

# Trip Notes

## Ladakh India Zaskar Trek

20 days, 19 nights



**Time:** India is 5:30 hours ahead of London GMT (UK)

**Language** - Hindi is the official national language of India, however, there are 22 official languages. English is also widely spoken and you will be escorted by a local guide who speaks Hindi and English.

**Visa/Entry Requirements** - Passports must be valid for six months beyond the length of stay. Visas are required for all travelers.

You will get a 30 day visa on arrival but you have to book apply and pay online before your arrival at <https://indi-anvisaonline.gov.in/visa/tvoa.html>. You will then pickup your visa at the airport.

You will also need an Indian reference. Please use us if you wish: **Ekno Tours & Travels PVT LTD, Dickeys Cottage, Village Molhi, PO Sidhpur, HP 176057, Tel: +91 9816685999 India**

### Vaccinations and Your Health

We recommend that you contact either your GP or consult your nearest Travel Doctor about Vaccinations. If you have a medical condition and are taking medication for this please let us know at the time of booking.

### Altitude Sickness

On Day 3 of our trip we fly from Delhi to Leh. Leh has an altitude of 3,550 metres. Therefore, you may be (slightly) affected by symptoms of altitude sickness. Symptoms such as a headache, slight dizziness, nausea can be experienced on arrival. The effects can be reduced through good hydration and rest. You will be encouraged to start to drink minimum of 2 litres of water per day on arrival

in Delhi until after your arrival in Leh.

To demystify the causes and symptoms please read on: There is so much less oxygen in the high mountains that it is not surprising that travelling to high altitude causes people to feel unwell, but how this shortage of oxygen actually leads to altitude sickness is still not fully understood. Most people remain well at altitudes of up to 2500m, the equivalent barometric pressure to which aeroplane cabins are pressurised. However, even at 1500m above sea level you may notice more breathlessness than normal on exercise and night vision may be impaired. Above 2500m, the symptoms of altitude sickness become more noticeable.

In fact the term "altitude sickness" can be used to describe any altitude-related illness. There are three forms of altitude sickness that can affect people very quickly after they have ascended to high altitude.

These forms of altitude sickness are called:

- Acute mountain sickness
- High altitude cerebral oedema
- High altitude pulmonary oedema

If you live at altitude for many years, you may be at risk of developing another illness, called chronic mountain sickness or Monge's disease.

### Acute Mountain Sickness

The commonest illness at altitude is acute mountain sickness. This is sometimes colloquially referred to as altitude sickness or mountain sickness. Most people experience acute mountain sickness as a relatively mild, self-limiting illness.

### What are the symptoms?

The most prominent symptom is usually headache,

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and most people also experience nausea and even vomiting, lethargy, dizziness and poor sleep. Symptoms are very similar to a really bad hangover. Acute mountain sickness can be diagnosed using a self-assessment score sheet. If you have recently ascended to over 2500m, have a headache and your total score is 3 points or more on the score sheet, then you have acute mountain sickness.

#### **Who gets acute mountain sickness?**

Anyone who travels to altitudes of over 2500m is at risk of acute mountain sickness. Normally it doesn't become noticeable until you have been at that altitude for a few hours. Part of the mystery of acute mountain sickness is that it is difficult to predict who will be affected. There are many stories of fit and healthy people being badly limited by symptoms of acute mountain sickness, while their older companions have felt fine.

There are a number of factors that are linked to a higher risk of developing the condition. The higher the altitude you reach and the faster your rate of ascent, the more likely you are to get acute mountain sickness. If you have a previous history of suffering from acute mountain sickness, then you are probably more likely to get it again. Older people tend to get less acute mountain sickness – but this could be because they have more common sense and ascend less quickly.

#### **What causes acute mountain sickness?**

How a shortage of oxygen leads to acute mountain sickness is not known. Some scientists believe that it is due to swelling of the brain but the evidence for this hypothesis is not conclusive. The theory is that in susceptible individuals, swelling could cause a small increase in the pressure inside the skull and lead to symptoms of acute mountain sickness. The swelling may be due to increased blood flow to the brain or leakiness of blood vessels in the brain.

#### **How is acute mountain sickness treated?**

It is better to prevent acute mountain sickness than to try to treat it. Ascending at a sensible rate (300m gain in altitude per day), should mean that your body can acclimatise as you ascend and so you will be less likely to develop acute mountain sickness. However, if you need to go up more quickly, you could consider taking a drug

called acetazolamide (also known as Diamox). There is now good evidence that acetazolamide reduces symptoms of acute mountain sickness in trekkers, although it does have some unusual side-effects: it makes your hands and feet tingle, and it makes fizzy drinks taste funny.

If you do have acute mountain sickness, the best treatment is descent. Painkillers may ease the headache, but they don't treat the condition. Acetazolamide may be helpful, especially if you need to stay at the same altitude, and resting for a day or two might give your body time to recover. It is essential that you should NEVER go up higher if you have acute mountain sickness.

If a travelling companion has symptoms of acute mountain sickness and becomes confused or unsteady, or develops an extremely severe headache or vomiting, they may have a life-threatening condition called high altitude cerebral oedema (HACE). For more information on altitude sickness see [http://www.altitude.org/altitude\\_sickness.htm](http://www.altitude.org/altitude_sickness.htm)

**Insurance** - Travel insurance is compulsory. We recommend that you take a copy of their travel insurance documents (especially relevant international contact numbers) with you while on tour. We advise that you check the inclusions and procedures for lodging claims prior to your departure. The documents should be stored separately from the originals.

**Climate** - Seasonal weather patterns can be quite unpredictable. Up to the minute information on worldwide weather can be found at [www.accuweather.com](http://www.accuweather.com).

#### **Suggested Packing List**

A complete list will be provided with deposit documentation.

#### **Luggage**

All travellers are limited to two items of luggage each; a suitcase with a maximum weight of 15kg and one piece of hand luggage with a maximum weight of 5kg. It is essential that your luggage is lockable. Please note that Indian authorities will only allow bottles onto the

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aircraft if they have been checked in as main baggage. Bottles in hand luggage maybe confiscated.

Domestic airlines within India have recently reviewed their checked luggage limits, as such all airlines have now implemented a maximum checked luggage limit of 15kg. Please keep this in mind when packing for your upcoming trip. Any excess luggage charges incurred will be at the expense of the passenger.

### **Tipping**

Tipping is a firm and expected element in the tourism industry. A nominated tipping amount is included in all group tour pricing, however is not collected in your final payment received by us. This is so that it can be paid directly to your Local Guide who will then distribute the tips among your main service providers – guides, drivers and attendants – on your behalf.

Any other tipping, such as tips for bathroom attendants or hotel porters that are taking luggage to your room, is at your discretion based on satisfaction of services received, as are gratuities for additional requested special services. The final tipping amount will be outlined in your final documentation.

**Exchanging Cash** - Machines that dispense cash are readily available throughout India which accept overseas debit/credit cards. They will dispense Indian Rupees in cash only (up to IR10,000 or US\$200 equivalent at any one time). Please notify your bank that you intend travelling to India. If you have cash, it is highly recommended that when travelling to cities outside of Delhi, Jaipur and Agra, and other main cities that extra care and attention is paid when exchanging money. Australian, US Dollars Euros are easily exchanged throughout India however, other currencies can generally be exchanged in hotels and airports provided notes are new and undamaged. We suggest exchanging your money before travelling to remote areas and smaller towns, as exchange facilities can be limited. Your Local Guide will remind you to do this before departure.

### **Personal Expenses**

You will need to take some extra money to cover drinks

, laundry and souvenirs, plus any additional sightseeing that may be offered to you. Based on the advice of previous customers an approximate amount of USD250 per week should be sufficient; however for those that can't resist a bargain, consider allocating a higher amount.

Your India tour does not include meals while on tour (only breakfast), providing you with freedom to explore the city and discover unique culinary delights. With this in mind, you will also need to allocate a certain amount of money for dinners, snacks and drinks while on tour. These meals are at your own arrangements so the amount allocated will be different for each tour participant.

**Optional Tours** - Optional tours may be offered in each city you visit during your tour. These are not included in the standard itinerary and will only be available if time permits. Each option will be arranged locally by your Local Guide.

**Your Accommodation** - All group tour hotels have private Western bathroom facilities, air conditioning, TV and a telephone. Plumbing and electricity supplies can be erratic and quite often the power in hotel rooms is turned off while guests are out of the room. If you experience any difficulty please speak to your Local Guide. Your accommodation is selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from a business hotel in one city to a boutique family run guesthouse in a smaller town or a heritage type hotel. In remote areas accommodation may be of a lower standard and may not have all Western amenities. Hotels are generally rated as local 4 star standard, but do please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality do exist between United States and India. Rest assured that all hotels used by us are regularly inspected by our staff and our partners to ensure that standards meet your needs.

**Late Check-Out** - Late check-out until 12pm is included in this group tour for passengers travelling on our package in the last hotel of stay. If you want to stay past the 12pm deadline please let us know on at the time of booking as

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extra charges will apply.

**Development** - Although India is developing quickly, it still lacks the international standards of civil infrastructure and tourist facilities. Concepts of personal responsibility are also different to those in United States. Consequently, tourist and public facilities may not uphold the same safety standards as in United States; for example, you may see a hole in the road without a warning sign or safety barricade. All of our suppliers meet local safety standards as a minimum. We want you to have an enjoyable holiday so we ask that you take extra care, use your common sense, refer to notices and follow advice from your Local Guide.

**Traffic in India** - Main and inner city roads in India have a reputation for being very congested. For this reason, it may not always be possible to return to your hotel after sightseeing to freshen up before going to the restaurant for dinner. Roads in India have generally been improved over recent years, but traffic and/or weather conditions may extend driving times. Road construction work usually covers an enormous section of road – not just one or two kilometres as you may be used to. For this reason, the timings listed in the sections below are approximations only.

**Seatbelts** - Please note that seatbelts are not compulsory by law in India and therefore the Indian people largely choose not to wear them. For this reason some vehicles may not be fitted with seatbelts or they may be hidden underneath protective seat covers. It is recommended that where seatbelts are available customers must use them and remain seated at all times while the vehicle is moving.

**Rail Journeys** - Your trip may or may not involve a train journey in India. Ekno Experience tries to book 1st or 2nd A/c depending on the availability. Getting on and off the trains in India can be quite disordered and confrontational as passengers will start boarding well before people have finished getting off! If your group is disembarking at a stop that

is not the end of the line, the train will only stop for 10 minutes and you must have your luggage ready and by your side a few minutes before the train pulls into the station. Follow your Local Guide at all times.

**Climbing Steps** - Sightseeing at nearly all of the palaces, fortresses and some temples involves climbing quite a number of steps. These palaces were built to provide defence against potential invaders so nearly all of them stand on top of a hill, while the interiors have layers of narrow hallways and steps to slow down the advance of enemies once they were inside. The steps tend to be quite large, not level and sometimes without handrails. Hindu and Buddhist temples also tend to be built at an elevation, as this is the most auspicious position according to ancient beliefs. This means you sometimes need to walk from the bus park to the entrance, and/or need to climb some steps inside.

People with knee or hip injuries, who have poor balance or are otherwise unable to complete these activities independently should consider the suitability of this itinerary carefully.

### Electricity

240V 50HzHz

Electric Plug Details

Indian-style plug with two circular metal pins above a large circular grounding pin



OR



European plug with two circular metal pins

### Consider Cultural Differences

India has many religions, cultures and histories. Foreign tourists, particularly females, may be stared at as many Indian women don't often go out without their father or husband. Be considerate of this belief, dress with consideration and don't take it personally.

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## Safety & Security

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade states, 'Due to the risk of harassment and assault, women should take particular care in all parts of India and exercise caution even if they are travelling in a group.' For full advice on travelling to India, visit <http://smartraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/Advice/India>

## Appropriate Dress

When visiting temples or mosques, both men and women should dress in non-revealing clothes. Full-length trousers with a shirt or t-shirt for men; and pants or skirts well below the knee with a top that covers the shoulders and upper arms for women. Women might also consider carrying a 'modesty shawl' in their daypack – this could be a sarong or light scarf – which they can wear over their shoulders and heads to feel more comfortable while sightseeing at mosques. When visiting Jain temples, you must not wear or take in any leather items such as belts, watches, camera straps, purses and shoes.

Religious sites and homes throughout India – for Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, Muslims or Buddhists to name a few – require all visitors to remove their shoes to enter. Even if you then need to walk outdoors, over hot or rough ground, you will not be allowed to wear shoes. You will often find shoe storage rooms near the entrance of a site where it is customary to leave your shoes near the entrance. Occasionally there are 'shoe minders' who will offer to keep your shoes safe for a 'tip' – this is not compulsory so each customer can choose to tip for this service or not. If you do not want to remove them, you will have to remain outside.

Bring some shoes that easily slip on and off, and carry a pair of thick, old socks in your daypack, which you can wear to protect your feet from any rough or hot surfaces. The itinerary below will indicate when you need to consider this.

## Itinerary changes

1. Our intention is to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however order of events and sightseeing may vary according to local conditions.

2. Many roads are uneven and or sections may be undergoing repair. Travelling by car is a slow process in India and usually cars travel on average 50kms per hour for distance travel (ie 500kms take 10 hours).

3. The domestic airlines in this region have frequent schedule changes. We will make alternative arrangements if flights are cancelled and your Local Guide will be informed of these.

## Flight Delays or Changes to Arrival Times

Due to unforeseen circumstances, flights can be delayed, and therefore connecting flights may be missed. If you find yourself in this situation, please contact our India office on + 91 9418791001 (Local Guide) OR + 91 98166 85999 (24 hours) to urgently advise your arrival details have changed. Please ensure you have details (flight number and arrival time) handy to pass on to our local office in India. This will ensure your Local Guide can be informed of your most up to date information and ensure someone is at the airport to meet you on arrival. If we are not advised of late changes and missed connections, Ekno Experience/Travels cannot guarantee someone will be able to meet you upon arrival in India as our local office will have no way of knowing which flight you will be arriving on.

We will not be responsible for providing reimbursement of transportation costs from the airport to your hotel in the event that our local office was not advised of changes to arrival times.



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## Itinerary

**Day 1:** Welcome to India! Greeting and pickup at the international airport by an Ekno Representative. Overnight Delhi

**Day 2:** Our flight to Leh is a spectacular journey over multiple Himaayan ranges. After you land, check into your hotel and rest. After lunch, we take a walking tour of Leh Bazaar, with trade routes loosely dated as far back as the third century, Leh is an ancient city set between mighty mountains and the Indus river.

The rest of the day your leisure to acclimatize and rest. Overnight Leh

**Day 3:** After breakfast, you'll start your tour of Leh and surrounding areas. Visit Gompa Soma (a monastery part of the Leh palace complex) and Moti Market, the old bazaar. Lunch together. After lunch, we'll hop in a jeep and head to Saboo monastery, a bit outside of Leh. Spend the afternoon exploring the monastery, talking to resident monks, and local devotees. On way back to Leh visit the Sankhar Gompa and the Shanti Stupa constructed by Japan as a symbol of international peace in 1991. Overnight Leh

**Day 4:** Leave early to visit the monasteries of Shey, Thikse and Hemis, an hour and a half drive from Leh. Visit the former summer capital of Leh, Shey with its ruined castle, palace, and gompa standing high on a hilltop. Next, head to the ancient Hemis Monastery, and finally, visit Thikse monastery, noted for its resemblance to the Potala Palace in Lhasa, Tibet. Return to Leh, the rest of the day is at your leisure. Overnight Leh

**Day 5:** Today we head to Lamayuru, stopping to visit the Alchi monastery as we follow the Indus river on its westward journey. The Alchi monastery is set in valley river valley near the village of Alchi. The sight dates back to the 10th century. After taking time to explore this cultural sight, we head to Lamayuru, arriving in time for lunch, followed by a tour of the monastery. The Lamayuru monastery dates to the 11th century and holds a wide array of Tibetan thangka, statues, and other religious artifacts. The rest of the day at your leisure to enjoy this beautiful monastery and village as well as the famous "moon-scape" that surrounds it. Overnight Lamayuru Guest House

**Day 6:** Today, we have a 5 hour drive to Rangdum, where we'll camp for the night. Rangdum is set at an altitude of 4,031 m and at the outer edge of the Zaskar valley. Overnight Camping

**Day 7:** Today we drive from Rangdum to Reru by car, a four hour drive. We'll begin our trek from Reru tomorrow but for now, set up camp and take in your spectacular surroundings. Overnight Camping

**Day 8:** Today our trek lasts for about 4 hours as we walk between Reru and Itchar. After breakfast, there is a short uphill climb before the trail descends steeply to the banks of the Tsarap river. The village of Itchar (3650m) is on the opposite side of the valley. Our campsite tonight is right below the village. Overnight Camping

**Day 9:** Today's trek is 15km in length and passes through a number of small settlements include Surle at a height of 3,670m. We walk along the flowing Tsarap river until we meet the Kargyak river. We cross over the Kargyak river bridge and climb to Purne (3,700m), our resting spot for the day. Overnight Camping

**Day 10:** Today we stay in Purne with a side trip to the 15th century Phugtal Gompa, one of the last monasteries in India that is exclusively reached by foot. The monastery is constructed around a natural limestone cave. From Purne, the trail to Phugtal follows the true left bank of the Tsarap river for 4- 5km until it reaches a bridge over the river. From the bridge, it is 1 km further until you reach the Gompa (3850m).

**Day 11:** Today we walk from Purne to Tanze. As we leave camp, we'll cross the bridge over the Kargyak River and follow the valley true left until we reach the settlement of Yal (3930m). From here, the path gradually descends into a large fertile plateau, with the relative prosperity of these communities marked by the white washed houses, including the village of Tetha (3950m). From Tetha, the trail is marked by well maintained Chortens, or Buddhist shrines, that line the trail to the village of Karu (3990m). After Karu, the trail descends back along the riverbank to the newly constructed bridge just below the village of Tanze, our camp site for the night. Overnight Camping.

**Day 12:** After leaving Tanze, we cross through Yak-grazing pastures full of edelweiss as we head towards the mammoth rock monolith, Gumburanjan, rising dramatically before us. After passing the rock face, it is another 2km walk to the shepherds encampments, known locally as Lakong (4470m). Just before the alpine meadow, cross the small rock bridge over an upper tributary of the Kargyak River. Our campsite tonight offers panoramic views of the Himalaya Range. Overnight Camping

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**Day 13:** Lakong to Chemuik/Rumjak via Shingo La Pass (6-7 hours). The Shingo La Pass is a relatively easy ascent by Himalayan standards and takes approximately 2 hours crossing some scree and snow. The Shingo La (4980m) is marked by rock cairns and a barrage of prayer flags fluttering in the wind. The pass is set beneath the impressive 6000 m peaks of the Himalaya and Baralacha Ranges and marks our move from Ladakh to Himachal Pradesh. The descent from the pass includes a steep 400m to the glacial floor. The trail continues along the broad glacial valley descending gradually to Chemuik or Rumjak (4290m). Overnight Camp

**Day 14:** Today is our last day of trekking. We'll walk for 5-6 hours across the sparse vegetation and scree to the slopes of the JankarSumdo (3850m). We cross the Darcha River and continue through boulder fields, several streams, and grazing pastures to Palamo (3600m). Tonight, we savor our last night camping under the stars as our time on the trail comes to a close.

**Day 15:** After breakfast we load into four wheel vehicles and head to Keylong in the Lahul Valley, Himachal Pradesh. Our drive will take 4-5 hours. Overnight Keylong

**Day 16:** After breakfast, we leave Keylong for our drive to Manali via the famous Rothang Pass (3980m). Arrive early afternoon in Manali. The rest of the afternoon is at your leisure to explore the town or take a well-deserved rest. Overnight Manali

**Day 17:** Spend the day sightseeing around Manali including a visit to the hot water springs of Vashist (a short drive from Manali) to soothe your weary muscles. Explore old Manali or Manu Hadimba Temple. Manali has a wide range of great restaurants to enjoy your meals in.

**Day 18:** We leave Manali after breakfast and begin our descent to the Indian plains, Chandigarh. The drive will take 7 hours by car. We follow the Beas River from Manali to Mandi, passing through one of the most beautiful gorges that Himachal Pradesh has to offer. Overnight: Chandigarh

**Day 19:** Depart Chandigarh and take the train to Delhi, arriving at 3:30pm. Transfer to your hotel and spend the rest of the afternoon at your leisure. In the evening, a farewell dinner to celebrate our successful hike through the Himalayas. Overnight Delhi

**Day 20:** Transfer to the Indira Gandhi International Airport for your return flight home. We look forward to seeing you on another Ekno experience, soon.

**Updated 28 March, 2016**



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