

GO LADAKH! An initiation to Ladakh



What is it? 10th edition of the annual CWH group trip to the land of passes. 3rd – 11th June 2017.

What would you call a journey traversing 3 of the 5 highest motorable passes in the world, the second highest salt water lake in the world, the second coldest inhabited place in the world, 3 entirely different terrains, 3 distinct cultures, 5 mountain ranges and possible for only 3 months in an year? Add an exploration along the remote Shyok river, monastery visits, hidden lakes, camping under the stars, glaciers, mountain biking, Tibetan cuisine, happening streets of Leh and you have a got a complete Ladakh experience for the first timer.

The road to Leh

In 2 stages – Kashmir to Leh | Around Ladakh

Stage 1a. Srinagar to Kargil via Sonmarg

From Srinagar, we follow the Sindh river to the lush green high altitude meadow of Sonmarg and then cross over the Zoji La to the barren contours of the trans-Himalaya in Drass. The vista now shifts to the Zaskar range and its narrow gorge as we approach Kargil, the town which marks the end of the Muslim Kashmir and the beginning of Buddhist Ladakh.

Distance covered: 204 km

Passes crossed: Zoji La (3505M)

Pit Stops: Sonmarg, Drass, Tiger hill

Mountain ranges: Pir Panjal, Greater Himalaya



Sonmarg and the Thajiwas glacier



The town of Kargil

Stage 1b. Kargil to Leh via Alchi

From Kargil, the road goes over the huge Khurbathang plateau to the village of Mulbek with its gigantic rock carving of Maitreya Buddha, crosses over two passes, reaches the spectacularly located Lamayuru gompa amongst amazing wind eroded towers and then descends all the way down to the Indus at Khalatse. Follow the Indus to its remarkable confluence with Zaskar at Nimmu and further on to Leh.

Distance covered: 234 Km

Passes crossed: Namika La (3719M)
Fotu La (4094M)

Pit Stops: Mulbek, Lamayuru, Alchi, Nimmu

Mountain ranges: Zaskar



Alchi, a unique monastery in Ladakh



The mighty Indus meets the Zaskar at Nimmu

Stage 2a. Leh to Nubra Valley

The Nubra valley, leading to the Siachen glacier and opened for tourists very recently, is reached after tackling the small matter of crossing the highest motorable pass in the world, the Khardung la. A visit to the gompa at Diskit, where a residence for the Dalai Lama is being built and the hidden lake right on the bed of the Nubra river at Panamic follows. This is the last place civilians are allowed before Siachen glacier.

Distance covered: 150km North of Leh

Passes crossed: Khardung la (5578 M)

Pit Stops: Panamic lake, Diskit, Hundur

Mountain ranges: Zaskar, Karakoram



The road at Khardung La



How to capture the scale of Nubra valley?

Stage 2b. Nubra to Pangong Tso

We drive to Pangong Tso on the Indo-Tibet border, which is the 2nd highest salt water lake in the world. It is 130km in length out of which 1/3rd lies in India and is famous for the color of its water which changes every hour. We pass through the spectacularly green Sakti village before crossing the Chang La and descending to Tangtse village with its domesticated Yaks and nomadic herdsmen, Chang-Pa.

Distance: 160 km east of Leh

Passes crossed: Chang La (5475M)

Pit Stops: Sakti, Tangtse, Pangong Lake

Mountain ranges: Ladakh range, Pangong range



Pangong Tso at India- Tibet border



Yak heads at a village entrance

Acclimatization

The average altitude in Ladakh is ~3500M. At this height everyone, including seasoned climbers, are prone to mild altitude sickness (AMS). Following are the precautions we are going to take:

1. Drive into Leh from Srinagar rather than flying into Leh or driving from Manali. The drive from Manali reaches a height of ~5300M before dropping down and is a sure shot way of falling sick. Srinagar-Leh on the other hand is a gradual gain.
2. Reach Leh on the 4th day after gradually climbing from Srinagar to Sonmarg to Kargil to Alchi and then to Leh.
3. Keep one entire day as rest day for acclimatization upon reaching Leh.
4. Keep ourselves well hydrated through out the journey.

These precautions will reduce our chances of getting AMS, but not make it zero. But always remember that even if we get sick, it's going to be the mildest form and in 99% cases one recovers within 24 hours. Read my blog on AMS [here](#).

The Ladakh first timers itinerary™: 9 day trip, 6 days off work

Day's activity	Remarks	You need to..	
3 rd June, Saturday	Fly into Srinagar in the morning. Drive to and stay in Sonamarg.	We stay in a guesthouse in an unreal setting - right under the Thajiwas glacier.	Book flight tickets to Srinagar. Make sure you land latest by 2 pm.
4 th June	Drive to Kargil via zoji la and Drass. ~ 5 hours	After Sonamarg, we cross the historical Zoji la pass and enter the trans-Himalayan region. Will visit the Kargil war memorial on the way in Drass. Kargil makes for a convenient stopover.	
5 th June	Drive to Alchi. Pass Mulbek and Lamayuru gumpa on the way. ~7 hours	Today is a spectacular drive crossing the Zaskar. We cross two high passes, two very important Buddhist villages of Mulbek and Lamayuru, to finally reach the hidden gem of Ladakh -Alchi. We stay in a beautiful guesthouse just outside the monastery.	
6 th and 7 th June	Short drive to Leh. Rest day for acclimatization. Check out the vibrant Leh and its sights and food.	A well-deserved and much required rest day. Chilling out is on the agenda. Our stay is at a guesthouse in the hep Changspa area of Leh.	
8 th June	Drive to Nubra valley across Khardung La, the highest road in the world. 150 Km, ~5 hours.	It has become very accessible, but that doesn't take away from the breathtaking beauty of Nubra valley. We also visit the important monastery at Diskit. Stay in a luxury campsite today.	
9 th June	Visit the hidden lake at Panamic. Drive to Spangmik village, pretty much the last village along the mighty Pangong lake on India side. ~ 8-9 hours.	Today we take the road really less traveled. From Nubra to Pangong Tso via Tangste and you will get a chance to see how Ladakh looked like few years back. At Spangmik, we stay at camp on the shores of the lake.	Note: The final call on which route to take will of course be taken on the spot depending on road conditions.
10 th June	Spend time on the shores of Pangong Tso on the border of India and China in the morning. Return to Leh in afternoon. ~ 4.5 hours.	Best things come to those who wait. And it's the same with Pangong Tso, the highlight of the trip. Wont even try to put it in words. Evening we are back in the good old Leh guesthouse.	
Sunday, 11 th June	Fly back early in the morning to Delhi.	Most of the flights out of Leh are in the morning only.	Book flight tickets from Leh to Delhi and beyond

Note: If you have 3 extra days I can help you organize the return journey via Jispa and Manali. It's another thrilling road drive through some amazing landscape. Let me know.

Cost for the trip: The cost components for the trip are:

Cost component	Includes
Transportation	From Srinagar airport and throughout the trip in SUVs with 4 people per car
Stay	Guesthouses at Srinagar, Kargil, Alchi, Leh, Nubra valley and camping in Spangmik. Twin sharing.
Food	Various options available for food through out and hence its not included in the package. Budget for around 2000 -2500 Rs extra for food. Will make a kitty on day 1 to be spent on food while in transit.
Permits and fees	All permits, entry fees and taxes are included

The cost of the trip = **Rs 45000/-** per person [Click here for PAYMENTS](#)

Note: Group size will be 15. Bookings are done on first come first serve basis. Confirm your place by making the full payment in advance. Read our [cancellation policy](#) and fill the [release document](#)

Payment options:

1. Cheque/ DD:

For 'Connect with Himalaya'
403, Ram Krishna chambers
Linking Road, Khar west
Above Reebok showroom
Mumbai -400052

2. Online transfer/ Cash deposit to:

Account name: Connect with Himalaya
Bank: Axis bank
Branch: Springfield- Lokhandwala, Mumbai
Current A/C #: 415010200003681
IFSC: UTIB0000415, SWIFT: AXISINBB002

Making a contribution:

There is always a way of giving back to the place and people where we go for our holidays. This is how we will do it:

- Stay in guesthouses run by locals wherever possible.
- Use local staff throughout the trip e.g drivers, guides, etc. They know the region best and have an inherent respect for local ecology.
- You can also contribute by buying woolens and other handicrafts from the villagers directly.

What to get along?

Ladakh in June is pleasant during days and cold during nights. Temp ranges from 5° C to 25° C. Full sleeve t-shirts during the day and warm sweater and jacket during mornings and evenings. Get woolen gloves, cap and socks also (can be purchased from Leh from local handicraft shops). Comfortable walking shoes and a pair of slippers/ sandals will do. The biggest thing we need to protect against is the UV radiations from the Sun. So a 50+SPF sun block is a must. Will send you a detailed list on signing up.

Get on the road

Gaurav Punj
cwh.now@gmail.com
+91 9833829240
www.connectwithhimalaya.com
Pics from our 2016 trip [here](#)

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