

EXPLORE!



Why book this trip?

Starting from golden Amritsar we travel through scenic mountain landscapes of Northern India to reach the Buddhist enclave of Ladakh. On route we travel through high mountain passes, discover ancient Tibetan-Buddhist monasteries and on some departures take in special festivals.

- **Amritsar** - Soak up the incredible atmosphere at the Sikh's holiest shrine, the Golden Temple
- **Leh and Dharamsala** - Learn all about Tibetan Buddhism as we visit several monasteries as well as visiting the home of the Dalai Lama
- **Western Himalayas** - Journey through some of the highest mountain passes in the world such as Tanglang La



INCLUDED MEALS
Breakfast: 16
Lunch: 1
Dinner: 6



TRIP STAFF
Explore Tour
Leader
Driver(s)
Local Guide(s)



TRANSPORT
Bus
4WD
Flight



ACCOMMODATION
1 nights simple
camping
2 nights simple
guesthouse
12 nights standard
hotel
1 nights simple
hotel



TRIP PACE:
Full on



GROUP SIZE:
12 - 18

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Join tour in Amritsar

Our tour begins today in Amritsar, the Sikh's holiest city. After time to freshen up we visit the stunning Golden Temple. Shoes must be removed, feet washed and heads covered before we can enter (please bring a headscarf with you or buy one outside). The Golden Temple itself is a surprisingly small building surrounded almost entirely by tanks of holy water in which the Sikh pilgrims bathe. The atmosphere is one of incredible calm with devotees taking their turn to pass through the main shrine where there is a continuous and melodic recital (known as the Akhand Path) from the Guru Granth Sahib, the holy book. We also visit the nearby Jalianwala Gardens, site of the notorious massacre under General Dyer in 1919 which led to 379 Sikhs being shot from point blank range by British troops.



ACCOMMODATION:
Treebo Dee Intercontinental (or similar)

Grade: Standard Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



DAY 2 - Travel to Dharamsala, home of the Dalai Lama

Today we drive out of Amritsar and cross the plains of the Punjab before making our way up to the old British hill station of Dharamsala. Until 1959 this was a quiet unassuming town, but that all changed when the Dalai Lama settled here after fleeing Tibet at the time of the Chinese invasion in October of that year. McLeodganj is the upper part of the town situated 500m above Lower Dharamsala and is the area with the greatest Tibetan influence. It is also where we base ourselves for our visit to the area. On arrival an orientation walk is organised which will include the Church of St John in the Wilderness, the Buddhist Namgyal Monastery known locally as Little Lhasa, and the Kalachakra Temple.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Shiva Sanctuary (or similar)



Grade: Standard Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 3 - A free day to explore Dharamsala's temples

We spend this morning in McLeodganj. If the Dalai Lama is giving one of his occasional public audiences we may be lucky enough to be granted permission to attend. This afternoon is left free for further personal exploration in the town. Alternatively you may wish to walk out to one of the temples in the surrounding hills, the closest being the Bhagsunath Temple with its small pool, attractive waterfall and spectacular views.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Shiva Sanctuary (or similar)



Grade: Standard Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE





MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 4 - Drive to Mandi and visit the Tilonath Temple

Leaving Dharamsala we continue on to Mandi, once an important town on the salt route to Tibet, now a small temple town held sacred by both Hindus and Buddhists. On arrival we walk to see some of the 81 temples in the town, many of which are huddled on the banks of the Beas River.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Munish Resorts (or similar)



Grade: Standard Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 5 - Visit Nagar Castle en route to Manali

Today we follow the Beas River north through the lovely Kulu Valley. A slight detour takes us up to the quirky Naggar Castle which overlooks the valley. Our destination is the picturesque town of Manali, surrounded by forests and mountains.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Utopia (or similar)



Grade: Standard Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 6 - Take a walk through villages to aid acclimatisation

The day is free to explore the town and the many picturesque villages nearby. Your tour leader will organise an optional half day walk to some of the traditional villages to the north of Manali. Alternatively you can also visit the Hadimba Devi Temple or Vashisht village on the other side of the Beas River. Later perhaps you may bargain for colourful souvenirs in the local bazaar.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Utopia (or similar)



Grade: Standard Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 7 - Cross the Rohtang La Pass (3977m) and visit the Khardang Monastery

Our full day's drive today takes us over the Rohtang Pass (3977m) today to the small settlement of Keylong, the administrative centre of the Lahaul and Spiti district. Along the way we are treated to impressive views of the Himalaya and we can watch the scenery change as we increase in altitude and the reduced oxygen level impacts the flora and fauna that inhabit the area. We will visit the Khardang Monastery which follows the Drukpa sect of Tibetan Buddhism. It is set on the slopes facing back towards Keylong and is one of the largest in the area.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Dekyid (or similar)



Grade: Standard Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 8 - Drive to Jespa

Today we have a very short drive to the town of Jespa where we'll have some free time to relax and enjoy the mountainous landscape.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Ibex - Jespa (or similar)



Grade: Standard Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & DINNER

DAY 9 - Drive to Sarchu via the Baralacha La Pass (4891m)

We climb higher today as we head for Sarchu. We climb to the top of the Baralacha La Pass (4891m) and then descend to our campsite for the night. The large pre-erected tents are set up each summer when the Leh to Manali highway is open and are fully equipped with beds and bedding with ensuite toilet facilities.



ACCOMMODATION:
Sarchu Fixed Camp (or similar)



Grade: Simple Camping



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & DINNER

DAY 10 - Experience the Gata Loops on the road to Leh

We set off for the long drive to Leh. We wind our way up through the Gata loops, an amazing series of 21

hair-pin bends before crossing the Tanglang La Pass at 5328m - the highest point of our journey. Leh was once a staging post on the Silk Road from China and is a small, picturesque town of about 8,000 people. Sited at 3500m, the summer days are dry and sunny but nights can be cold. The people of this harsh land are Tibetan and have maintained their strong sense of tradition. On arrival in Leh we take it easy and have a short orientation walk through the town.



ACCOMMODATION:
Himalayan Heritage Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Standard Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 11 - Spend a day watching the masked dances of the Phyang Festival

Today we spend a full day experiencing the annual Phyang Festival. Phyang monastery is located just west of Leh and belongs to the red hat school of Buddhism. The festival features the sacred Chham dance, a dance performed by the monks said to ward off evil spirits. A highlight of the festival is the display of a huge Thangka which is unfurled at the start of the festival and displayed throughout. The festival draws pilgrims from throughout the region and is a fantastic chance to meet people whilst enjoying the spectacle.



ACCOMMODATION:
Himalayan Heritage Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Standard Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & DINNER

DAY 12 - Visit the monasteries at Thiksey, Tak Tak and Hemis

The predominant faith of the local residents here is the Lamaistic form of Buddhism of Tibet. This is seen clearly in the monastery (gompa) architecture and by the extraordinary number of gods and demons that order the daily life of the community. Today we plan a full day of sightseeing to visit the gompas of Thiksey, Taktak and Hemis. Hemis Gompa, situated some 48km outside Leh, is the largest and most important monastery in Ladakh, a treasure house of golden statues, gem-studded stupas, rare books and fine paintings of the Buddha.



ACCOMMODATION:
Himalayan Heritage Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Standard Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & DINNER

DAY 13 - A chance to raft on the Indus River on the way to Alchi

This morning we have the opportunity to do some white water rafting (optional) on the Indus River, if water levels permit before driving on to Alchi village. Whilst lifejackets are provided we recommend you are able to swim a minimum of 25 metres unaided. In the afternoon we visit historic Alchi Gompa. Alchi is renowned for its magnificent Kashmiri Buddhist artwork which dates from an earlier period and is quite different from the other frescos in Ladakh.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Zimskang (or similar)



Grade: Simple Guesthouse



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



DAY 14 - Explore Saspol Caves and Rizong Monastery

Today we have a number of optional walks planned. The first takes us back across the river to Saspol, then up to the nearby Saspol caves with glorious views across the Indus Valley. This afternoon we can take a slightly longer and very scenic walk back down to the Indus Valley after a visit to Rizong Gompa and nearby nunnery where we may see the nuns sorting and toasting barley (depending on the season).



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Zimskang (or similar)



Grade: Simple Guesthouse



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 15 - Take a walk to Likir Gompa before returning to Leh

This spectacular walk is the last of the optional walks in this area and takes us up to Likir Gompa which contains some beautiful murals and is seemingly guarded by a 10 metre golden Buddha (please note: some may find this walk strenuous). There is also a small museum of religious artefacts here. This afternoon we drive back to Leh, with the remainder of the afternoon left free. You may opt to walk to the Shankar Gompa, a small but interesting monastery housing an impressive Dukar figure (Avalokiteshvara), complete with 1000 arms all holding weapons, and 11 heads. There may also be time to visit the ruined 17th century Old Palace, which hangs tier by tier on the hillside above the town.



ACCOMMODATION:
Himalayan Heritage Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Standard Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE





MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 16 - Fly to Delhi and explore the city

Today we take an early morning flight to Delhi and transfer to our hotel. After checking in we begin a city tour of some of the main sights of New and Old Delhi. The Indian capital has long been a phoenix rising again and again out of its own ruins. New Delhi was the creation of the British Raj of the 30's and our tour includes viewing the President's Palace, Lok Sabha (Parliament), India Gate and the Rajpath. We then continue to Old Delhi with its hub at Chandni Chowk Bazaar, a jamboree of deafening barter. A short cycle rickshaw takes us to the Jama Masjid Mosque and we pass by the Red Fort en route.

Please note that hand luggage is not permitted on the flight from Leh to Delhi, so you will be required to pack all of your belongings in to your hold luggage.



ACCOMMODATION:

Hotel Good Times (or similar)



Grade: Simple Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 17 - Tour ends in Delhi

Our tour ends this morning after breakfast in Delhi.



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

Trip information

Country information

India

Climate

There is considerable variation between the different regions of India but, in general, the climate is tropical. Summer temperatures on the plains are very hot, but cooled by the South-West Monsoon, which lasts from June- September. During these months it can be very wet and therefore very humid. At altitude, temperatures can become quite cool at night even in the summer and may drop below freezing between December and February so warm clothing is necessary. In the winter, northern and mid India can be very cool, with cold evenings, so warm clothing, including plenty of layers, are essential. The south of India remains warm and sunny during the winter months.

Time difference to GMT	Plugs	Religion
+5	3 Pin Round	Catholicism, Hindu, Islam and Sikhism

Language

Hindi and English.

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Phey To Nimu - White water rafting on Indus River £27.00 (per person, on a sharing basis).

Clothing

Because of the high altitude temperatures in Ladakh can drop dramatically at night, please make allowance for warmer clothing accordingly. It is essential to bring waterproofs, sweater, long trousers (if walking in shorts), warm hat, gloves and sun hat.

Footwear

We strongly recommend walking in good boots. Although all the walks are day walks and optional it is worth noting that trainers and tennis shoes simply do not give the ankle support afforded by a decent pair of boots. Please bring comfortable shoes for relaxing in/evenings.

Luggage

15Kg

Luggage: On tour

One medium size rucksack or holdall and a day sack for the day. Suitcases are not recommended.

Please note that hand luggage is not permitted on the flight from Leh to Delhi, so you will be required to

pack all of your belongings in to your hold luggage.

Equipment

Sunglasses, sun cream, water bottle (at least 1 litre) and a torch. Swimwear is useful for the optional rafting.

We carry a Portable Altitude Chamber (PAC Bag) on this tour and have a supply of oxygen available if required in an emergency for anyone suffering from altitude sickness.

Tipping

Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly, you should allow £45 for tipping.

In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

India

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch price	Dinner price	Beer price	Water price
£8	£10	£3	£0.5

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Indian Rupee Recently new 500 and 2000 rupee notes have been bought in to circulation and as the old notes are no longer accepted there have been some cash flow issues. You don't need to worry about being given old notes as it's very easy to tell the difference, the new notes are pristine in comparison with most Indian money which is fairly tatty.

Recommended Currency For Exchange

GBP/US\$ are the best currency to change into local currency.

Where To Exchange

The Indian rupee is a restricted currency and it is best not to obtain in the UK as rates are very poor. You can either change money at the airport on arrival or in major towns during the tour. Your Tour Leader will advise you on the best places in each town. Both GBP and USD cash are easy to exchange at the airport and at hotels however you will be restricted to changing £60 cash at a time and it's not possible to change money at these locations using a credit or debit card.

ATM Availability

ATMs are available in most large cities in India but they are very limited elsewhere so please do not rely on this.

Credit Card Acceptance

Very rarely, only in the larger outlets.

Travellers Cheques

Opportunities to exchange are limited.

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus, 4WD, Flight

Accommodation notes

With its rapidly expanding economy, accommodation choices in India are expanding. Whatever the level, from basic guesthouse to high end city centre hotel, you should always be prepared for standards to be different than in the West. Plumbing and electricity supplies can be somewhat erratic and although the welcome is always warm, service levels may be less efficient than you may be used to. As you might expect from their mountainous and in some instances remote locations, accommodation in Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh is generally fairly simple with basic facilities. In Leh we stay in a small hotel which is new but built in traditional Ladakhi style. Our guesthouse in Alchi is family-run. The tented camp at Sarchu on the Leh to Manali highway is specially erected each summer for travellers - it has walk-in fixed tents for two people with beds and all bedding provided. A small bathroom with western-style toilet and running cold water is attached to each tent and there is a separate large dining tent. Our hotels in Jespa, Manali, Mandi, Dharamsala and Amristar are all graded standard. Please note that due to high rainfall during the summer months, hotels can sometimes feel a bit damp - due to construction standards this is unavoidable.

Accommodation in India is as varied as the country itself. On our tours we stay in a mix of hotels, heritage properties, camp sites and homestays. Standards do not equate to standards in the UK and it's best to approach each type of accommodation with an open mind. Service can be slow in places especially when travelling with a group. For the most part hotels do not have heating so in the winter months it can be chilly and if you feel the cold you may wish to ask for extra blankets. Hot water is not always available 24 hours a day in some of the smaller properties, and with a group staying you might find if you are showering last you may miss out on the hottest water.

Essential Information

FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice [click here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, [click here](#)

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Price Guarantee

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa and Passport Information

India: Holders of passports endorsed 'British citizen' may be eligible for the e-Tourist Visa to enter India.

The visa can be applied for through the official Indian government visa website only - <https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/visa/tvoa.html>. Please check all eligibility criteria that can be found on the website but important points are listed below -

You must be arriving into one of 24 selected entry points which can be found via the official Indian Government website link above. However, you can exit from any of the authorised immigration check posts in India.

Passports must have at least 6 months validity from the date of arrival in India and at least two blank pages for stamping. The visa application will take approximately 4 days to process. It is valid for 60 days from the date of arrival in to India, and double entry is permitted on the e-Tourist visa. You can only obtain 2 e-visas for India in a calendar year.

The visa costs approximately \$100, however these costs are subject to frequent change so you should check on the official Indian government visa website mentioned above. Biometric data will be collected on arrival in India

Whilst the online form offers a relatively quick way to apply for a visa, a number of applicants have reported difficulty in completing the form. Travcour will complete the on-line visa on your behalf for a fee of £30 + the visa cost. Please contact them directly if you wish to take up this service.

If you are not eligible for the e-Tourist Visa, please refer to VFS Global to apply for your Indian visa - http://in.vfsglobal.co.uk/how_to_apply.html.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our Essential Information and Booking Conditions.

Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The complimentary transfers will be arranged from the Explore designated airport or train station to your trips joining point, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. Generally the airport or station that Explore have selected will be the one that is closest to the town or city where the trip starts, or the one nearest to the joining point. It will be either an airport or train station but not both.

The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Polar, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your

responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. Read more about them here.

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport. On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

India

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against Tetanus, Infectious Hepatitis, Typhoid and Polio. Please consult your travel clinic for the latest advice on Malaria, Dengue and Zika Virus. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at Explore Travel Health and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.



**AWARD WINNING
EXPLORE LEADERS**



**PRICE GUARANTEE
PROMISE**



**AIRPORT
TRANSFERS**