STOK KANGRI TREK

India • Trek • Extreme

About the Challenge

The beautiful Ladakh region in northeast India is home to spectacular Himalayan panoramas of snow-capped peaks and sweeping high altitude plains dotted with small villages and ancient monasteries. It offers some of the most beautiful and rewarding mountain trekking in the world, and is home to rare wildlife including the elusive snow leopard.

Our goal is the summit of Stok Kangri, one of the ‘easiest’ 6000m peaks in the world, in that it does not require technical skills or experience. It does, however, require physical fitness, and unwavering determination and self-belief!

We spend time acclimatising in Leh before trekking over high passes to Base Camp and our night-time ascent of Stok Kangri (6121m), where we should be rewarded with sunrise views over the Himalayas and Karakoram Mountains.

Trek Ladakh and Stok Kangri • 14 Days
Day 1: Depart London

Day 2: Arrive Delhi
Arrive in Delhi and transfer to our hotel. Depending on our arrival time there may be some time to explore the sights. We meet again for dinner and get a good night’s sleep, as we have an early start in the morning. Night hotel.

Day 3: Delhi – Leh
An early flight takes us to Leh, the capital of Ladakh and, at 3500m, an excellent place to start our bodies acclimatising to the altitude. The flight lasts approx 1.5 hours and takes us over the Greater Himalaya, and we should get excellent views of Stok Kangri as we fly in. We transfer to our hotel and relax, catching up on some sleep if you need to. If you feel up to it, a gentle amble around Leh’s bazaars is a good way to spend the afternoon, but it’s important to take things easy. Night hotel.

Day 4: Acclimatisation Day – Ladakhi Monasteries
After a good night’s sleep we’ll be feeling more acclimatised, and feeling ready to explore! We drive to three of the major gompas around Leh, which provide a wonderful cultural insight to the region. We drive up to Hemis, approx. 200m higher than Leh, and wander the temples of its 17th-century monastery, once the largest and richest in Ladakh. We then move on to the more modern red and white monastery of Thiksey; perched on a hilltop, it can be seen from miles around. Lastly we visit the gompa at Shey, a former Royal Palace of the kings of Ladakh. Returning to Leh, you are free to explore – it’s a great place to wander, or relax in a café and chat to your fellow trekkers. Night hotel.

Day 5: Acclimatisation Day-Trek
Today we take to the hills around Leh, testing our bodies a little further. The ruins of the Old Royal Palace are set above Leh, overlooking the town. The palace was modelled on the famous Potala Palace in Lhasa, Tibet. From here we walk along a winding path to Tsemo Monastery, where there are magnificent views over Leh and its surrounding villages and valleys. Descending round the back of the palace via Sankar, we come to the recently-built Japanese Peace Pagoda, which also commands fabulous views. From here we can see across the valley to Stok Kangri, which dominates the skyline. With our appetites for the trek truly whetted, and hopefully feeling good at altitude by now, we return to Leh and prepare our kit for tomorrow. Night hotel.

Trek approx. 3-4 hours

Day 6: Leh – Chilling – Skiu
Our day starts with a drive along the mighty Indus River; the road then becomes a dirt track which leads us through a spectacular gorge alongside the River Zanaskar. We come to Chilling, a village renowned for its blacksmiths and metal crafts, which lies on the banks of the Zanaskar. Crossing the river by rope trolley bridge, we start trekking towards Skiu. Today is a relatively short day, but we’re still building up gently. We trek through fairly arid lands with jagged rocky mountain slopes around us. Villages use irrigation for their crops, so there are dazzling patches of green among the striking reddish-brown rocks. We come to Skiu, a small village in the beautiful Markha Valley, with a picturesque
crumbling old gompa. Night camp (3450m).

Trek approx. 3-4 hours

Day 7: Skiu – Ganda La Base
Today is a longer day taking us predominantly uphill to the base of Ganda La, a high mountain pass. We leave Skiu on a path lined with stupas, or chortens as they are known in Ladakh and Tibet. We will see more of these Buddhist shrines, and carved mani rocks, as we follow today’s route. We start to ascend and pass through spectacular rocky gorges and canyons, and can look back across the more cultivated land we have crossed. As we near the base of Ganda La there are magnificent views – folded barren ridges running parallel as far as we can see, and the snow-capped Stok mountains. Night camp (4450m).

Trek approx. 6-7 hours

Day 8: Ganda La Base – Ganda La – Rumbak
Our morning starts early but with mountain panoramas which inspire us to continue our uphill walk to the top of Ganda La. It’s fairly steep at times, but as we gain height the views over the Stok and Karakoram ranges become increasingly impressive. We may see Himalayan marmots playing on the slopes, or hear their whistles; they create a good distraction from our efforts. We walk slowly, and within an hour or two will be at the top (4900m). After some time to enjoy the views – we can see our route for the next two days from here – we walk down the other side, through scenic valleys to Yurutse (4160m), where one solitary house perches above irrigated fields. We trek on to Rumbak, a picturesque cluster of white flat-roofed houses and narrow alleyways, overlooked by a gompa. We may be invited into one of the local houses here to try the traditional Ladakhi butter tea. Our camp lies just beyond the village at the base of Stok La; the views of the mountains ahead are truly magnificent, and as the sun sets the colours in the jagged rock change dramatically. Night camp (3850m).

Trek approx. 5-6 hours

Day 9: Rumbak – Stok La – Mankarmo
Today’s route is renowned as one of the most spectacular treks in Ladakh, as we climb back up to 4900m to cross the Stok La, another high mountain pass. Our path takes us gently uphill to start with, but becomes steeper as it zigzags to the top of the pass. Jagged rock flutes rise all around us – home to the endangered snow leopard. They blend in very well to their surroundings so are hard to spot, but keep your eyes open! From the top of the pass the views are magnificent – layer upon layer of multi-coloured rock cathedrals lie before us in every direction. Once we have our fill of the views, we descend – steeply at first, but then contouring more gently around two valleys until we come to a river tumbling down from Stok Kangri. We walk alongside it, crossing a few side streams, until we reach a shepherd settlement at Mankarmo. We may see groups of Himalayan blue sheep scrambling agilely on the rocks. Night camp (4380m).

Trek approx. 7-8 hours

Day 10: Mankarmo – Stok Kangri Base Camp
An easier and shorter day today, as we follow a trail ascending gently through the valley, with Stok Kangri towering before
us. After crossing a couple of rivers, we should reach Base Camp in time for lunch. We will spend the afternoon resting, as well as making time to check our equipment and have a full briefing about the ascent. We will also have a run-through of walking with crampons and in a rope team: these are not always needed, but depend on the snow conditions and may be used as an extra safety measure. After an early dinner we get some sleep before our early start. Night camp (5000m.)

Trek approx. 3-4 hours

Day 11: Stok Kangri Summit Day (6153m)
We start our attempt on the summit at around 2am, our head-torches lighting our way through the dark. A long, hard day lies ahead of us, but the rewards are worth it! We scramble over scree and boulders at first, heading to the moraine glacier above camp, then take a trail across a sloping snowfield which leads up to the south ridge. The ridge takes us to the summit; it is narrow and exposed in places, and steep, with some scrambling over loose or icy rock. We usually rope up along the ridge for safety. Despite this, the hardest obstacle is the altitude. From the summit the views are jaw-dropping – the mighty peaks of the Himalaya, Karakoram and Ladakh Mountains lie all around us stretching out to the horizon, while miniscule Leh can be made out in the distance. In clear weather we can see K2, the second-highest mountain on the planet. Once we’ve had time to take it all in, we descend carefully the same way, back to Base Camp, where hot food awaits us! Night camp (5000m).

Trek approx. 12 hours (5-7 hours to summit)

Day 12: Stok Kangri Base Camp – Stok – Leh
We leave Base Camp behind us and trek out to the small village of Stok – a beautiful morning trek descending through a gorge of multi-layered colourful rock which opens out into a wide valley. At Stok, we load up into the waiting vehicles and return to Leh (approx 30 mins) and our hotel, where you can relax and enjoy a hot shower and a cold beer before meeting up to celebrate our huge achievements. Night hotel.

Trek approx. 2-3 hours

Day 13: Free day Leh / Buffer Day
Today is free to relax in Leh or do some last-minute souvenir shopping. Night hotel. [Lunch and Dinner not included]

In case of bad weather at Stok Kangri, we will use Day 12 as a second attempt at the summit, and return to Leh via Stok today.

We transfer to the airport for our flight to Delhi and connect to our international flight home.

WHAT’S INCLUDED

- All transport from London to Leh return
- All meals except where specified, accommodation & camping equipment including sleeping mat
• Discover Adventure leaders; doctor with a group of 12 or more participants; local guides, cooks, pack-ponies & drivers
• Local support and back-up equipment
• Trekking permit and entrance to any sites included in itinerary

WHAT’S EXCLUDED

• Any meals specified ‘not included’ in the itinerary
• Travel insurance
• India entry visa
• Sleeping bag
• Personal spending money, souvenirs and support crew
• Inbound airport departure tax (no tax applied at time of writing)
• Fees for any optional sites, attractions or activities
• Airline taxes; we cap these so £250.00 is the maximum you will pay
• Any applicable surcharges as per Terms and Conditions

TREK TRAINING WEEKEND

£170 Special Offer - Only when you book at the same time as registering for your main challenge

Discover Adventure Trek Training Weekends take place in Snowdonia National Park, Wales. This training weekend is designed to put you through your paces to enable you to gauge fitness levels and gain advice from our experienced leaders.

GRADE | EXTREME (5)

Trip grades range from Challenging (1) to Extreme (5).

EXTREME trips involve very taxing terrain and conditions, often with extremes of temperature, at altitude. They will test your stamina and perseverance to the max.

See Trip Grading Explained.

Discover Adventure reserves the right to change the route or itinerary for safety reasons should local conditions dictate.

Please note: This document was downloaded on 18 Oct 2018, and the challenge is subject to change.