani (a freshly made Indian soft drink consisting of lemon, sugar, water and mint) and rhododendron juice.

On a Shakti Ladakh experience, imported spirits (vodka, gin, rum, whisky) imported wine (a Chianti and an Orvieto usually), Indian champagne and local beer are included in the rate. Please do let us know if you would like us to get you a particular brand of spirit or wine in at the time of booking. We can arrange French champagne (Moet and Chandon) at an additional cost of USD95 a bottle.

COMMUNICATIONS

Most mobile networks work in Ladakh, however there are no GPRS or 3G services available (only GSM) so data services will not work on blackberrys or smartphones. As all of the mobile networks come in to Ladakh on one line, service is not that reliable and it is sometimes impossible to make or receive calls.



There are internet café's in Leh, however they are also subject to sporadic service due to the connectivity and frequent power cuts. Should you not have a phone that works, our guides have phones which you can use for emergencies.

RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

Minimising our negative impact on the culturally and ecologically sensitive areas where we work is a central tenet of Shakti's philosophy and, as well as making a direct contribution ourselves, we encourage our guests to adhere to our written Code of Conduct. We believe that, in this way, we can all support each other in securing the future of these sublime regions and their inhabitants.

Some of the ways in which Shakti contributes to the local people and the environment are:

Employment

We have hired most of our staff locally and trained them in various fields of hospitality. Also, we have tried to bring the local cultures to visitors as they exist, thereby generating direct income to the villagers without compromising on their lifestyle and way of life. This means they don't need to resort to high volume, high impact tourism that degrades their environment and way of life.

Buildings & Infrastructure: According to the location, we either commission new buildings that leave only the lightest footprint on their setting or we breathe new life into existing, traditional village houses.

Electricity Generation

On the village walks, we use the mains supply of electricity but our usage is very small as we use solar lanterns, candles and hurricane lamps for most of our light and wood for cooking.

At 360° Leti, we use sustainable sources (principally solar) to provide 100 percent of our electricity supply, excepting a small generator run battery that we use to charge up laptops and mobile phones.



Rainwater harvesting

We have set up a rain water harvesting project in Almora next to our office – this is being replicated with various villagers in the areas we operate. Since we work with the villagers on these projects, they are then able to learn and have taken the initiative to develop more projects.

Village Development Fund

In order to respect local customs, we ask any guests who may wish to offer gifts or money, to do so through this fund. 100% of guest contributions received in this way will go to the intended recipients, channelled through this more socially acceptable channel. The implementation of these projects is supported by our tie-up with The Leap – a voluntary organisation based in the UK, which sends volunteers for 6 or 10 week placements, to work with us on our community and environmental missions.

Support of local cultures and skills

We have helped support a local dance group of traditional Kumaoni dancers. We include a performance in all our trips which has helped to sustain this skill, as well as train younger members. We incorporated local building techniques and styles for our mountain camp, 360° Leti. The “dry-stack stone wall” is the traditional method of construction in the area - we have revived these skilled techniques practiced by a few specialist families in the area, by incorporating them into the construction of our camp.

Controlled social impact

Each of our operations is on a very small scale – and while that limits the number of guests we can receive, we prefer it that way, so we don't impose ourselves too much on our surroundings.

CODES OF CONDUCT IN THE HIMALAYAS

Shakti practices the ethics of responsible, eco-friendly and sustainable tourism to ensure minimum human interference with the natural surroundings and maximum community participation. We believe this ethos is a fitting tribute to this immeasurable gesture of nature called the Himalayas.

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Therefore, we encourage you to carefully read and adhere to these guidelines, so we can all contribute in maintaining the pristine condition of this area, securing the future of this wilderness and its inhabitants.

Litter: Simple – Just don't!

Every effort is taken to stress the importance of picking up litter. Shakti staff are committed to ensuring all campsites are left spotless of waste. All litter is carried with us along the walks, and deposited in safe methods at the end of the trip. By enforcing these rules, we set an example to other visitors and also to the locals of the area. You will be of great help just by showing diligence to such a request, and bringing the Shakti staff's attention to any litter.

Deforestation

The eradication of trees and forests has a monumental effect on the ecosystem and local populations. We will only ever use dead/broken wood for any fires that we may have.

Fire Risk

We insist that our clients are extremely cautious and vigilant about any kinds of unprotected or potentially dangerous fires, since these areas are especially susceptible to forest fires. A few such examples would be lighting of candles in the village houses, careless dispersal of lit/unlit matches, cigarettes etc.

Natural Environment

We take every effort to educate our clients about their natural surroundings, encouraging them to value the un-spoilt nature. This helps to install a respect for such lands. We also take every opportunity to encourage the local people to also adhere to these guidelines.

Local Cultures

The culture of these regions has been fostered and protected for generations. We take steps to inform and educate our clients about their cultural surroundings, encouraging them to be more of an unobtrusive observer and a participant in its course. These efforts are aimed to ensure a level of respect and appreciation for the local people.

Extending the point further, we strongly recommend that our clients do not indulge the local inhabitants by being generous in the monetary fashion, or by donating any



goods of any kind. This practice will contribute to an increase in crime in the local region and ultimately play a major role in the deterioration of the social system. We may also take this opportunity to stress the point that Shakti contributes to the local economy by providing employment opportunities and encouraging clients to donate items like clothing and educational material for local children. We have set up a village development fund, which will in turn be used for specific projects in the local areas.

Water

Ladakh is a high altitude desert and it rarely rains. Water comes from a finite source (glacial melt water) and is in short supply. We would appreciate your help in only using what is necessary and conserving water where possible.

HEALTH, FITNESS AND SAFETY

Due to the environment of Ladakh and the villages that we are operating in, we have named this as a “village experience”, not a village walk. Transport between the houses will be by road, by raft or on foot. The walking involved in the suggested itinerary is not strenuous and is designed for people of moderate fitness.

Please note that our itineraries are just suggestions and as every experience is private, it can be customised to your needs. As such, we can omit walking if you so desire or we can increase the amount of walking. The rafting for both the short rafting offered in the village experience and that offered on the river journey does not really involve white water and involves no more than grade two rapids.

All our guides and many of our staff are NOLS first aid trained, we have first aid kits in all houses and vehicles as well as oxygen cylinders for altitude problems. We also have an evacuation plan in place should there be an emergency. As Ladakh is a sensitive military area, all evacuations have to be done in conjunction with the military through your embassy.

CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT

A list of suggested clothing and equipment for the Ladakh Village Experience has been included in the Appendix below.



If you do not have the clothing and equipment contained in this list then a good option might be to rent from the UK. Trek Hire is a company that rents out high quality items at competitive prices which would save you the expense of buying. The link to their website is <http://www.trekhireuk.com/>

Alternatively if you are going to buy then please contact the office for the Cotswold Outdoor promo code that entitles you, as a client of The Mountain Company, to a 15% discount in their stores and online.

VISA REQUIREMENTS

Citizens from the UK, US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand require an entry visa, it is your responsibility to obtain the entry visa. The Indian High Commission in London has updated the procedure for obtaining tourist visas. The decision on whether to grant a visa has been retained by the High Commission; however the application and collection process has been outsourced to VFS Global.

All applications have to be made online at <http://in.vfsglobal.co.uk/> You still have to apply online if you are submitting your application by post or using a visa agency. Walk-in applicants also need to fill out the online form before visiting VFS's office.

It should take 2 to 3 days to process your visa from submission although many people have experienced delays so please allow longer than this. Postal applications might take up to 15 days plus postage time. We suggest you carefully read the VFS website taking particular care in calculating the fee payable and also the rules for acceptable passport photos in order to avoid further delays.

VACCINATIONS AND MEDICAL

You should obtain professional advice from a travel clinic or your local GP about which vaccinations to have before you arrive in Nepal. A dental check-up is a good idea as there will be no dental facilities while on the trek.

We bring a comprehensive first aid kit from UK (Life Systems Mountain Leader) plus high altitude medicine, antibiotics and other medicines.



FLIGHTS

We recommend Max Travel (ATOL bonded license# 4705) for booking international flights and other travel arrangements. Please take a look at their website at <http://www.maxtravel.co.uk/> or give them a call on 020 7095 0920.

There are a number of good online agents that we also recommend, they are:

Kayak: *an excellent flight cost comparison website* <http://www.kayak.co.uk/>

Traveljungle: *another good flight cost comparison website* <http://www.traveljungle.co.uk/>

Cheap Tickets: this site quotes airfares in USD\$ & often is very competitive when translated back to GBP£ <http://www.cheaptickets.com/>

Southall Travel: very competitive prices for India, Pakistan and Nepal both online and telephone support <http://www.southalltravel.co.uk/>

INSURANCE

Travel insurance for any Mountain Company itinerary is a condition of booking a holiday. At the very least you should have emergency medical and repatriation insurance which must include the cost of mountain rescue. Cancellation insurance is strongly recommended as all deposits paid to The Mountain Company are non-refundable.

To get an online quote for your personal travel and trekking insurance (UK residents only), take a look at Snowcard's website at http://www.snowcard.co.uk/pages/d_select1.asp?referrer_id=MC





Please note that The Mountain Company do not act as an agent of Snowcard Insurance and any policy bought via this web link is effected directly with Snowcard Insurance Services Limited.

CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

For those of you who are visiting India for the first time we have provided some cultural information to help ensure your behaviour is acceptable to your hosts in India:

- Both men and women should dress conservatively wearing full length trousers and a shirt.
- There are many hot springs, rivers and lakes where it is pleasant to take a dip, it is fine for men to go bare-chested while bathing but should not go nude. Women should try and be as modest as possible in these situations.
- Indians consider the left hand to be unclean, therefore do not eat food with your left hand and make sure you give or receive food only with your right hand
- Shoes are considered degrading so keep them on the ground and remove them before putting your feet on anything and on entering a temple you should remove your shoes.
- You will pass Buddhist mani walls, chortens, and stupas along the trek and to follow local traditions you should pass them on your right.
- When visiting a monastery or gomba it is customary to give a donation for its upkeep.



SUGGESTED READING

Please take a look at The Mountain Company's bookstore for a wide selection of books and maps to Nepal, the link is at: <http://astore.amazon.co.uk/themountainco-21>

- The Great Game – Peter Hopkirk
- Young Husband: The last great Imperial Adventure – Patrick French
- Ancient Future – Helena Norberg Hodge
- Jesus lived in India – Holger Kersten
- Kim – Rudyard Kipling
- Himalaya – Michael Palin
- Footprint Indian Himalaya Handbook - Robert Bradnock

MAPS

Ladakh - Zaskar Centre by Editions Olizane Scale: 1:150,000

Leh, Zaskar and Nubra Valley by West Col Productions Scale: 1:200,000



APPENDIX 1

SUGGESTED CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT LIST

We recommend you to travel with a soft material bag and a small day-pack. Please bear in mind the porters will be carrying your luggage so please ensure they are of good quality, have strong straps and secure zips.

In terms of clothes, it is all about layers as you could experience temperatures (in celsius) that range from almost zero to thirty degrees. Though the weather will usually be less extreme than this, you will find yourself adding and removing layers a fair amount during a day, especially if you are walking. As such lots of layers are essential and we would recommend packing a range of clothes from t-shirts, long sleeve t-shirts, jumpers, shorts and trousers.

- 1x head torch (plus spare batteries)
- 1 x normal hand held torch (plus spare batteries)
- Penknife – either Swiss Army or Leatherman, though the guide will have one.
- Spare plastic bags (for packing your clothes, to help protect from dampness/rain in both your rucksack and daypack)
- One pair ankle length boots/or walking shoes with a good grip profile. We recommend 'goretex' as it is light and breathable, though leather is better in wet and snowy weather; this is very rarely a factor on a Shakti experience. Please ensure you have 'broken' the boots in, new ones could cause aggravation.
- You may like to bring a pair of rubber slippers/flip flops to pad around in and Ugg boots or a similar type of shoe are particularly recommended.
- Good quality socks with cushions and climate control (several pairs)
- A good rain/windproof jacket with a hood
- Good quality fleece pullovers-100% polyester



- Vests/T-shirts for the day.
- Swimming suit/shorts (you may like to cool off in the streams on the walks and there is a waterfall on one of the walks from the camp)
- Lightweight trousers (the combat style are the most practical, especially the ones that unzip to make shorts) for walking
- Shorts
- Trousers for the evening.
- Light gloves
- Fleece hat with ear flaps and sun hat.
- Sun glasses with UV protection
- Suncream with high SPF
- Shower gel/shampoo
- Insect Repellent
- Oral rehydration salts
- Blister plasters

We recommend you to carry in your day pack

- Bearing in mind that you will not be able to access your main bag whilst you are out walking, we recommend the following items be carried in your day pack:
- 1 x 25/30litre day pack with air-comfort system/back support.
- Water proof jacket
- Extra fleece/warm layer
- Sun hat
- Sun glasses
- Suncream with high SPF

Telephone and fax: 0207 4980953 / International callers: +44 207498 0953

Skype ID: Rolandh1 / Email: info@themountaincompany.co.uk / www.themountaincompany.co.uk

Postal address: Flat 3, 190 Cedars Rd, Clapham, London SW40PP, UK



- Camera with enough spare film and batteries
- Binoculars
- Notebook and pen
- Lipsalve
- Lightweight scarf which can double up as a headscarf.



APPENDIX 2

INTERNATIONAL PASSENGER PROTECTION

In accordance with "The Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992" all passengers booking with The Mountain Trekking Company Ltd ("The Mountain Company") are fully protected for the initial deposit and subsequently the balance of all monies paid to us, including repatriation if required, arising from cancellation or curtailment of your travel arrangements due to the insolvency of The Mountain Company.

There is no requirement for Financial Protection of day trips, and none is provided. This insurance is only valid for packages booked that DO NOT include flights.

Consumer aware: Your booking is insured by IPP Ltd and its panel of insurers. This insurance is only valid for passengers who book and pay directly with/to The Mountain Company. If you have booked and/ or paid direct to a Travel Agent for a holiday with The Mountain Company please request proof of how the booking is secured as this will not be covered by IPP Ltd in this instance. For further information please go to www.ipplondon.co.uk

This Insurance has been arranged by International Passenger Protection Limited and underwritten by Insurers who are members of the Association of British Insurers & Lloyds Syndicates.

Claim procedures: download claim form from www.ipplondon.co.uk, any occurrence which may give rise to a claim should be advised within 14 days to: International Passenger Protection Limited, Claims Office, IPP House, 22-26 Station Road, West Wickham, Kent BR4 0PR, United Kingdom. Telephone: +44 (0) 208 7763752. Fax: +44 (0) 208 7763751.

In order to deal promptly with any claims hereunder it is essential that you retain all bills, receipts and other documents relating to your travel arrangements. Claims forms must be submitted to IPP within six months of date of insolvency they cannot consider or pay claims received after this date.