

MONASTERIES, DUNES AND THE LAKES OF LADAKH

From the monasteries of the Indus Valley, to the Nubra sand dunes and the beautiful lakes of Changtang, this adventure is an invitation to discover the essence of Ladakh in just 15 days. Our itinerary carefully balances local encounters, cultural discoveries, hiking and open spaces... A complete and accessible trip, ideal for a first discovery of the Indian Himalayas. Located between the Himalayas and the Karakoram mountain range, Ladakh has preserved its Buddhist culture thanks to the isolation of its highlands. It is one of the Himalayan regions with the largest number of Buddhist monasteries and some, like Alchi date back to the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Our journey begins discovering the Indus Valley monasteries, flawless architectural gems of the heart of Ladakh. Then, we continue to the Nubra Desert, where important trade routes between Tibet and Central Asia are found. Here, green valleys contrast with arid dunes and authentic villages dot the mountains along valley. Next, we drive to the Changtang Plateau and meet changpas, semi-nomadic pastoralists who come to graze their cattle in the pastures around Tso Moriri and Tsokar lakes.

 Region	India: Rajasthan and Ladakh
 Activity	Hiking & culture Trekking
 Duration	14 days
 Group	2 to 15 people
 Code	ILAD15-EN
 Price	From €1,616
 Level	2/5
 Comfort	4/5
 Language(s)	English

ITINERARY

Day 1 Domestic Flight Delhi - Leh

Arrival in Delhi. From here we take a magnificent domestic flight to Leh, the capital of Ladakh. It is found at 3500 m above sea level, above the Himalayan range. Day of rest and acclimatization in Leh.

Accommodation: Hotel

Day 2 Acclimatization - visit monasteries of Shey, Hemis and Thiksey

We continue our acclimatization with visit of the high Indus valley and the great monasteries of Shey, Hemis and Thiksey. Shey was the capital of the kingdom in the 13th century. We continue to Hemis, the most spiritually important monastery in Ladakh. More than 500 monks remain devoted to this monastery which was erected in 1605 and preserved from looting thanks to its geographical location. We then visit the Thiksey Monastery, located on the right bank of the Indus about twenty kilometers from Leh. This monastery was rebuilt in the 15th century is dedicated to Maitreya, the Buddha of the future.

Accommodation: Hotel

Day 3 Leh - Basgo - Alchi - Saspol Caves

We take the road along the Indus Valley: a grand route displaying a series of desert plateaus and deep gorges. In Nimu, the crystal clear waters of the Zaskar River mingle with the swirling flow of the Indus river. Afternoon arrival in Alchi from where we climb to the village of Saspol to visit twelfth century caves. We enjoy a pleasant walk in the fields and through the village before heading back to Alchi.

Accommodation: Guesthouse

Day 4 Alchi monasteries - Lamayuru (3500 m)

This morning we visit the beautiful monastery of Alchi whose frescoes date back to the twelfth century and are classified as World Heritage by UNESCO. We then climb to Lamayuru along a beautiful winding road to visit a monastery with three important 11th century temples which sit perched on a rock overlooking the village. There are many hiking opportunities around the village of Lamayuru.

Walking: 2 to 3 hours

Accommodation: Guesthouse

Day 5 Lamayuru (3 500 m) - Prinkiti la (3 750 m) - Wangla (3 200 m)

A beautiful day of hiking in terms of landscapes. The color of the rocks changes according to the daylight and contrasts with the lush green village of Lamayuru. We climb up to the Prinkiti La pass (3700 m). After a good rest we begin our descent to Wangla. Early evening visit to the monastery of Rinchen Zangpo which sits perched on a hill overlooking the village of Wangla.

Walking: 4 hours

Elevation: + 350m / -550m

Accommodation: Homestay

Day 6 Wangla - Phyang - Leh (3500 m)

Back to Leh. On the way we visit the early 16th century Phyang Monastery in the green village of Phyang, 17km from Leh. Afternoon at leisure. Possibility to visit the monastery of Namgyal Chemo, located above Leh (optional).

Walking: 2 hours

Accommodation: Hotel

Day 7 Leh - Khardong La Pass - Nubra Valley - Hundar (3160 m)

We journey towards the Nubra desert, along the highest road in the world and through the Khardong La pass (5680 m). We stop to explore Khardong village and take a gentle stroll amidst breathtaking scenery. Khardong is a small paradise oasis, surrounded by impressive cliffs. Then, we continue to the Nubra Valley which was an important stage of the old trade routes between Tibet and Central Asia. We sleep in Hundar, with beautiful views of the Naya Kangri mountains.

Walking: 2 hours

Accommodation: Guesthouse

📍 Day 8 **Nubra Desert : Disket - Sumur - Hundar (3160 m)**

A day exploring the Nubra desert. Early morning visit to the Samsteling Monastery, a collection of 7 temples founded more than 150 years ago. Then we discover Disket Monastery, the oldest in the Nubra Valley. Next, we walk 2 hours towards Hundar. This evening, those who wish, can ride camels to explore the surrounding dunes (optional).

Walking: 2 hours

Accommodation: Same Guesthouse

📍 Day 9 **Hundur - Shyok Gorges - Thaktok (Dakthok 3810 m)**

We take a pretty, uncrowded road along Shyok River. This wild road crosses the pass of Wuri La and continues through magnificent gorges. We descend to Takthok Monastery in Sakti Village and visit this monastery dating back to the sixteenth century. It is the only old Nyingma school monastery in Ladakh.

Accommodation: Guesthouse

📍 Day 10 **Thaktok - Tsomoriri Lake (4540 m)**

We take the road towards the Changtang plateau located southeast of Leh; just a few kilometers from Tibet. This region has only been open to tourism for a few years. A complete change of scenery awaits - those who love open spaces will be delighted! In the summer, many nomads come to graze their flocks of goats, sheep, horses and yaks in the great meadows here. The Changtang Lakes also host many protected species of migratory birds every year. We will stroll along Lake Tsomoriri; the sunset over the lake is simply splendid... During our three-day trip to Changtang, we will discover the daily life of Changpas, the nomadic pastoralists of this region.

Accommodation: Camping (tent)

📍 Day 11 **Tsomoriri Lake - Tsokar Lake (4530 m)**

Early this morning we walk along the lake enjoying the calm serenity of Tsomoriri. The lake covers an area of almost 120 km². It provides critical breeding grounds and basic staging areas along the flyways of more than 40 species of waterbirds. This afternoon we leave for Tsokar Lake.

Walking: 3 hours

Accommodation: Camping

📍 Day 12 **Tsokar Lake - Leh**

Morning hike around Lake Tsokar. The ochre red mountainous landscape is reflected in the lake's turquoise waters. The large deposits of salt around the lake resemble salars in the Andean countries. Return to Leh.

Walking: 3 hours

Accommodation: Hotel

📍 Day 13 **Leh - Delhi. Gastronomy Visit In Old Delhi**

Early this morning, we take a domestic flight to the Indian capital. A gourmet getaway in the alleys of old Delhi greets us; we discover local culinary specialties with tastings and demonstrations. Then we visit Old Delhi, the ancient capital of the Mughal Empire which dates back to the seventeenth century. We observe the fortifications which were erected by the emperor Shâ

Jahân, one of the sponsors of the Taj Mahal. We visit the Jama Masjid Mosque, the lanes of Chandni Chowk and other traditional buildings which reveal the history of the Mughal empire. Muslim traditions mingled with the religious and cultural diversity of the big cities is frequent in Delhi.

After this day of visit, you have two possibilities:

- Free evening and night in Delhi, then continue your Delhi tour on Day 15.
- Or, for an extra charge, possibility to finish your trip by visiting Agra and the famous Taj Mahal (Price: 90 € per person, to book at the time of registration). For those who choose this option, at the end of the gourmet tour of Old Delhi today, you take the road to Agra (4 hours drive). Overnight in Agra.

Accommodation: Hotel

📍 **Day 14 Visit Delhi ou the Taj Mahal. International return flight**

For those who choose the Delhi option: After breakfast, continue to visit the Indian capital. We visit the Hindu pilgrimage site and temple of Swaminarayan Akshardham. Depending on your flight schedule, we complete our visit by discovering a selection of other important sites like Raj Ghat or Qutub Minar... Transfer to Delhi airport for your international return flights.

For those who choose the Agra option (Price: 90 € per person, to book at the time of registration): Visit the Taj Mahal early this morning to enjoy the beautiful light which enhances this fabulous white marble monument. Then, we explore the imposing palace and fort of Agra, built from red sandstone by the Mughal emperors. This monument from the late 16th century is classified as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Transfer to Delhi airport for your international return flights.

International return flight

The program has been drawn up according to the latest information available during its drafting. Imponderables are always possible and situations beyond our control can modify the process. Depending on the meteorological and operational conditions, your management team reserves the right to modify this itinerary in order to ensure the best version of the stay and your safety. Always, for security reasons, the management and the organization reserve the right to interrupt your participation if your technical level and / or your physical form do not correspond to those required. In no case shall this interruption give rise to any reimbursement or payment of compensation

DATES & PRICES

International departures:

No departure for now

Trip code: ILAD15-EN

Included

- Transport by private vehicle according to itinerary
- Accommodation in 3 * Hotel or B&B in Delhi
- Domestic flights Delhi / Leh / Delhi
- Accommodation with full board except meals in Delhi and Leh
- English speaking guide for the entire stay for 2 -3 participants
- French speaking guide for the entire stay for 4 participants
- Special permit for the Nubra Valley and Changtang Lakes
- Entrances to monuments
- A gourmet tour and guided visit of Old Delhi
- Local guides for monastery visits

Not included

- An Indian Visa
- Single room supplement in hotel in Delhi and Leh (255 €)
- International flights
- Repatriation insurance
- Meals in Delhi and Leh (~ 5 to 15 € / meal) on days 1, 13 and 14 and dinner on day 12
- Drinks, tips and personal expenses - all that is not in "THE PRICE INCLUDES"

Notes

For many years, we put our know-how and experience of Himalayan destinations to the service of travellers from different horizons. You may find yourself in an international group with participants from our various partners.

Level 2/5

This technically easy trip is accessible to all. It is perfect for people who enjoy gentle hikes and are interested in exploring historic sites and discovering the local culture. Walking is the best way to discover the varied landscapes, the routes are easy, but good hiking shoes and equipment are required.

Terms and conditions

Booking conditions

Booking a trip with Altaï Nepal implies acceptance of the terms and conditions of sale. Each customer is required to complete a registration form and, subject to availability at the time of registration, travellers are expected to pay a deposit of 35% of the total price to complete their booking. Payments can be made online or by bank transfer. You will receive an e-mail with your booking confirmation.

Invoice procedure

Once your booking is confirmed you will receive an invoice by e-mail. The full balance of the trip must be received at least 35 days before your departure date. Altaï Nepal reserve the right to cancel your booking, free of charge, if this deadline is not respected.

Cancellation policy

If for any reason you have to cancel your trip, Altaï Nepal require written confirmation of your decision. The money you have paid will then be refunded according to the following deductions:

- Cancellation received more than 30 days prior to the departure date: a sum of €50 per person will be retained
- Cancellation received 30 to 21 days before the departure date: your deposit, 30% of the total trip price will be retained
- Cancellation received 20 to 14 days before the departure date: 50% of the total trip price will be retained

- Cancellation received 13 to 7 days before the departure date: 75% of the total trip price will be retained
- Cancellation received less than 7 days before the departure date: 100% of the total trip price will be retained

Special cases:

Please note that, regardless of the date of cancellation or modification if you have agreed to pay for services such as hotel reservations, flights or additional activities, these services are usually non-refundable so additional fees may apply.

- Fixed airfares: if your airline ticket was issued in advance, often done to avoid significant surcharges, you will be charged 100% of any non-refundable fees if you wish to change or cancel your flight plan.
- Fixed in-country costs: early charges for firm bookings will be charged if you cancel or modify your trip.
- Insurance costs: if you have taken out comprehensive or cancellation insurance, the cost of insurance is due and cannot be refunded.

Please note that fees apply according to the date Altaï Nepal receive your cancellation or modification request in writing.

If we have to cancel a departure due to an insufficient number of participants, you will be informed no later than 21 days before departure and a full refund will be issued, you will not be entitled to further compensation. We reserve the rights to cancel departures due to exceptional circumstances which may impact the safety of participants. Such circumstances include those amounting to 'force majeure' in which case participants will receive a full refund but they will not be entitled to any compensation.

Changes to travel contract

If you wish to make a change to your booking please contact us in writing; you will be expected to pay any fee which might arise from this change. In the event of unforeseen external events, Altaï Nepal may change some aspects of the travel contract. If any changes are necessary you will be informed as quickly as possible.

Pricing

The prices on our website are updated regularly and all of the prices we advertise are accurate when published. Altaï Nepal reserve the rights to make changes to any of these prices. Before you make a booking we will give you the up-to-date price of your chosen holiday including any supplements, upgrades or additional activities you may have requested. If the number of travellers is fewer than the indicated number of participants on the website, a small group surcharge may be applied. For all of our trips we include details of services, prices and what is/is not included but please be aware that changes to the prices may be necessary in accordance with exchange rates or price changes of various components of the journey.

Contract transfer

If you are unable to travel with Altaï Nepal for any reason, you can transfer your booking to another person in which case our modification conditions apply. Both the transferor and transferee will be jointly and severally liable for payment of the total holiday price and other associated expenses. Some airline carriers treat name changes as cancellations and you may be required to pay for the cost of a new ticket.

Insurance

We strongly recommend that you take out personal travel insurance for your trip with Altaï Nepal as soon as your booking is confirmed. We advise you to purchase a travel insurance policy which covers flight cancellations, luggage loss and emergency health care. Please look carefully at which activities are covered by your insurer and do not forget to bring all necessary documents and information with you (name of the company, name of the contract, insurance policy number, telephone number...)

PRACTICAL INFO

Staff

Armed with an abundance of experience and a wealth of knowledge, our professional guides are all real experts. Your trip will be led by a professional English-speaking Tour Leader who is part of the Altai Nepal Team. During the trip they will be assisted by local culture guides.

Food

Rich Indian cuisine is famed for its variety; it is sure tasty but may also be spicier than foods you normally eat. This region is on the border so we will also have the opportunity to taste delicacies from Tibet, Nepal and Bhutan. Ladakh is a Buddhist region so inhabitants are mostly vegetarian. On this trip, we will eat simple hearty meals in local restaurants and hotels. All drinks are at your own expense.

Accommodation

Hotels and guesthouses

Transportation

This trip includes transfers by private vehicle and plane

Budget & exchange

The local currency is the Indian Rupee (INR).

Visit <http://www.xe.com> for the latest currency converter and exchange rates. You can withdraw Indian Rupees from in-country ATMs or change money in Delhi or Leh, credit cards are widely accepted. Please budget for drinks, tips and other personal expenses.

Tips

Tipping is very present in Asia and India. It is an integral part of the 'tourism' culture of the country: independent of salary levels, your tip is seen as a sign of appreciation, the amount depends on your satisfaction. If you are pleased with the services of your guide tipping is always appreciated - it is not obligatory and should be left to the discretion of each individual. We recommend a budget of 50 to 60 US\$ per participant for a two-week trip for the whole team (English-speaking Altai Guide, drivers, porters ...).

Supplied equipment

Camping equipment: Quality tents and camping equipment will be provided for any nights camping.

Vital equipment

- Warm Sleeping Bag
- Water purifiers (micropur, aguatabs ...)

From head to toe:

- A cap or sunhat
- 1 or 2 sets of thermals: long-sleeved thermal tops and full-length long johns
- Long sleeved and short sleeved t-shirts, preferably in quick-drying technical material
- A light fleece or equivalent (plus extra warm layers if necessary)
- A breathable wind proof, waterproof jacket (Gore-Tex...)
- Lightweight waterproof over trousers
- Suitable shorts
- Walking trousers
- A pair of high-rise walking boots - strength, good grip of the foot and ankle (high stems) and impermeability are essential. Choose shoes with non-slip soles (vibram).
- A pair of trainers/sandels or equivalent casual shoes for cities, villages and evenings
- Thick walking socks
- Warm gloves, hat and scarf (it can be chilly in the mountains)

Material

The weather can be very changeable in mountainous regions, please think carefully about what clothes you bring, the layers you wear next to your skin make the biggest difference. We prefer that you do not wear cotton clothing, including underwear, when participating in activities. When cotton gets wet from water or sweat it ceases to insulate and it does not dry fast. The best materials for outdoor activities are fast drying materials like polyester or materials which are warm when wet like wool. The most powerful materials against the wind and rain are 'breathable' materials like Gore-Tex or Nikwax.

Our advice for keeping warm

We recommend wearing multiple layers including:

1. A warm breathable base layer
2. A second thermal layer
3. Wind and waterproof protective outer layers

Helpful equipment

- Your personal toiletries and a fast drying towel
- Water bottle(s). Min. 2 litres, light and isothermal
- A good pair of sunglasses (think min. category 3)
- Sun-cream, face and lips
- Head torch and spare batteries
- A pocket knife
- A pair of hiking poles
- A waterproof bag cover (or plastic bags) to protect your belongings
- Toilet paper
- Anti-bacterial hand gel
- Your camera
- A notebook or travel journal

Luggage

Your luggage must be divided into two bags:

- A rucksack (35-40L or 45-50L) for use as a day bag. This will contain your (vital) personal belongings for the day (sweater, spare t-shirt, water bottle, picnic-lunch, sunglasses, small things ...)
- Please bring a flexible travel bag with zips for easy access max 80L and max 15kg. Your domestic flight has a limit of 15kg luggage. Please do not bring hard bags like suitcases which are difficult to transport.

Medicine

Your guide is a trained first-aider and will carry a full first aid kit at all times during the trip in case of emergencies. We recommend that you bring a small personal first aid kit containing any medication you may need such as inhalers, plasters, antiseptic and painkillers.

Passport

Your passport should be valid for at least six months after the last day of your stay. It is your responsibility to confirm your specific passport requirements and please be aware that proof of onwards travel may be required.

Visa

It is your responsibility to obtain your individual visa for India. Depending on your nationality, it can be obtained in 2 different ways.

1. Electronic Visa (e-tourist visa) 48 USD (to be paid by credit card on the on-line website.)

This is a "single entry" visa valid for one month from the date of entry into the country. It can be obtained online at <https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/visa/and>. Upon your arrival in India, you must also present to the authorities your confirmative visa receipt received by email and your return flight airline tickets. This visa must be obtained between 4 and 30 days before your date of entry into Indian territory.

2. Classic Visa: 60 € in approved centers and 85 € by post

You must pre-register on the website <https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/visa/> and then move with your passport and all the documents requested to one of the many centers authorized to issue you with a visa. You can also do it by post. The deadline for obtaining this visa varies from 3 to 10 days.

Mandatory vaccines

No mandatory vaccinations are required. Recommended vaccines include Typhoid, Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, Rabies, Japanese Encephalitis, and Influenza.

Health information & recommendations

It is your responsibility to check that your personal health insurance covers everything in this trip. A consultation with your doctor is a prerequisite for any trip and we advise you to visit your dentist too as untreated cavities have an annoying habit of waking up with altitude.

Hygiene Recommendations

Water is not drinkable in Nepal. It is always possible to buy bottled water but in order to limit pollution and preserve natural areas, we strongly recommend that you drink purified water. For that, think to bring a water bottle of minimum 1.5 liters and purifying tablets (micropur, agua tabs ...). Consume only treated water or water which has been boiled for 30 minutes and then filtered. Be sure to wash your hands frequently, and definitely before each meal (anti-bacterial hand gel is recommended) and take care to disinfect any skin wounds. Avoid drinking natural drinks like pressed fruit juice and do not consume ice cream or "lassi" (a milk-based beverage) bought in the street. Meat and fish / shellfish should be well cooked before consumption.

Weather

Autumn and spring are theoretically, the best periods to visit this part of the Indian Himalayas.

In autumn (from early October to mid-December), it is generally lovely weather with clear skies but temperatures are cooler, especially at night. During the day between 1500 and 2500 m, temperatures rise up to 20 °C (68°F). From 2500+m of altitude, daytime temperatures are pleasant, about 15°C (59°F) when sheltered from the wind but the climate is a little unstable here and temperatures can drop to -10 °C (14°F), particularly at night.

In the spring (from March to the end of May) the mountains of Darjeeling and Sikkim are in full bloom and the rhododendrons are at their most beautiful. It is beginning to be hot with some storms at night. Temperatures vary between 10 and 25 °C (50 - 77 °F), but can rise to more than +30 °C (+86°F) especially in lower valleys. Between 2000 and 3000 m temperatures rarely drop below 0 °C (32°F), but the weather can change quickly and nights can be quite cool.

The monsoon season in July to September.

Electricity

230 - 240 V. ; 50 Hz.

Local time

IST India Standard Time is UTC/GMT +5:30 hours. Daylight Saving Time (DST) is not observed here.

Sustainable tourism

As adventure and wilderness travel experts who run trips to some of the most remote parts of the world, we take responsible tourism very seriously. We respect the 'Leave No Trace' outdoor ethical code and try to explore this beautiful location whilst causing minimal environmental damage.

Since the beginning, we have advocated for responsible tourism and the importance of equitable and sustainable principles. Harmonising these fundamentals ensures a fair distribution of economic benefits, improved working conditions for local teams and an increased awareness of the importance and practice of environmental protection. We hope that all of our clients will respect our philosophies and embrace these attitudes.

The Leave No Trace policy can be summarized in 7 simple steps which we hope you will follow during our trip...

1. Be prepared
2. Stick to trails and camp overnight right
3. Stash your trash and pick up waste
4. Leave it as you find it
5. Be careful with fire
6. Respect wildlife
7. Be considerate of other visitors

Over the years we have built up good relations with our local suppliers and we are keen to support local businesses as much as possible. We are a small company and we pay our local partners and suppliers directly insuring fair rates.

Our small group sizes not only provide a more intimate adventure but also cause less impact on the environment and local communities. We expect all who travel with us to support and uphold our Sustainable Tourism philosophies.