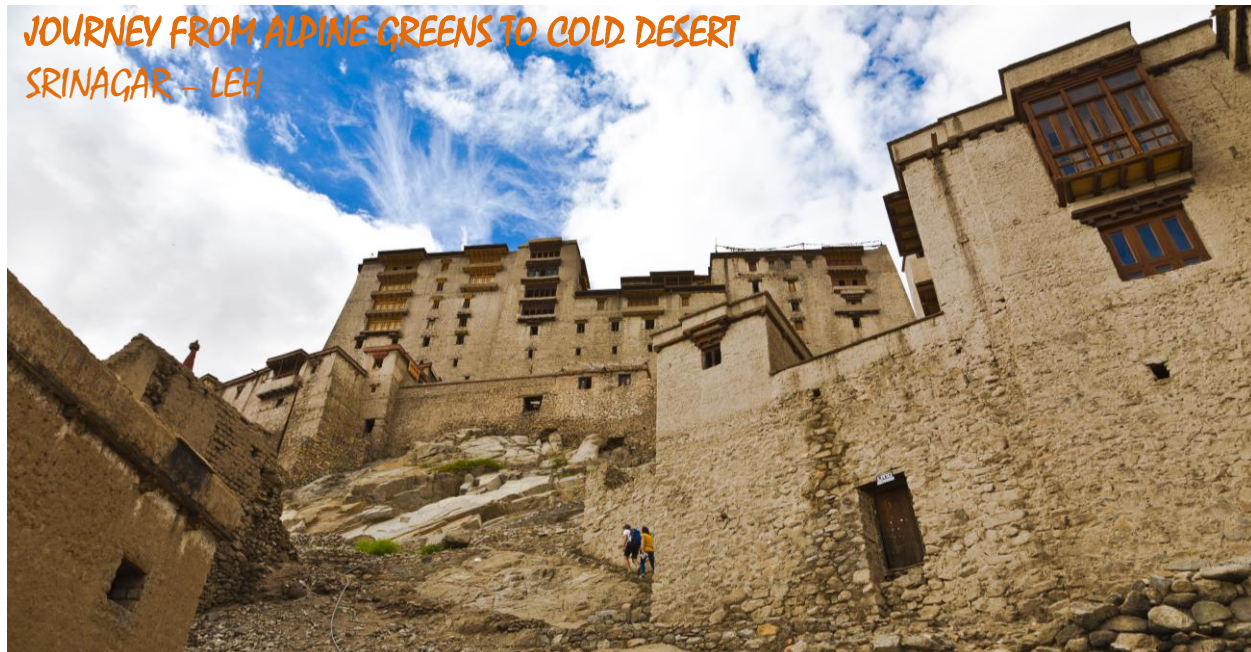


JOURNEY FROM ALPINE GREENS TO COLD DESERT
SRINAGAR – LEH

TRIP DATE: Trip 1: Jun 11 – 21, 2016
Trip 2: Aug 12 – 22, 2016



Duration: 10 Nights/11 Days

Places Covered: Srinagar – Kargil – Lamayuru – Leh – Khardung La – Deskit – Hundar – Turtuk -Pangong Tso – Leh

Start From: Srinagar Airport

End At: Leh Airport

Maximum Altitude Reached: 5602 M (Khardung La)

Permits Required: No

Kashmir

The Mughal emperor Jahangir is said to have spontaneously exclaimed: "If there is a paradise on earth, it is this, it is this, it is this", when he set foot on Kashmir. Over the centuries the wild natural grandeur of this region has cast a similar spell on countless visitors from all over the planet. To match the grandeur of the sights, you will be lodged in the royal confines of a luxury houseboat for 02 nights and receive the same personalized, high quality service, that sets apart Banjara offerings elsewhere.

Ladakh

Diverse cultures have developed in the Himalayas over the last few centuries. Some of the regions, that remained cut off from the rest of the world for historical reasons, have retained their unique character. To the West of the Himalayas, Ladakh is one such region. It is a land like no other. Bounded by two of the world's mightiest mountain ranges, the Great Himalaya and the Karakoram, Ladakh lies athwart two others, the Ladakh range and the Zaskar range, and covers almost 1, 00,000 sq. kms, or a little more than twice the size of Switzerland! The greater Himalayas shelter Ladakh from the Indian monsoon. Ladakh was once covered by an extensive lake system, the vestiges of which still exist on its south-east plateau of Rupshu and Chunshul in drainage basins with evocative names like Tso Moriri, Tso Kar and grandest of all, Pangang Tso. With Tibet and

Xinjiang regions of China to the East and North West, and Pakistan to the West, Ladakh occupies a key strategic position. For reasons of security, therefore, Ladakh was closed to travelers till 1974. Now, one can explore the high altitude cold desert of Ladakh through Jeep Safaris and treks.

Day 01 | Arrive Srinagar

Board flight and arrive at Srinagar airport by afternoon. Assistance on arrival and transfer to Nageen Lake. Check-in at the houseboat on arrival. Post lunch; take a leisurely five hour shikara boat ride on the Nageen enjoying extravagant views of the surrounding snow dusted mountain ranges. As you glide on its placid waters laden with lily and lotus plants, you will visit Dal Lake and floating flower and handicraft markets as well as the Char Chinar Island, a good spot for bird watching.

Srinagar, Founded around 150 AD by King Pravarasen II, Srinagar owes its name from two Sanskrit words, Sri - meaning profusion & wealth and Nagar means a city. Situated on the banks of river Jhelum, the summer capital of the state of Jammu & Kashmir is a heavenly abode on earth with majestic snow-capped Pir Panjal mountain range rising behind the serene and picturesque lakes of Dal, Nagin & Anchar, vividly beautiful houseboats swinging in the water, blossoming gardens, water sports activities, hand crafted souvenirs and traditional warm hospitality.

Day 02 | In Srinagar

Post breakfast, visit the Persian styled Mughal Gardens - the Shalimar Bagh, Chasmeshahi Bagh and Nishat Bagh known for its beautiful terraced lawns, bright flower beds, cascading fountains and decorated marble pavilions that showcase the opulence of the rulers that built them in the 17th century AD. Be back to the houseboat for lunch. Post lunch; drive into the Old Town to explore its narrow lanes on foot with your guide. Visit the 14th century Jama Masjid and the Shah Hamadan mosque that showcases exquisite wood carving. Also visit Noor Jehan's delightful Mosque of the Slipper and the tomb of Zein-ud-Din, one of the best rulers Kashmir ever had.

Day 03 | Srinagar - Kargil (3140 M) 204 km / 17 hrs

Check out after breakfast and leave on a drive from Srinagar into the verdant landscapes of the Sonamarg area. You could stop here for a while to explore the area. Later resume the drive and move into starkly contrasting mountain desert terrain as you cross the formidable Zoji La (3529 M) and reach Drass where you may stop to see some landscape features made famous courtesy the Kargil conflict with Pakistan in 1999- Tolo- ling, Mushkoo Valley & Tiger Hill. Carry on and reach Kargil by late afternoon. Check into rooms at the hotel. Stay overnight in a hotel.



Day 04 | Kargil - Leh (3505 M) 238 km/7 - 8 hrs

Leave after breakfast on a drive over Fotu La (4107 M) & Namika La (3780 M) to reach the moonscapes of Lamayuru. Walk up to the ancient gumpa and have lunch at a quaint cafeteria next to the gumpa. Later you reach Khalsar and carry on along the Indus all the way to Leh - stop en route at Nimmu (confluence point of the Indus & Zaskar), Patthar Sahib Gurudwara, Magnetic Point and the Hall of Fame - Army Museum. Reach Leh by evening. Check into hotel rooms. Rest of the day reserved for rest.

Leh, dominated by Sengge Namgyal's nine storey palace, a building in the grand tradition of Tibetan architecture, Leh is the main city of Ladakh. In the bazaar, the main sites to visit are the Jo-khang, a modern ecumenical Buddhist temple, and an imposing mosque dating from the late 17th century situated opposite each other.

Day 05 | Leh - visit select gompas, monuments & villages in Leh Valley

Post breakfast, visit Shey Monastery & Palace and then the famous Thiksey Gumpa. Drive back and before Leh take a detour over the Indus to reach Stok Village. Drive right up to the trekking point, and enjoy a traditional Ladakhi meal in a 3 Centuries old village home and the amazing views of the Stok Kangri peaks. On the way down, stop to check out the Palace & Museum here. **Photo ops:** the gompas & the monuments, the Stok & Rimo range of mountains from various vantage points, at Stok Village, in Leh Palace and at the Bazaar.

Day 06 | Leh - Nubra Valley at Deskit (avg. alt. of Nubra Valley is 3048 M / 10000 ft) 140 km / 5 hrs

After breakfast, leave by 0800- 0830 hrs on a stunning drive over the mighty Khardung La (5602 M) into the verdant Nubra Valley. We reach the base of the valley at Khalsar. Here the road forks & the broad valley get divided into two distinct parts by the Shyok & Nubra Rivers. Of course, the road forks too; the RHS branch goes all the way to Siachen Glacier. We move on the other branch and reach Deskit Village in the afternoon. Check into your hotel rooms and have hot lunch. At around 15.30 hrs drive for about 10 min. to reach the dunes of Hunder and enjoy a ride on the Double Humped Camels. Later drive back to Deskit and reach vantage point with a huge outdoor statue of the Sakhyamuni Buddha near Deskit Gumpa to enjoy great sunset views. Stay overnight in a hotel at Deskit.

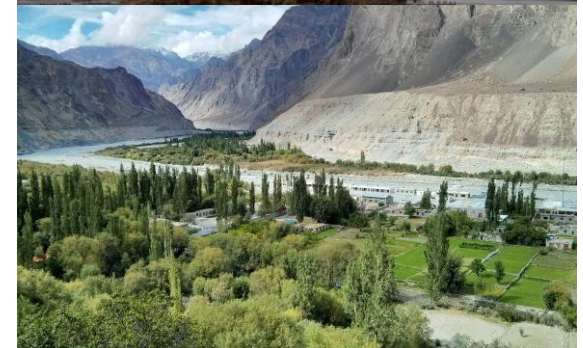
Nubra valley

In the days of yore, the fertile Valley of Nubra formed a part of the overland route between Tibet and Turkestan. Once dotted with garlands of camel and yak caravans, this Silk Route glen is also known as the 'Valley of Flowers' of Ladakh, and is amongst the greenest valleys in the region - ideal for your holiday break. One can understand why anyone would envy the flowering glen of Nubra valley. During early summer, Nubra is clad in endless bushes of yellow and pink wild roses, and once the valley is through with the season of roses around August, a carpet of wild lavender lies gently on it. Nubra is also a relatively warmer valley in Ladakh and the comparatively benign climate helps yield better crops and fruits, making Nubra the 'Ldumra', or orchard of Ladakh. The romance of the Silk Route still hangs in the air as you cross the formidable Khardung La - The highest 'motorable' pass on the planet- which connects Leh and the Nubra Valley. The road from Leh rises steeply to meet Khardung La and then dramatically plunges into a whirlpool of bends and turns to gradually unfold itself along the rushing Shyok and the Nubra Rivers.

Visit the Diskit and Hunder villages. The road, connecting Diskit with the quaint little Hunder Village, winds through a gorgeous stretch of sand dunes. You could spend a pleasant evening around these natural marvels that border a stream, and have snow-capped peaks for a backdrop. Keep your eyes open for the double-humped camels and Seabuck-thorn forest! The more adventurous ones could take a camel ride from Hunder to Diskit.

Day 07 | Deskit - Nubra Valley at Turtuk 90 km / 3 hrs

Post early breakfast; drive further north past the Thoise Air Field. The wide, open Nubra Valley starts closing in dramatically with the rocky mountain face getting darker & darker, finally bursting out into the verdant & vibrant



Turtuk area at the north western end of the valley which borders the Balti province of Pakistan - this area & the twin villages of Turtuk Youl & Pharol were annexed by India during the 1971 war. In fact the village gives the look & feel of being in Pakistan/Afghanistan. On arrival check-in at the campsite. Later spend 2- 3 hrs walking in & around the villages, interacting with the warm & hospitable locals sporting European looks. The cherubic kids are especially adorable. Enjoy a traditional Balti meal at one of the local house. Post lunch visit the 16th century Masjid, Minaret and a royal house of Yabgo dynasty and enjoy the bird-eye view of K2 peak. Also meet the blacksmith making bronze utensils.

Day 08 | Turtuk - Leh (3048 M) 230 kms / 8 hrs

Post breakfast; retrace your route over Khardung La to reach Leh by evening.

Day 09 | Leh - Pangong Tso (4260 M / 14000 ft) 150 km / 5 hr

Leave after a leisurely breakfast on an incredible drive from Leh on the road to Manali past Shey & Thiksey. At Karu we take a detour and start ascending to cross the Ladakh range over Chang-La (5,475 M / 17950 ft). At the foot of the pass on the other side we reach Tangse. Stop to enjoy your packed lunch in the Ladakhi style dining area of a local home-cum- guest house. A few kms after Tangse take a short detour to see a small, recently built wooden Buddhist temple, with delectable traditional wood carvings. However, the main attraction of this circuit is the grand Pangong which you would reach by early evening. Check into a Safari Tents bang on the lake shore at a campsite. Enjoy spectacular views of the mountains of the Changchenmo range to the north, their reflection shimmering in the ever changing blues and greens of the lakes brackish water.

Pangong Tso - an incredible drive from Leh takes the visitor past the picturesque villages of Shey and Thikse, and turns off the Indus valley by the side valley of Chemrey and Sakti. The Ladakh range is crossed by the Chang-la (18,000 ft/ 5,475 m) which despite its great elevation is one of the easier passes in Ladakh remaining open for much of the year even in winter, apart from periods of actual snowfall. Tangse, just beyond the foot of the pass, has an ancient temple. However, the main attraction of this circuit is the Pangong Lake, situated at 14,000 feet (4,267 m). A long narrow basin of inland drainage, hardly six to seven kilometers at its widest point up till which foreign tourists are permitted, is only some seven km along the southern shore from the head of the lake, but it affords spectacular views of the mountains of the Changchenmo range to the north, their reflection shimmering in the ever changing blues and greens of the lakes brackish water. The lake is about 70 kms long 3/4th of which is inaccessible since that lies in China. Above Spangmik village are the glacier and snow-capped peaks of the Pangong range.

Spangmik and a scattering of other tiny villages along the lakes southern shore are the summer homes of a scanty population of Chang-pas, the nomadic people of Tibet and south-east Ladakh. The Pangong Chang-pa (nomadic tribe) cultivates sparse crops of barley and peas in summer. In winter they fold their tents (Rebo) and take their flocks of sheep and pashmina goats out to the distant pastures.

Day 10 | Pangong Tso - Hemis - Leh (3100 M / 11000 ft) 160 km / 6 ½ hrs

Enjoy your early morning cuppa & a spectacular sunrise by the lake shore. On the drive back to Leh, take a detour at Karu to see the glorious Hemis Gompa atop a hill in the periphery of the Hemis National Park. Later have your lunch in a quaint cafeteria at the base of the main stairway. Reach Leh by late afternoon. Rest a while and leave for the bazaar to shop for Thangkas, Chunky antique Silver Jewelry with Turquoise embellishments, mementos, Apricots & apricot based beauty products... Spend sunset at Shanti Stupa for unforgettable views of Leh Valley & town. Bid your adieus as you enjoy a grand farewell dinner at restaurant and reach your hotel in time to turn in for the night.

Day 11 | Leh - Delhi

Post breakfast check out and get dropped at Leh airport to board flight for your onward destination.



foreign tourists are permitted, is only some

