

# Nubra Valley Expedition - July/August 2013



## Ladakh, India - Trek



Specially tailored for  
your school or youth group

### ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Accommodation:	Hotels & Camping
Grade:	Vigorous <span style="color: green;">●</span> <span style="color: yellow;">●</span> <span style="color: orange;">●</span> <span style="color: red;">●</span> <span style="color: grey;">●</span>
Max trek altitude:	16,899ft/5,151m
Duration:	22 Days, London to London
On Trek:	7 days
Min group size:	10
Trek Leader:	MK Appointed European Leader
Land only:	Joining in Delhi

### DATES:

Saturday 27 July to Saturday 17 August 2013

*A superb expedition that combines trekking in the beautiful 'Garden Valley' of Nubra, with fun river-rafting, sightseeing, including the Taj Mahal, and a community project in Leh.*



Accredited  
Agent



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# Introduction



In 1995 we secured for the first time a permit for a small film crew to enter the Restricted Area of Nubra. They came back bubbling over with enthusiasm for a truly beautiful and undiscovered part of the Himalaya. In the late 90s and since then we have had groups who have completed the trek and again have come back with fabulous reports of the place and the people. This itinerary is based on those highly successful treks, and a further reconnaissance trek by our MD, Steve Berry, in 2006.

The trek itself is interesting, remote, re-crossing the range of mountains just north of Leh. It therefore gives excellent views of the eastern Karakoram. The first day spent in the Nubra Valley is spent in some comfort, and short drives take you to some of the most beautiful places in Nubra. You therefore have a decent rest before undertaking the trek back to the Indus Valley.

Nubra lives up to its name which means 'Garden' or 'Green Valley' with numerous apple and apricot orchards dotting its landscape. Lying approximately 1,300ft/400m lower than Leh, Nubra sports a much milder climate, which enables its inhabitants to cultivate more extensively, as compared to their counterparts in the main Indus valley. The main crops grown here are wheat, barley, millet, and onions. There is plentiful birdlife in Nubra and recent groups have seen, amongst others, redstarts, wagtails, Indian Eagle Owl, hoopoes, various types of kites and eagles, choughs, and partridge.

Demographically, ninety per cent of the population is Buddhist, while the rest are Muslims. There are numerous monasteries and other places of religious significance, the most prominent among them being Samstanling (140 years old) and Deskit Monastery (500 years old) both attached to the Gelugpa order (Yellow Hat sect). Hundar is one of the most interesting villages as it houses ruins of numerous places of historical and religious significance.

The road from Leh to Nubra follows the old caravan route to Central Asia. It is one of the highest motorable roads in the world, passing over the Khardung La, 18,379ft/5,602m. The trek does not go over this pass but over the Lasermo La, 16,899ft/5,151m from the north. From the hamlet of Khalsar, which is at the far end of Shyok Valley the trail divides, one heading up along the Nubra river to the Siachen Glacier and the other to the villages of Bogdang and Turtuk, which were once a part of erstwhile Baltistan, now a part of Indian-administrated Kashmir. These two passes were the very ones used by the famous Himalayan explorer, William Moorcroft (1770 - 1825).

While timings given in any itinerary are highly subjective, they are particularly so in this itinerary - everybody knows everybody in this region and our main agent in Leh comes from Nubra. Therefore previous trekking groups have found themselves invited into monasteries to meet brothers and cousins of the trek staff, stopping for meals and drinks at the houses of friends and family and resting in the gardens of relatives, to say nothing of being summoned to look at temples, celebrations and houses by the local villagers and monks. The hours given here therefore usually represent the time taken to get from one camp to the next, rather than the hours spent on foot.

## Trek Leaders - main Leader European (to be decided), backed up with a local Sirdar and trek crew.

Once the expedition is booked with Mountain Kingdoms we will contract one of our European Leaders to be the main Trek Leader. We have a 'panel' of around 100 Leaders and in consultation with Charlie & Neil we will select a suitably qualified Leader.

Your leader will be backed up by a knowledgeable, English speaking Indian or Nepalese guide. You are most likely to have a Ladakhi Guide, however sometimes Sherpas come over from Nepal in the summer season.

In addition to helping you get the most out of your visit to Ladakh and taking care of you on trek, your leader will co-ordinate the work of your trek crew each day, ie ensuring that your meals are carefully prepared, your tents are erected for you each day and that everything runs as smoothly as possible.



Trek leaders enjoying an end of trek party.



## Outline itinerary

Days 1-3	Fly to Delhi, sightseeing, fly to Leh, Ladakh
Day 4	Acclimatisation. Visit Leh palace & Leh town
Days 5 - 8	COMMUNITY PROJECT
Day 9	Drive to Nubra. View Samstanling monastery and Panamik
Day 10	Drive to Hundar. Visit Deskit. Bactrian Camel safari
Days 11-17	On trek. Cross the Lasermo La Pass. Return to Leh.
Day 18	Rafting and visit Alchi temples, or rest in Leh
Days 19 - 22	Fly to Delhi. Visit to Taj Mahal. Fly to London.

## Mountain Kingdoms Responsible Tourism Policy

### Award winners

Mountain Kingdoms has a top five star rating for sustainable tourism from the Association of Independent Tour Operators' (AITO) and is a previous winner of the prestigious annual AITO Responsible Tourism Award.



### Our commitment

Mountain Kingdoms is committed to responsible tourism, through policies and practices which permeate all aspects of its business. Our policies aim to ensure that we and our clients act in a way which is socially, environmentally and culturally sound. We feel strongly that all Mountain Kingdoms holidays should benefit local communities, protect the environment by minimising pollution, and respect local traditions, religion and heritage. We tread lightly - low volume, low impact trekking/touring is the best way of preserving the beautiful and fragile places we visit.

We work with organisations such as Tourism Concern, International Porter Protection Group (IPPG), Tourism Industry Carbon Offset Service (TICOS), AITO and various charities, to help achieve our responsible tourism goals.

### Our Initiatives

We support a number of Responsible Tourism initiatives and organisations in many of the destinations we visit. Our main initiative is raising funds for Northpoint School in Nepal and to date we have raised over £10,000. Other examples of our recent ongoing work are the Simien Mountains Mobile Medical Service, the Bridge Project in Zanskar and support for the Village Education Project in Kilimanjaro. Further details of all our Responsible Tourism initiatives can be found at [www.mountainkingdoms.com](http://www.mountainkingdoms.com).

### Porter Protection

In the countries where we use porters such as Nepal and Peru, we feel that the issue of porter protection is immensely important. We support the work and the aims of the IPPG (International Porter Protection Group) and as such we have a set of guidelines to adhere to and which we apply worldwide.



### Carbon off-setting

Working with the Tourism Industry Carbon Offset Service (TICOS) we offset the carbon emissions for every Mountain Kingdoms holiday booked by clients that includes a flight. TICOS allocate this money to a school in Ladakh, India which Mountain Kingdoms has supported for many years. Clients who book a Land Only trip with us may like to make their own contribution via the TICOS website [www.ticos.co.uk](http://www.ticos.co.uk).



## Further information:

When we receive your booking we send you a full Trek Dossier which contains details of visas and vaccinations required, a suggested gear and clothing list and lots of useful information.

If you do have queries at this initial stage do ring us on **01453 844400** and we will be pleased to offer advice.



# Day-by-day itinerary



## DAY 1 - SATURDAY: *DEPART LONDON HEATHROW.*

Leave London on the evening Jet Airways flight to Delhi, arriving next morning.

## DAY 2 - SUNDAY: *ARRIVE DELHI. AT LEISURE.*

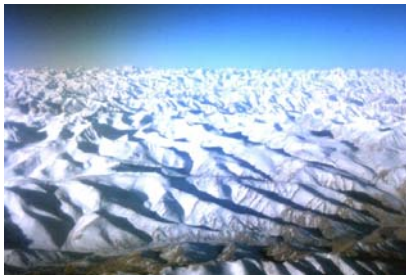
On arrival you will be met and transferred to your Delhi hotel. Time to relax or go sightseeing. The heat, dust, sights and sounds of India's frenetic capital are quite a culture shock! We provide an afternoon sightseeing tour in the company of an English-speaking Indian guide to visit Qutab Minar - a collection of temples on the edge of Delhi made famous by the controversial author F Von Daniken.

Delhi is basically twelve old towns/cities laced together by the new city of Delhi built by the British in the times of the Raj. The sheer size and scale of the old colonial buildings in New Delhi give some idea of the power of British imperialism in India. Many of the old Lutyens/Baker buildings survive to this day.

Overnight at the hotel.

(Meals:)

## DAY 3 - MONDAY: *FLY TO LEH. (11,500ft/3,500m).*



After an early breakfast you transfer back to the domestic airport for the early morning flight to Ladakh. This surely is one of the most sensational scheduled flights in the world, taking you right over the top of the Greater Himalaya before dropping down in a series of steep turns, to land at the small military airport at Leh. During the flight you should get good views of the distant Karakoram including K2, the second highest mountain in the world, and will pass over some of the highest peaks in Jammu & Kashmir (which includes Ladakh) - flight time 70 minutes. You will be met on arrival and driven through Leh to check in to your hotel, where you stay overnight.

We recommend that the rest of the day be spent resting to help adjust to the altitude, possibly a walk around the old part of town if you are feeling up to it.

Overnight hotel.

(Meals:B,L,D)

## DAY 4 - TUESDAY: *ACCLIMATISATION & AT LEISURE IN LEH.*

Again take it easy today and enjoy a stroll around the town. Leh is very Tibetan; the national dress, 'stove-pipe' hats and felt boots with turned-up toes are much in evidence. The 16<sup>th</sup>C Royal Palace, which dominates the town, is very reminiscent of the Potala in Lhasa and Tibetan Buddhist monasteries, large chortens, prayer flags and mud brick houses with flat roofs are a dramatic culture change from the hot, teeming frenetic rush of Delhi. Don't try to do too much today! Visit the palace, poke around the bazaars and if you're feeling really keen and strong, walk out to one of the villages just to the north. Meander slowly up the many steps to the Tsemo Gompa and Shanti Stupa from where there are great views and for a modest fee, you may like to while away an hour watching the early evening dancing display in the Royal Palace. In the summer there are often polo matches at the polo ground in the old part of town.



Overnight hotel.

(Meals:B,L,D)

## DAYS 5 TO 8 - WED to SAT: *COMMUNITY PROJECT.*

At this point in time it is too early to specify exactly what work will be undertaken during these four days. Our MD's oldest friend in India, Wangchuk Kalon, has told us that the project is likely to be associated with the Lamdon School in Thiksey, near Leh. Steve Berry has known Wangchuk since 1981 and he has set up other community projects like this before. It may well be some form of building project. We will set up a 'fixed camp' next to the school which has the definite advantage that the group will become closely involved with the local community, being there on the spot. It also saves on the cost of a hotel in Leh and travel costs to and from town.

Overnight hotel.

(Meals:B,L,D)



**DAY 9 - SUNDAY: *DRIVE TO NUBRA, AFTERNOON VISIT SAMSTANLING MONASTERY AND PANAMIK***

This is a beautiful drive that starts to give you an idea of the scale and beauty of the Nubra Valley. The road at times is cut out of cliff faces. From Leh the road climbs 39 kms in zigzags to the summit of the Khardung La Pass, (5,359m/17,582ft). This pass is one of the highest motorable passes in the world and was opened to traffic in 1988. Having taken your photos of the distant Karakoram mountains to the north, and Ladak to the south you descend a little less steeply to the floor of the Nubra Valley. You drive over the Shyok river to the village of Tirit. Our Ladakhi partner's family has a small "palace" here, set in huge gardens and orchards. They have 25 large family-sized tents with separate showers and toilet block. There is a very nice dining room attached to the main building. After lunch, visit Samstanling Monastery, passing on the way the abandoned Royal Palace. The monastery was founded by "Lama Tsultim Nima", some 140 years ago, and is the sister Gumpa of Rizong Monastery. The "Kushok" (reincarnate spiritual leader), whose title is Shas Rinpoche, is a very close adviser on scholarly matters to the Dalai Lama and is often found in meditation retreat at Samstanling. At present 60 monks reside in this gumpa nestled among apricot orchards.



After this visit, drive up the Nubra Valley from Sumur for 22 kms to Panamik. This is the beginning of the Restricted Area; the military base for the Siachen Glacier is 50 kms further up the valley to which you will see supply convoys being driven. Often, if you are lucky and have keen eyes, you can spot herds of blue sheep not far from the road and there are an unending number of interesting road signs. In Panamik, we hope to arrange for you to visit a village house. Return to overnight at the tented camp at Tirit.

Camp overnight.

(Meals: B, L, D)

**DAY 10 - MONDAY: *DRIVE TO HUNDAR VIA DESKIT MONASTERY. BACTRIAN CAMEL SAFARI.***

This is a wonderfully relaxing day where you will visit arguably the most beautiful monastery in Nubra Valley at Deskit. Deskit is about 14 km and Hundar is a further 7 km beyond this. The monastery is high above the town, though it is possible to drive to the foot and walk up. The views of Nubra Valley are unsurpassed from the top roof of the monastery. It was founded and built around 1420 AD by Lama Shesrab Zangpo of Stod (the chief disciple of Tsong Kha-Pa, the founder of the 'yellow hat' sect of Tibetan Buddhism) during the reign of King Dragspa. Approximately 100 monks live in the Gumpa. Deskit at the foot is the largest village and is the administrative centre of Nubra, complete with a bazaar and shops. There is a huge outdoor statue of the Buddha on a protruding bluff above the town. Incidentally, on the way to Deskit, you pass the famous sand dunes of Nubra and here you will go off on a short Bactrian camel safari. In any event, continuing onwards you drive to Hundar which has a palace, deserted 50 years ago and now belonging to the monastery. It was originally three storeys, but ever since a flood filled up the bottom floor with silt 100 years ago, it now only has two. Hundar is a pretty village full of religious and historical sites including the palace and monastery and a huge chorten arch with fine paintings in the dome. Inside the temple, the desiccated hands and head of a Tibetan soldier from an invading army of the past are kept in the chapel of the protector deities. Remember to ask the monks who may tell you the legend surrounding them.



Overnight camp at Hundar.

(Meals: B, L, D)

**DAYS 11 & 12 - TUE & WED: *FIRST DAY - TREK TO SUMDO SECOND DAY - TREK TO WACHAN (12,565ft/3,830m).***

The trek begins with gradual upstream climbs and descents, beginning with an interesting narrow gorge, up and down some airy paths, along Hundar Tokpo (river) to Skarchen Tokpo. The horses will make a detour to avoid difficult stretches. This is the only river crossing without stepping stones on the entire trek; a shallow, knee deep, wade. Wachan can be seen above, located on a green plateau, where camp is pitched. These two days are sometimes done as one long day of 8 hours walking, but we feel it will be better for acclimatisation, and





more enjoyable to split this section of the trek into two days. Therefore, at the end of the first day you will camp at Sumdo (the Ladakhi word means 'river junction').

Overnight camp. (Meals:B,L,D)

**DAY 13 - THURSDAY: *TREK TO THANGLESGO (14,765ft/4,500m). 6 hrs.***  
 Gradually walk up to the pastures of Hundar Dok (summer grazing ground) for about 3 hours where you may see flocks of sheep taken to the area; continue for another 2 to 3 hrs to camp at the beautiful grazing grounds next to the Thanglesgo river.

Camp. (Meals:B,L,D)

**DAY 14 - FRIDAY: *TREK TO BASE OF LASERMO LA. (15,420ft/4,700 m). 5 hrs.***  
 You will trek along a beautiful stream and through pastures covered with wild flowers and up the valley to camp at the base of Lasermo La. The trek is well-defined except in a few places where it is stony.

Camp overnight. (Meals:B,L,D)

**DAY 15 - SATURDAY: *REST, ACCLIMATISATION, LOCAL EXPLORING.***  
 You will no doubt appreciate a rest day before crossing the big pass.

Camp overnight. (Meals:B,L,D)

**DAY 16 - SUNDAY: *CROSS LASERMO LA (16,899ft/5,151m) TO MORUBUK (15,485ft/4,720m). 6 hrs***

Lasermo La can be seen from the camping place. Climb gradually up the moraine to the snout of the glacier before a 45 minute easy snow slope to the top. There are several routes to the summit of the pass, depending on the snow condition and the season you are crossing it. The horses may have to be led from the left side to a higher ridge of the pass. The climb is rewarded with wonderful views of the mountains and valleys below, including Saser Kangri, 25,165ft/7,670m, 60 kms to the NNW. The descent to the camp at Morubuk, a small settlement, is steep with loose sand and stones requiring rock-hopping across a stream several times.

Camp. (Meals:B,L,D)

**DAY 17 - MONDAY: *TREK TO PHYANG PHULLING, (12,861ft/3,920m) ABOVE PHYANG, 3 hrs DRIVE TO LEH (11,500ft/3,500m). 45mins.***

From the camping ground you walk downstream as far as a small wood, where a rest is taken to allow the horses to catch up before a 15 minute walk, together, to the road head, 10 kms north of Phyang, at Phyang Phulling. The jeeps will be waiting for the 30kms drive to Leh, passing Phyang monastery; welcome baths, beers and lunch await you at your hotel.

Camp. (Meals:B,L,D)

**DAY 18 - TUESDAY: *RIVER RAFTING AND VISIT TO THE TEMPLES AT ALCHI.***

You will drive west out of Leh, past Spitok gumpa and the Indian army barracks, out onto the road that heads eventually to Kashmir. The scenery is grand, as you have come to expect, and sometimes you parallel the Indus River below you. After a couple of hours you come to the confluence with the Zanskar River (Sumdo meaning 'river junction') and you drive upstream for a while to the put in point and here you will meet your rafting crew. They will give you a safety briefing and kit you out with wet suits, life jackets and helmets and then you are off for a few hours fun on the river. Your landing is at Basgo where there is a small 'palace'. From here it is only a short drive to see the incredible temples at Alchi. The temples of Alchi are really very special. They are 1,000 years old and have remained untouched by war or earthquake. It is a further two hours to Leh and your hotel.

Overnight hotel. (Meals:B,L,D)

**DAY 19 - WEDNESDAY: *FLY TO DELHI.***

Today you take the early flight back over the Himalaya with stunning views once again. On arrival in Delhi you will be met and transferred to your hotel. Rooms are available from midday and then most of the day in Delhi is free to rest, relax and reflect, or for shopping or sightseeing.

Overnight in hotel. (Meals:B,D)





**DAYS 20 & 21 - THU & FRI: VISIT TO THE TAJ MAHAL.**

After your adventurous trek to the Himalaya you are going on an exciting trip to Agra to see the sights of the one-time capital of the great Mughal Empire. The trip is organised so that it can be easily completed in two days. You will be transferred from your hotel in Delhi to the railway station where you will catch the *Shatabdi Express* to Agra. Once there you will be looked after by one of our fully trained, English-speaking guides who will show you around the Red Fort, the Taj Mahal and the ancient city and mosque of Fatehpur Sikri. In the evening on Friday you will be taken back to the railway station for your return journey to Delhi, and transferred to the airport.



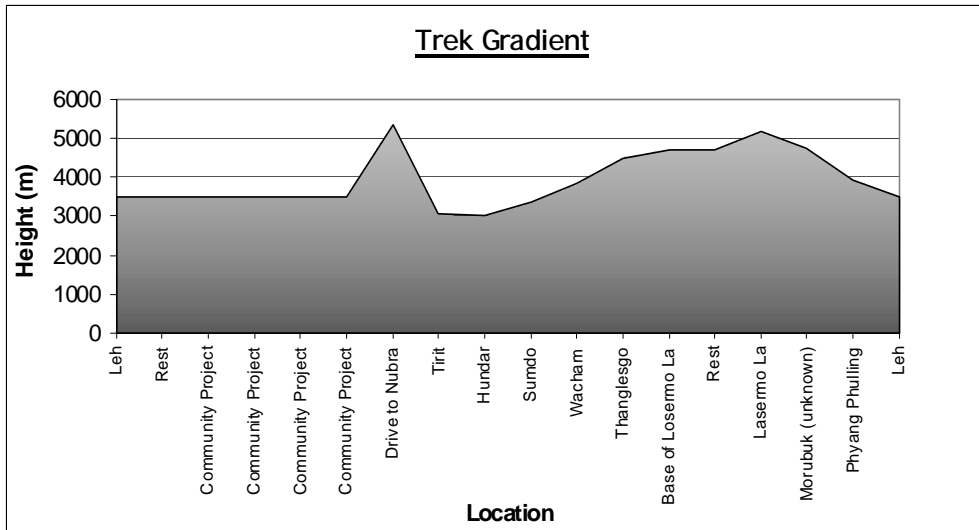
Overnight in hotel.

(Meals:B)

**DAY 22 - SATURDAY: FLY TO LONDON HEATHROW.**

You fly back to London Heathrow with Jet Airways.

## Trek gradient



This is intended to illustrate only an overall 'feel' for the route and does not show daily ascents and descents.

**IMPORTANT:** Please be aware that this trip involves travel above 4,000m/13,120ft. Whilst all our itineraries are carefully designed to optimise acclimatisation to high altitudes, participants on this trip are likely to experience some symptoms of being at altitude. The Dossier pack we provide when you book your holiday includes comprehensive advice on safe travel at altitude. If you require further information or advice on travel at altitude prior to booking please contact the office to speak to an experienced member of our team. Alternatively we recommend [www.medex.org.uk](http://www.medex.org.uk) as a good source of information.



# General information



## Temperature range

LEH	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Min	-15	-12	-6	-1	3	7	10	9	5	-1.5	-6	-11
Max	-2	2	8	13	17	22	25	25	22	15	9	2

## Trip notes

**Hotels:** **Delhi:** On Day 2 you will use a modern hotel near the airport as you will need an early start on Day 3. This will be either the **Avalon Courtyard Hotel** or the **Ashok Country Resort Hotel**. At the end of the trip you will use either the **Hotel Broadway** or **Regent Continental**. The **Hotel Broadway** is a 3-star hotel which prides itself on being a 'home away from home'. It is located in the heart of Old Delhi, 5 minutes from downtown Connaught Place, between Colonial New Delhi and the Old City. It has a very unusual and renowned restaurant that is a well known place to eat. The **Regent Continental** is also a comfortable hotel, in the centre of Old Delhi.

**Leh:** We stay at the newly built **Ladakh Residency**. This is one of the best hotels in Leh with 23 en-suite bathrooms, and decorated and furnished in traditional style. Alternatively we may use the **Kang Lhha Chen Hotel**, the **Spick & Span Hotel** or similar.

**Agra:** To see the Taj Mahal you will stay in the **Hotel Jaypee Palace**. Built in 1999 this 4 star hotel has a gym and a swimming pool and is 2.5 kms from the Taj Mahal.

**Meal plan:** Bed and Breakfast in Delhi, all meals included in Leh, on the drives and on trek.

**Flights:** **International flights:** We use **Jet Airways**, or a similar IATA accredited airline, for the direct, non-stop, flight to Delhi.

**Internal flights:** For our return flight Leh-Delhi we use **Jet Airways**, **Kingfisher** or **Indian Airlines** or one of their subsidiary airlines.

### Important note:

Every effort will be made to keep to the above itinerary but as this is Adventure Travel, we cannot guarantee it! By its very nature adventure travel involves an element of the unexpected, particularly in remote and/or mountainous regions. A variety of factors such as adverse weather conditions, difficulties with transportation and the health of group members can all contribute to the need to make changes, often at the very last minute. Changes can affect any part of the itinerary including overnight stops, duration of walking days, choice of accommodation and routing. Your trek leader will make every effort to maintain the integrity of the original itinerary and minimise the impact of any changes, but an easy-going and flexible nature is a real asset! Please note that all timings and distances given are approximate.





**Mountain Kingdoms** aims to offer the best value for money. We do not charge extra for meal packages or local charges and try to ensure that all the key elements of your holiday are included - you won't get any nasty shocks!

**Therefore the price includes:**

- ✓ A European Leader backed by a local leader
- ✓ Economy class return air fares from the UK & UK Departure Tax (flight inclusive only)
- ✓ All internal flights and hotel/airport transfers
- ✓ Good standard hotel accommodation (3 star) in Delhi, twin share, bed and breakfast basis
- ✓ Best available hotels in Leh on full board
- ✓ All camping facilities and all meals on trek
- ✓ Camp staff to carry out all camp work
- ✓ All road transport by private vehicles
- ✓ Costs of all portage and their insurance
- ✓ Sightseeing where specified
- ✓ Carbon offset for clients taking our flight-inclusive option
- ✓ A free high-quality Mountain Kingdoms kit bag

**The price does not include:**

- ✗ Travel insurance
- ✗ Indian Visa fees
- ✗ Lunch and evening meals in Delhi
- ✗ Airport departure taxes, excepting UK Departure Tax
- ✗ Optional trips
- ✗ Tips





Villages to north of Leh



Rafting



Leh



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