

MARKHA VALLEY, LADAKH



Markha Valley, Ladakh



HIGHLIGHTS

- A beautiful trek in Ladakh, also known as Little Tibet, exploring a high and arid landscape with many Buddhist monasteries clinging to high cliffs. We will cross two high passes bedecked by colourful prayer flags.
- Spectacular views of Kang Yatse (6,400m) and Stok Kangri (6,135m), also the Eastern Karakorum and the dry mountains of Zaskar.
- Included in the itinerary is the opportunity to see the sights in Delhi and the monasteries of Leh.
- Roland, owner and founder of The Mountain Company, led this trip in July 2005 and has modified the itinerary based on this experience. He will be happy to answer any questions you might have.

"Overall the trip went really well. The partners in Leh and Delhi that were chosen by The Mountain Company were very reliable and the staff which they hired were very good, in particular our guide, cook and horse man for our trek in Ladakh." Sylvia Mueller and Robert Anderson (USA)



MARKA VALLEY, LADAKH

Total number of days	15 days
Grade & days trekking	Gentle, 9 trekking days
Accommodation	6 nights hotel, 8 nights camping
2010 price ex Delhi	£1,250
Minimum group size	2
Dates	July 10 th to 24 th 2010 July 31 st to August 14 th 2010 August 21 st to September 4 th 2010 July 9 th to 23 rd 2011 July 30 th to August 13 th 2011 August 20 th to September 3 rd 2011



THE FOLLOWING IS INCLUDED IN THE PRICE OF THE TRIP

- Internal flight to/from Leh and Delhi.
- All transfers including airport collections.
- Twin share room at Hotel White House in Delhi and Hotel Pangong (or equivalent) in Leh.
- Breakfast only at hotels in Delhi and Leh, all meals included while on trek.
- Twin share tents while on trek.
- All trekking arrangements including permits and fees, tents, TMC guide, ponies and cook.
- Financial protection insurance with International Passenger Protection.

THE FOLLOWING SINGLE SUPPLEMENT IS AVAILABLE:

Single room supplement	£POA
Single tent supplement	£60

Please note that if you are a single person booking on one of our trips you do not have to pay the single room supplement, this is only payable if you specifically request to have a room or tent to yourself. You will not have to pay this for this option if you happen to end up with a single room or tent due to odd numbers on the trip.

THE FOLLOWING IS NOT INCLUDED IN THE PRICE OF THE TRIP

- International flight to/from Delhi (from £350).
- Travel & trekking insurance (Snowcard from £55).
- India visa up to 6 month (£30).
- Lunch and evening meals in Delhi and Leh.



- Personal clothing & equipment please see the 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 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.

This Insurance has been arranged by International Passenger Protection Limited and underwritten by Insurers who are members of the Association of British Insurers. A certificate detailing this cover will be given to each passenger as evidence of cover.



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

This is a trek in Ladakh crossing two high passes with spectacular views of Karakoram and Zaskar mountain ranges.

Ladakh, also known as little Tibet, is one of the most remarkable regions of India. Although politically part of India, Ladakh is geographically and culturally an extension of western Tibet. Ladakh is a high and arid landscape with lush irrigated valleys surrounded by snow capped peaks. Leh the capital of Ladakh has long been a remote and fascinating outpost and important cross-roads for pilgrims and traders in the upper Indus Valley.

After the spectacular flight over the Himalaya to Leh we spend several days for essential acclimatization with sightseeing at Buddhist monasteries. The trek starts at the village of Spituk and after crossing the Ganda La we descend into the Markha Valley. We continue to the beautiful Nimaling plains dominated by the impressive Kang Yatze peak. From here we cross the Kongmaru La with superb views south to Zaskar and north to the Karakoram range. We descend from the pass through a steep canyon with wonderful coloured rock and then drive back to Leh.

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.

Day 2. Fly to Leh (3,505m).

Transfer to the airport for an early morning flight to Leh. The rest of the day you can rest from altitude and the early start or start exploring Leh. Overnight hotel.

Day 3. Sightseeing around Leh.

Leh is the ancient capital of Ladakh and has many hilltop forts and palaces to visit including the Royal Palace which overlooks the town. The town is situated on the old Silk Route and still has a trading tradition- it is well worth wandering around the colourful bazaar.

Day 4. Sightseeing around Leh.

The two most well known monasteries are Shey and Thiksey. Shey gompa was constructed by the first king of Ladakh and was the seat of power for the pre-Tibetan kings. Thiksey gompa is a very impressive monastery containing numerous stupas, statues, thankas, wall paintings and a large pillar engraved with the Buddha's teachings.

Day 5. Drive to Spituk, and trek to Jingchen (3,380m)- 4 to 5 hours walking.

After breakfast, we drive to Spituk and start trekking. On leaving Spituk we enter a flat plain at the foot of the Stok mountains, for the rest of the day the trail follows the Indus river, often with rafts floating past, before leaving the Indus to head into the mountains along the pretty Jingchen gorge.

Day 6. Trek to Yurutse (4,120m)- 3 to 4 hours walking.

The route follows the Jingchen Nala upstream in an increasingly narrow valley- look out for the blue sheep high above on the steep sides of the valley. Before entering Rumbak the valley widens and the snow-topped Stok mountains come into sight. The trail continues upstream, crosses the bridge and then takes the right fork to Yurutse.

Day 7. Trek to Shingo (4,150m) over the Ganda la (4,850m)- 4 ½ to 5 hours walking.

On leaving Yurutse the trail passes a beautiful purple band of rock and continues to Ganda la base camp where you take the path west towards the Ganda la. Once at



the pass there is a great view of Stok Kangri and the Zanskar range to the west, and from there descend to Shingo.

Day 8. Trek to Skiu (3,400m)- 3 to 4 hours walking.

Today we pass through a spectacular gorge with beautifully coloured and eroded rocks following the Shingri Nala river to Skiu- above Skiu is an attractive gompa and the remains of a royal residence.

Day 9. Trek to Markha (3,700m)- 6 ½ to 8 hours walking.

The trail passes through Chalak and Tunespa and on approaching Markha you get the first glimpses of Kang Yatse (6,400m).

Day 10. Trek to Tchatchutse (4,150m)- 4 ½ to 5 hours walking.

The route goes up the main valley on the right bank, passes the monastery of Humlung and continues to Hankar. The valley narrows and the trail crosses to the left bank to reach the pastures of Tchatchutse.

Day 11. Trek to Nimaling (4,720m)- 3 to 3 ½ hours walking.

The trail passes a small lake and then across pastures to Nimaling which is one of the most beautiful high valleys in Ladakh with grassy plains surrounded by high peaks and passes. To the south the view is dominated by Kang Yatze and to the north the Kong Maru La- the high pass we must cross in order to return back to Leh.

Day 12. Trek to Shang (3,660m) over the Kong Maru la (5,100m)- 5 to 7 hours walking.

Today is a long day as the trail climbs to the Kong Maru La- at the top of the pass there are colourful prayer flags framing the 360-degree Himalayan panorama. To the north we look out towards Tibet, the Eastern Karakorams and China and to the south lies Kang Yatze whilst in the west there are the dry mountains of Zanskar.

The descent from the pass is fairly steep but soon eases before entering a narrow gorge with colourful rock formations. We descend into the Indus Valley and to the village of Shang.



Day 13. Trek to Hemis (3,600m)- 3 to 4 hours walking.

We walk along the riverbed on the left bank passing a series of chortens and follow a gently rising trail through rugged scenery to Hemis. After visiting Hemis monastery we drive back to Leh.

Day 14. Fly to Delhi and sightseeing

Today we fly to Delhi and the rest of the day we explore Delhi with a good local guide- the day is flexible depending on what you would like to see but the most popular places generally are the Red Fort, Jama Masjid, Qutub Minar and the Mughal gardens.

Day 15. Fly back home.

Transfer to Delhi airport for the flight back home. End of trip.



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.

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.

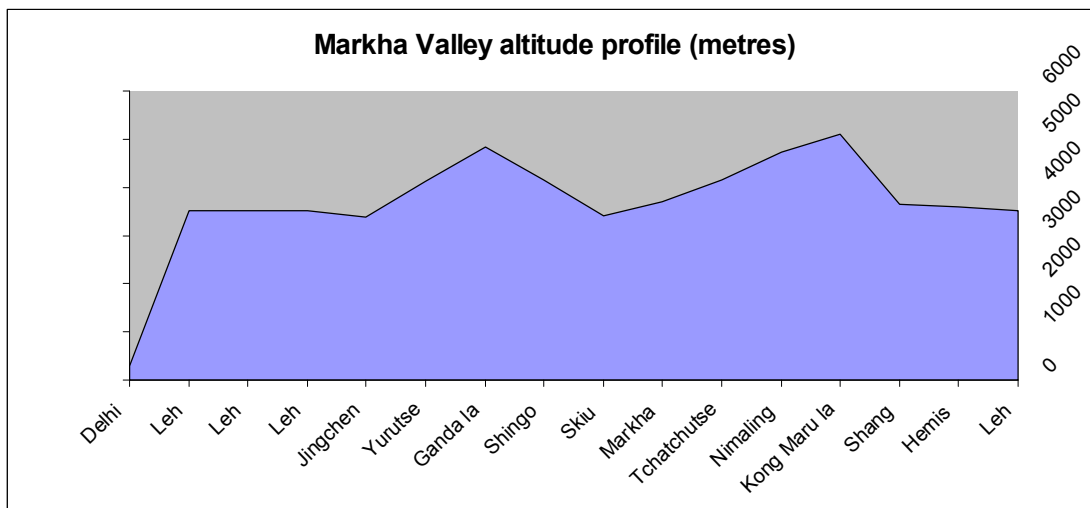




PRACTICAL INFORMATION

ALTITUDE AND ACCLIMATISATION

Our Markha Valley itinerary has been designed for gradual acclimatisation to take place, take a look at the altitude profile for the itinerary below:



There are ways of helping the acclimatisation process, as described below:

- Walk slowly: there is plenty of time included in the itinerary so there is no need to rush, go at your own pace and enjoy the incredible views!
- Drink lots of water: it is easier for your body to acclimatise when hydrated so drink water and avoid coffee, tea and alcohol.
- Consider taking diamox (acetazolamide): before using this drug we recommend consulting a doctor and thoroughly researching the pros and cons.

For further information we suggest you take a look at the following websites:

Base Camp MD website:

<http://www.BaseCampmd.com/expguide/highalt.shtml>

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

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High Altitude medicine website:

<http://www.high-altitude-medicine.com>

Medex Travel at High Altitude:

<http://www.medex.org.uk/v26%20booklet.pdf>

BMC website:

<http://www.thebmc.co.uk/Feature.aspx?id=1746>

ACCOMMODATION IN DELHI & LEH

In **Delhi** we normally use the White House hotel which is located centrally in the Karol Bagh district of New Delhi. It is a short walk from the hotel to the Metro station and five minutes into Connaught Place. For more information take a look at their website www.hotel-whitehouse.com

In **Leh** we use the Pangong Hotel (Category A rated) which is located in a grove of poplar trees only 5 minute walk from the centre of Leh. The hotel has a beautiful garden with views of Stok Kangri. There are 18 well furnished spacious double rooms with attached bathrooms and running hot & cold shower facility with Cable TV.

We will book hotels of a similar quality if we are unable to get reservations at these ones.

A TYPICAL DAY ON TREK

The day starts with an early morning mug of tea brought to your tent by one of the cook's helpers. Before heading over to the mess tent for breakfast it is best to pack your overnight gear into your duffel bag. During breakfast the tents will be packed away and, after the pony men have arranged their loads, they will set off on the trail in the cool of the morning.

After breakfast, probably between 7am and 8am, we start walking. The pace of the trek is leisurely with plenty of time to enjoy the scenery, take photos and explore the



local villages. Lunch will be around 11am at a spot by the side of the trail and is prepared for us by the cooks.

There is more walking after lunch and normally you will get into camp by mid afternoon with the tents already put up by the local staff. In the evening a three course meal is served in the mess tent around 7pm. After supper the western leader will discuss the plan for the next day with the group. People might stay in the mess tent chatting about the day's events for a while before retiring to their tent for the night.

FOOD

In **Delhi** there is a wide range of excellent restaurants close to the hotel in Connaught Circus from upmarket, local dhabas to western style. Some of the more popular ones are: Spice Route (in the Imperial hotel), Banana Leaf, Nirulas, Baristas, Parikrama, United Coffee House and Standard. Breakfast is provided each morning by the hotel.

In **Leh** there is also a wide range of good restaurants, our favourites include Dreamland, La Terrasses and the Tibetan kitchen.

While on the trek you will get breakfast with porridge and cereal, toast or chapattis, omelettes and a range of hot drinks. Normally a hot lunch is prepared by the trek crew or on the longer days a pack lunch is provided after breakfast. On arrival at the camp in the afternoon you will be given tea and biscuits and a three course meal will follow later in the evening.

CLIMATE

The traditional trekking season in Ladakh is mid June to mid September, in Leh the typical summer maximum temperature is 30°C and minimum 12°C. At higher altitudes on the trek temperatures range from about 20°C to -5°C. Delhi is typically hot and humid at this time of year, temperatures in July and August range from 34°C to 24°C with high humidity.



CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT

A list of suggested clothing and equipment for the Markha Valley trek has been included in Appendix below. This is a comprehensive list and experienced trekkers will often take only a selection of these items based on what has worked in the past. It is worth pointing out that you will need a sleeping bag for this trip.

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.

Each trekker should bring one backpack for items required during the day. Your day backpack will contain items such as warm clothes, jacket, camera, water bottles, personal first aid kit and snacks.

The rest of your personal equipment packed in a duffel bag or backpack will be carried by a pony. **The maximum weight allowance is 15kgs.** Please ensure that your bag is marked clearly on the outside for easy identification.

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

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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

Snowcard activity level for Markha Valley trek is 3 and prices start from £55.



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 gumpa 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>

Ladakh: Crossroads of High Asia by Janet Rizvi

Heartlands: Travels in the Tibetan World by Michael Buckley

A Journey in Ladakh by Andrew Harvey

Ladakh by Prabuddha Das Gupta

Tibetan Foothold Dervla Murphy

Quest for Kim: In Search of Kipling's Great Game by Peter Hopkirk

City of Djinns: A Year in Delhi by William Dalrymple

The Ascent of Rum Doodle by WE Bowman

MAPS

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

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

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APPENDIX

SUGGESTED CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT LIST

Footwear:

- Walking boots. A pair of water repellent boots with ankle support.
- Gaiters. A pair used to keep boots dry if walking through deep snow or on wet ground.
- Wool and liner socks.
- Trainers/sneakers or sandals. Can be used in camp/lodge in the evenings.

Clothing:

- Waterproof jacket and trousers (goretex or similar).
- Trekking trousers.
- Long sleeve shirts (not cotton).
- Micro fleece.
- Mid to heavyweight fleece.
- Sleeveless or body warmer type fleece.
- Thermals or baselayer for top & bottom (merino wool or synthetic).
- Fleece pants.
- Medium weight down jacket.

Handwear:

- Fleece gloves.
- Warm mittens and/or gloves.

**Headwear:**

- Wool or fleece hat.
- Sun hat.
- Bandana or scarf.
- Headtorch. Bring extra batteries.
- Sunglasses.

Personal Equipment:

- Sleeping bag.
- Backpack large enough to carry water bottles, camera, lunch and extra clothing.
- Stuff sacks for keeping your gear dry and organised.
- Two water bottles (Nalgene wide mouth bottles are the best).
- Sunscreen and lipsalve with a high SPF.
- Insect repellent.
- Water purification tablets (Pristine, Biox Acqua or Acqa Mira).
- Favourite snack food.
- Books, ipod and cards etc.
- Trekking poles.
- Camera with spare batteries and memory cards.
- Insurance certificate.
- Earplugs (optional).
- Baby wipes (optional).
- Hand sanitizer (optional).



Travelling:

- Duffle bag or large backpack for your personal gear on the trek (carried by a porter). Bring a small combination padlock to secure the bag.
- Travel clothes. You will need casual clothing for air travel days.
- Toiletry bag include toilet paper, soap, towel, toothbrush, etc.

Personal first aid kit:

Note: we provide a comprehensive group first aid kit but please bring personal medications and other items you might use regularly such as:

- Any personal medications.
- Malaria prophylactic tablets.
- Blister treatment- Compeed patches are the best.
- Rehydration powder eg Dioralyte.
- Analgesic (paracetamol, ibuprofen and aspirin).
- Plasters and zinc oxide tape.
- Throat lozenges.
- Diamox (optional), helps with acclimatisation.