

ZANSKAR EXPEDITION

Fixed date departure for 2010

07th-19th August (ex-Delhi) 1st Trip

19th-31st August (ex-Delhi) 2nd Trip

Many a description of the journey from Kashmir to Ladakh is described as being “along the Silk Route”, which is a not-that-accurate characterization. In point of fact, the route has greater significance as the “feeder trail” to the Silk Route linking Central Asia with South Asia. Two routes from South Asia led to the famous Silk Route; one from Gilgit in today’s Pakistan through the Karakorum Pass into Kashgar and the other through Leh in Ladakh directly north and into Yarkand, both in what used to be known as “Chinese Central Asia”. It was along these routes that in all probability such things as shifts in populations, as well as the crafts of Central Asia and most notably the famous chinar tree, one of the maple family, travelled to Kashmir over the centuries. Our journey from Kashmir to Ladakh is a fascinating introduction to the first leg of the “Yarkand Route”. Kashmir is said to have been influenced by Central Asian ethnicity, culture and language. A brief glance at a map demonstrates that this would have been impossible without it first encountering the 10th century onwards Tibetan-speaking Western Himalayan culture of the old Baltistan – Ladakh “Wazarat” or “principality” of the Dogra Kingdom of Jammu & Kashmir. This tour will open the geographic curtain to show us how these influences might have happened. Indeed our two week adventure will geographically and culturally explore three distinct regions of Kashmir, Zanskar and Ladakh, with the highlight being the river journey through what has been termed the ‘Grand Canyon of Asia’



Few places on earth match the grandeur and sheer magnitude of the Zanskar in Ladakh, the trans - Himalayan region on India’s northern borders.

Being a geographical extension of the southwestern end of the Tibetan plateau, Ladakh is often referred to as “Little Tibet”. Indeed, both geographically and culturally there is little difference.

Our 13-day expedition to this high altitude lunar landscape is a “once-in-a lifetime” experience combining the best of adventure and cultural insight into the lifestyle of these Himalayan and Trans Himalayan communities from the predominantly Islamic communities of Kashmir to the predominantly Buddhist communities of Zaskar and an insight into their shared lifestyle in these barren lands. The landscape perceptibly changes from the verdant green valleys of Srinagar, Kashmir and drops into the lunar trans Himalayan landscape of the high altitude desert of the Zaskar and Ladakh.

2 days of an idyllic, tranquil experience on the shores of the Nageen lake in house boats followed by a 3-day mountain drive from Srinagar to our river put-in forms a major highlight of the trip. Few mountain drives offer such a varied landscape from high altitude desert to ‘in- your -face’ Himalayan close-ups of the Nun Kun massif (23,400ft ASL) as we drive right below its northern face and its hanging glaciers. Our final road leg sees us cross the Pensi-la 14500ft ASL, the highest point of the trip with the Durung Drung glacier below, a major source of the Zaskar.

The 6-day river journey, starting just 40 km below the glacial headwaters takes you through the Zaskar gorge sometimes referred to as the ‘Grand Canyon of Asia’. Big water Class 3 and 4 rapids, walks through orchards ripe with apricot, side-hikes to gravity-defying monasteries and an evening incantation with the monks, all add to the unique charm and adventure of our expedition to this rugged wilderness.

The last (optional) day or two spent in Leh gives you time to visit Buddhist monasteries and the old palaces as well as time to wander around the quaint old bazaar of Leh town.

The Itinerary

Day 01 (7th & 19th Aug) - Fly Delhi to Srinagar. Overnight in House Boats, on Nageen Lake. Visit Mughal Gardens in the early evening.

Day 02 (8th & 20th Aug) - Early morning visit the floating flower and vegetable market and a visit to Gulmarg.

Day 03 (9th & 21st Aug) - Drive Srinagar to Kargil across the mighty Zoji La (Pass) and drive on to Shargul. Camp at Shargul.



Day 04 (10th & 22nd Aug) - The most spectacular drive filled with natural wonders. We drive to Ringdum Gompa (12,000 ft.). Few mountain drives get you this close to the Great Himalaya. The awesome mass of the Nun Kun massif over 7000m high with its hanging glacier across

the road from us, dominating today's journey. Overnight in the PWD rest house/ tented camp at Ringdum.



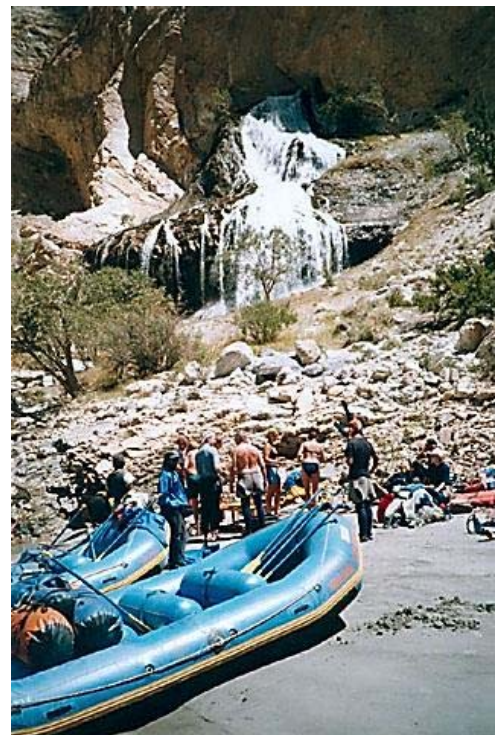
Day 05 (11th & 23rd Aug) - Our final road leg across the Pensi La at 14,500 ft ASL, surrounded by an awe inspiring arena of the Zaskar peaks. Below us is the Durung Drung glacier that feeds the Zaskar River. We drive on to camp 40 kms below the glacier at Remala village, our put-in. Overnight tented camp.

Day 06 (12th & 24th Aug) - Rafting expedition commences on the Doda river from Remala to Karsha covering approx 30 km. Class 2 rapids primarily; wide open valley surrounded by

6000 m high Himalayan and Zaskar peaks. After settling into camp by 2 PM, take a short walk to the spectacular Kharsha Monastery for the evening incantations by the monks.

Day 07 (13th & 25th Aug) - This will be a layover day. Witness a beautiful sunrise over the Himalayan peaks followed by a leisurely breakfast. Visit The Kharsha Monastery in the early morning or late evening to witness the chanting of the monks. During the day you may drive or walk 1hr. 30 mins to the village of Padum which is at the cross roads between the valleys of the Zaskar and Tsarap river.

Day 08 (14th & 26th Aug) - Our river journey continues down to the confluence of the Doda with the Tsarap River, to form the Zaskar. Today's stretch is approximately 50 kms. With Class II & III rapids, passing by Zangla village the old capital of Zaskar. We enter the upper Zaskar gorge, completely dwarfed by the gigantic chasm walls each turn bringing on amazing rock formations and colors. The power of the river and rapids pick up, ending our exciting run till Nyerak, the only camping site in the upper gorge section. Lounge around in the early evening and take in the grandeur of this geological wonderland.



Day 09 (15th & 27th Aug) - Layover Day. You have the option to just take it easy or go on a day long hike up this magnificent canyon first crossing the 25 ft span wooden Nyerak Bridge across one of the narrowest parts of the river. Up it is after that on the old trade route between Zaskar and Indus valleys, now a well known trekking route. This trek gives you a completely different perspective on the scale and geological formation of the gorge with

stunning views as we climb higher above. We have a chance to interact with the hardy but cheerful locals as they trek between their habitations in this harsh and desolate lunar landscape. Visit the local home of Tashi who weaves carpets. After lunch we descend back down to river level and Nyerak camp.

Day 10 (16th & 28th Aug) - Action packed rafting day through the heart of the Zaskar Grand Canyon- 40 km of non-stop Class 3 and 4 whitewater, awe-inspiring rock formations and a stop for lunch at a gigantic cataract pouring out of a cliff face to an oasis below- paradise! We conclude our long days rafting at Lamaguru camp, the confluence of the Markha River with the Zaskar.

Day 11 (17th & 29th Aug) - We start early to raft the final leg of the Zaskar from Lamaguru to Nimu, covering approx 25 km to its confluence with the mighty Indus.



Mostly Class 3 bouncy rapids including encountering the big water 'Chilling' rapid as the volume increases significantly after the Markha River has joined. Our raft trip ends at the confluence from where the river becomes the mighty Indus as it flows westward towards Pakistan and finally to the Arabian Sea. We drive back 40 km to Leh to check into our hotel to have lunch and take those much needed hot showers! Overnight at hotel.

Day 12 (18th & 30th Aug) - After a leisurely breakfast some sight-seeing of the neighbouring monasteries at Thikse, Shey and Shanti Stupa. The afternoon is for shopping and exploring Leh's quaint bazaar and numerous bakeries. Overnight at hotel.

Day 13 (19th & 31st Aug) - Fly Leh /Del.

COST PER PERSON: Rs.75, 000/-
Single Supplement: Rs. 12,000/-

COST INCLUDES:

- Hotel Accommodations on twin share basis in Leh and Kargil
- Tented and Rest house accommodation on twin share basis, enroute through the trip
- Rafting and all specialized equipment
- Meals throughout the trip



COST EXCLUDES:

- INR Airfare Delhi/Srinagar; Leh/Delhi
 - Site-seeing in Leh
 - Any expenditure of a personal nature such as laundry, telephone calls etc.
 - Alcoholic beverages
 - Medical and/or Travel Insurance
 - Any cost arising out of unforeseen circumstances such as landslides, bad weather and road conditions and any other circumstances beyond our control
- 2.575% Govt. Service Tax



NOTE:

1. Himalayan River Runners reserve the right to modify and alter the itinerary due to circumstances beyond our control, such as weather and road conditions, condition on the river, etc. This right would be exercised in the best interest of your safety and well being
2. **The above point includes any change we may have to make to the Srinagar part of the journey. The altered plan would include a flight from Delhi to Leh instead of Delhi to Srinagar**
3. Cost may change in case of a fuel hike or any other unprecedented hike

4. The cost is based on twin share accommodation for Srinagar & Leh and all points enroute as well as in tents. Should you be booking as a single person – the supplement will apply
5. Himalayan River Runners will not be liable incase of delays on flights in the Delhi- Srinagar or Leh-Delhi sectors as well as for any delays due to bad weather etc.

CHECK LIST OF PERSONAL ITEMS TO BRING ALONG ON THE ZANSKAR EXPEDITION.

1. 3 seasons sleeping bag
2. Pile Jacket / Pullover / Jersey
3. Thermal underwear (Poly Propylene, Capelene etc., Light weight)
4. Wind / Water resistant Jacket
5. Woolen Socks / Cotton Socks - extra pair woolen/synthetic for rafting
6. Gloves, Muffler, Woolen Ski Cap
7. Change of clothes for camp/ hiking
8. Canvas Shoes for the raft or neoprene booties
9. Hiking / Walking shoes (one pair)
10. Flash Light with spare cells



11. Dark Glasses
12. Sunscreen / Sunblock
13. Vaseline / Coldcream / Lip Salve
14. Personal Toiletries
15. Water Bottle
16. Cap/hat with brim (can be worn under the helmet)
17. Small Daypack
18. Binocular / Camera, etc. (optional)

We provide 3 mm neoprene wet suit, neoprene gloves and rafting jacket for the trip - please advise weight and height for the wet suit well in advance.

Note : Please keep your personal items to a minimum. These should be carried in Duffel Bags. No Hard Shell Bags And Suitcases. On river, you will be wearing a wet suit, preferably with light-weight thermal underwear (optional). All other personal gear will be carried in waterproof bags, lashed down in the back of the raft. Easy Access dry bags will be at hand for cameras, sun block, etc. Keep off river / camp clothes to a minimum. All extra gear will be left in the hotel at Leh or sent back in the vehicles from the starting point of the river.

ZANSKAR TRAVEL ADVISORY

About altitude : Leh is at an approximate altitude of 1,200 ft asl compared to Delhi's 750 ft asl. Some adapt better and faster to altitude than others. By travelling via Srinagar and Kargil etc we will be giving ourselves enough time to acclimatize slowly and herefore we are likely to "suffer" less when we reach the Zanskar valley and finally Leh. Let your body get attuned to the `thin air` and focus on your breathing. Consciously hydrate yourselves at short intervals (i.e. with water and not alcohol!). You must try and drink at least 5-7 litres of water every day. Rest a lot in the first 24 hrs. Do not be alarmed if you have an odd headache or two in the first 36 hrs. Keep your guides and trip leader informed about your headaches, nausea, 'tingling' sensations or swelling in hands and feet.





About weather : Srinagar is a valley and therefore it is likely to be less cold and quite pleasant in August. Ladakh is a high altitude desert. When clear and sunny, it is very hot during the day and the sun is strong. It gets extremely cold once the sunsets. You have to be prepared for both extremes. Do not step out without applying liberal amounts of sun block (this goes for all skin types and colors). A sun shade and dark glasses are necessary. Keep the nape of your neck covered.

Checklist of clothes : Please follow the checklist closely. We will provide you with wet suits and paddling jackets on the river as well as neoprene gloves. Please bring along suitable closed shoes (canvas is OK, but, neoprene booties are ideal) for the rafting. While rafting you should wear your shoes with a pair of wollen or synthetic socks. Cotton clothes will keep you cold when wet. Toilet paper is provided. Towels are not provided during the trip. There will be towels in your hotel in Leh.

Packing for the rafting trip : You will be allotted 1 large dry bag between 2 persons to carry all the clothes and sleeping bags you require for the rafting trip. There will be smaller dry bags on each raft, which will be easily accessible for all to carry your sun block and cameras etc. Extra clothes can be left behind at the Lha Rimo Hotel in Leh. Some clothes may also be returned at the put-in point of the rafting trip from where the vehicles will return to the Hotel in Leh.

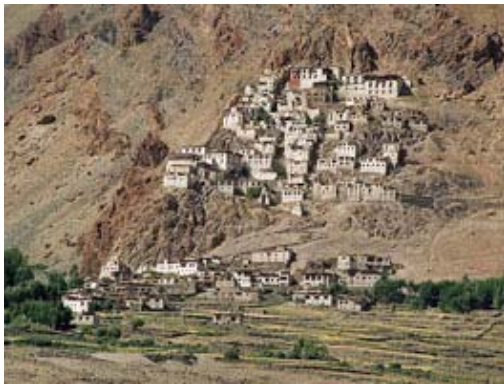
Water: From Mulbek onwards you will be drinking water which will be treated with iodine. On the river you will get fresh spring water also treated with iodine.

Delhi-Leh-Delhi flights and bookings : This is a very crucial part of the trip! It is only in August and September that there are daily flights from Delhi to Leh. As has been our practice in the past – we make bookings for the day closest to our fixed date departure date incase there are no flights on the day that our trip is supposed to leave and return. All agents make block bookings and therefore most are heavily wait listed. Closer to the time by June – the new flight schedule is announced and there are flights every day and then we get the dates of our choice. The Indian Airlines and Jet Airways both fly to Leh and we try and make bookings on both flights and go ahead with the one that confirms the booking first. You will be periodically informed about flight status and the final bookings will be made with your approval.



Return Flight Leh - Delhi : The security check for this flight is very detailed. You are advised not to carry batteries, nail files (any remotely sharp objects), cigarette lighters etc. in your carry on cabin baggage.

Passports : For Expats/diplomats/foreign tourists - Please carry your passports till Leh which can be left behind at the Hotel. On the rafting trip please carry photo copies of your passports.



While site-seeing : Before taking pictures, please take permission from the monks at the monasteries. Some monasteries restrict or disallow the use of flashes on cameras. All (or most) Ladhakhis are friendly, quiet and courteous and smile a lot - but it wouldn't harm to just take permission before you take their photograph. As with children all over the world - the kids in Ladakh are cheerful and boisterous and will always try and get a "bon bon" or pen off you - we request you not to give in to their pleas!, this might encourage beggary.

**Please do not hesitate to contact us for further information
info@himalayanriverrunners.com**