The Snow Leopard Expedition 16 days

Head into the breath taking mountain ranges of Northern India in search of the ever elusive but stunningly beautiful snow leopard. Spend your days hiking and tracking this amazing creature before returning to Delhi for a few days sightseeing.

TOUR DETAILS:

- Starts in: Delhi / Ends in: Delhi
- Departs: 02 Mar 2013 & 01 Mar 2014
- No local payment required
- Breakfast:15, Lunch: 12, Dinner: 12
- Hotel Rating: Standard Hotels, Camping and Homestays
- Tour Guide: Yes, escorted by a specialist snow leopard conservancy naturalist

ONLINE RESOURCES:

- For a detailed GO GUIDE - click here
- To book this trip - click here
- To enquire about this trip - click here

TOUR MAP:

QUICK WEB LINKS

India Prices ::: Why Us for India? ::: India Reviews ::: Our India Blog ::: Golden Triangle Tours ::: Kashmir Tours ::: Kerala Tours ::: Top Spots in India ::: Best Time to Visit ::: Festivals & Events ::: Hotels in India ::: Tiger Spotting ::: India - Useful Info ::: FAQs on India ::: India Visas ::: India Gallery

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Day 1: Delhi

Once you arrive into Delhi you'll be met at the airport and transferred to the hotel. The rest of the day is at leisure so why not head into Delhi and do some exploring? Overnight - Delhi

Day 2: Fly to Leh, Sanka Gompa & Leh Palace

Delhi - Leh. After breakfast we transfer back to the airport for an internal flight to Leh in northern India near the border with Tibet. This quaint little town is a labyrinth of winding streets and cool bazaars and is great for a spot of retail therapy. The local Ladakhi women dress in traditional attire and sell vegetables behind enormous baskets. The most iconic sight in the town in the imposing 16th century Leh Palace which dominates the skyline. We also make a visit to Sanka Gompa, a Buddhist teaching house, home to a number of lamas from the yellow-hat sect. Our day here is generally relaxed as we start to acclimatise to our new environment and altitude. Overnight - Leh

Day 3: Shey Palace & Thiksey Monastery

Today we head over to Shey Palace, a onetime residence of the royal family with a famous high gilded statue of Buddha inside. We will also spend some time bird watching on the Indrus River. Look out for black billed magpie, mountain chiffchaff, great tit and common kestrel to name just a few. Later on we visit the Thiksey Monastery, which is home to one of the largest and most impressive gompas in the area. Several well appointed temples fill this gompa all adorned with exquisite wall paintings and images relating to the Buddhist faith. There is also a very important collection of Tibetan books here and the whole place is extremely atmospheric and the delightful chanting and music is incredibly intoxicating. Be sure to try and get to the roof where you will be met by stunning views of the surrounding valley. Overnight - Leh, Hotel Kanglachen or Omasila

Day 4:

Leh - Hemis High National Park. After breakfast we drive into Hemis High National Park. We reach the village of Zinchen and start our first trek. Heading through the gorge we aim to arrive at Husing Camp in time for a spot of lunch. We spend the night here and it is our first night of camping in the stunning Hemis wilderness. Overnight - Hemis High National Park, Camping

Days 5 - 12: Snow Leopard Expedition

Over the next 8 days we trek around Hemis National Park in search of the snow leopard. By day we will explore the park taking in all the breath taking scenery and wildlife. In the evenings we will return to our beds for the night, either camping or in a local traditional home stay.

Snow leopards can weigh up to 120lbs, are up to 5ft in length and can jump up to 50 feet in the air. They naturally predate on wild bharal (blue sheep) or ibex (mountain goat) however they have been known to kill domestic animals such as local farmers' goat and sheep. They are able to kill and carry up to 3 times their body weight and are generally opportunist hunters.

They survive the bitter winters in the Himalayas due to their amazing thick and warm fur coats. Their feet are also covered in this insulating fur and as a result give them natural snow shoes! Just like their African cousins, snow leopards are solitary animals. They are only found with others when they are nursing their cubs. A typical litter from a snow leopard is between 2-3 cubs with gestation taking between 90-100 days and young staying with their mothers for about 20 months.

Sadly Snow leopards like most big cats are very much endangered. Over the years these beautiful creatures have been hunted by poachers for their fur and also for their organs. The fur has been used in the fashion industry and their organs sold to the Chinese on the belief that they contain healing powers for their medicine. They have also been killed by local hunters who have done so as means of protecting their cattle. This as well as their habitat and prey declining means that numbers are now estimated to be at around 6000 left in the wild. In India alone there are thought to be around just 200-600.

Although it is of course these magnificent felines that we are looking for, there is also lots of other interesting wildlife to be seen. The local mountain goat, known as the ibex is a stunning

woolly creature that can weigh up to 200 pounds. Their colour ranges from pale to dark brown and they have a darker dorsal stripe. The ibex has distinctive horns which curve backwards and are bigger on the males. The Eurasian lynx is a medium size cat that is reddish brown in colour with black spots. They have black tufts on top of their ears and a short bobbed tail. They prey on smaller animals than the leopard like rabbits, hares, foxes and deer. The Tibetan wolf varies in colour depending on the season and the part of their body. The back and tail are usually black and white, the chest, belly and inside legs are white ears are grey. Its legs are slightly shorter than the European wolf and it is one of the region's most prolific hunters. Overnight - Hemis High National Park, Hotel on day 5, days 6 - 12 camping & homestays

Day 13: Leh & Ladakh

Zingdech - Leh. This morning we drive back to Leh and civilisation! After a much needed and deserved shower it is time to relax, grab a drink and enjoy the last of the gorgeous and peaceful Himalayan scenery. Overnight - Leh

Day 14: Delhi City Tour

Leh - Delhi We have an early start this morning for our flight back to Delhi. Once in Delhi we transfer to our hotel before embarking on a half day city tour. You will be taken around this vibrant capital city with its two distinctive personalities. New Delhi will have you visit the imposing 17th century Masjid Mosque and the sprawling Red Fort. Whilst in Old Delhi you will visit the chaotic, winding but exciting back alleys where you will witness noisy street traders and over laden rickshaws. Overnight - Delhi

Day 15: Delhi City Tour

Today is our last day in Delhi and we start off with another half day city tour – this time taking in a bit more of New Delhi. We'll head over to the Parliament Builind and the Presidential Palace before visiting India Gate, Qutub Minar and Humayun's Tomb. The rest of the day is free to further explore Delhi, shop for souvenirs or grab a few beers. Overnight - Delhi

Day 16: Delhi

After breakfast we are transferred back to the airport for everyone's onward flights.

* Main image courtesy of Tambako the Jaguar

WHAT YOU SEE AND WHAT YOU GET:

Below is a list of key highlights and what is included on this tour. Further, where appropriate, we have listed the items that are not included in the tour price.

Trip Highlights

- Thiksey Monastery - boasting numerous chambers full of statues and stupas. Thiksey in many respects a replica of Potala Palace in Lhasa.
- Hemis National Park - home to the Snow Leopard, Tibetan Fox, Ibex, Bhara, Tibetan Sheep, Red Fox, Eurasian Brown Bear, Golden eagle, Vulture
- Delhi - Old Delhi - Red Fort, Jama Masjid, Raj Ghat, New Delhi - India Gate, Rajpath, Humayun's Tomb, Qutab Minar and carpet emporium with demonstration
- Shey Monastery - houses a 24 metre high image of Buddha cast from copper and covered with gold leaf
- Trekking for one of the worlds rarest big cats.

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What's Included

- 15 Breakfasts, 12 lunches, 12 dinners
- 3 nights standard accommodation in Delhi, 3 nights standard accommodation in Leh, 9 nights camping or homestay in Hemis National Park
- Economy Return Flight from Delhi to Leh
- Expert naturalist from the Snow Leopard Conservancyand proven leopard spotter.
- Escorted trekking with guide, cook and scouts
- Entrence fee to Hemis National Park
- Entrence fee to Thiksey Monastery
- Airport arrival transfer on day 1 and departure transfer on day 16. Airport transfer upon arrival and departure from Leh.

What's Not Included

- International flights and visas
- Laundry, drinks, items of a personal nature
- Tipping - an entirely personal gesture

PRICES AND DATES: from USD $5,599

Prices shown are per person travelling. 'Twin/Double' prices per person apply when there are 2 people travelling, sharing a room. The 'Single supplement' applies for single travellers who require their own room and needs to be added to the 'Twin/Double' price. If you are happy to be paired up with another single traveller of the same sex on your tour, this can be arranged (subject to another solo traveller of the same sex having already booked with us). As such the single person supplement would not be required.

2014

Date	Price/Person	Single Supp.
01 MAR - 16 MAR	USD $5,599	USD $979