Zanskar Dream Trek, Ladakh

Explore wild and remote Zanskar, trekking a route created by our MD Steve Berry

Group departures

See overleaf for departure dates

Holiday overview

Style	Trek
Accommodation	Hotels, Camping
Grade	Strenuous
Duration	31 days from London to London
Trekking / Walking days	On trek: 24 days
Min/Max group size	5 / 12. Guaranteed to run for 5
Trip Leader	Mountain Kingdoms Appointed Leader
Land only	Joining in Delhi, India
Max altitude	5,216m/17,257ft, Kong Maru La, Day 29

Private Departures & Tailor Made itineraries available

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Departures

Group departures

2024 Dates:
Fri 16 Aug – Sun 15 Sep

Group prices and optional supplements
Please contact us on +44 (0)1453 844400 or visit our website for our land only and flight inclusive prices and single supplement options.

No Surcharge Guarantee
The flight inclusive or land only price will be confirmed to you at the time you make your booking. There will be no surcharges after your booking has been confirmed.

Will the trip run?

This trip is guaranteed to run for 5 people and for a maximum of 12. In the rare event that we cancel a holiday, we will refund you in full and give you at least 6 weeks warning. Many trips do fill up quickly – we advise you to book early if you want to secure a place(s) on the dates of your choice.

Insurance

We offer a travel insurance scheme - please contact us for details.

Private Departures

We can also offer this trip as a private holiday. A Private Departure follows exactly the same itinerary as the group departure but at dates to suit you (subject to availability) - please contact us with your preferred dates.

Tailor Made service

We pride ourselves on the level of quality and choice we provide for our clients who want a fully tailor made holiday. A holiday will be created especially for you by one of our well-travelled expertst. They will be able to advise on the accommodation best suited to your needs, the sights you should visit (and those to avoid!) and the best walks and activities matched to your ability. In short, we will work together with you to create your perfect holiday. If you would like to explore the idea of a Tailor Made holiday with Mountain Kingdoms then please call us on +44 (0)1453 844400 or see the Tailor Made pages of our website for further inspiration.

Your guide

Mountain Kingdoms Appointed Leader
In destinations with limited tourist infrastructure, and on long treks into very remote regions, you will be led by a Mountain Kingdoms Appointed Leader. These western leaders usually work alongside a local guide and often have particular expertise in the region you are visiting. Between them, our leaders have led hundreds of mountain treks and tours and have travelled to all parts of the globe. Collectively they represent an enormous fund of knowledge.

Your trip highlights

- Unique to Mountain Kingdoms, this trek avoids the more 'popular' routes in Zanskar with large parts of it through completely uninhabited wilderness.
- A truly exciting and challenging trek for the serious adventurer.
- An opportunity to meet the King of Padam and to see rare wildlife such as ibex, blue sheep and Himalayan wolf, Marmot, Pica, Eagles, Plover, Hoopoe and possibly Brown Bear.
- An excellent acclimatisation programme with time in Leh and the walk up to beautiful Sapi Lake
- First rate camping facilities and a highly experienced Mountain Kingdoms appointed leader.

At a glance itinerary

Days 1-3	Fly to Delhi. Fly to Leh. Free time to relax and acclimatise.
Day 4	Drive to Urgain Village, Sapi with visits to Alchi and Lamayuru en route.
Day 5	Acclimatisation walk to Sapi Lake.
Days 6-8	Trek across the Russi La and Chardo La ending in Bealchum. Drive to Namsuru.
Days 9-12	Drive to Ringdom. Trek over the Pudzong La Pass and on to Dibling.
Days 13-14	Trek to Lingshed via the Barmi La.
Days 15-20	Trek over the Murgum La, Kiupa La and the Namtse La, to the village of Zangla. Rest day with possible visit to Padum to meet the king.
Days 21-27	Trek through narrow gorges and across three passes to reach Nimaling.
Days 28-29	End trek at Chogdo. Drive to Leh. Day at leisure.
Days 30-31	Fly Delhi. At leisure. Fly to London.

Trip summary

Zanskar is a small Tibetan Buddhist Kingdom, lying just north of the main Himalayan range and about 120 miles long. It is part of the former Kingdom of Ladakh, and up until relatively recent times, its two 'Kings', or Gyalpos (precious rulers) mediated local disputes and in ancient times collected taxes for the main King of Ladakh. Zanskar's scenery is powerful and dramatic; gorges, aluvial fans, snow-capped mountains, villages perched above precipices, cliff temples, old fortresses, prayer-flagged passes, chortens, cantilevered Tibetan-style wooden bridges and there even still exist a small number of the traditional suspension bridges made entirely from birch twigs. In the winter conditions are harsh, with temperatures dropping to -30oC, or worse, but in the summer it is dry and sunny and Zanskaris work hard to grow and harvest their crops of barley, buckwheat, peas and some potatoes. Zanskar itself is closed in the winter by snow-bound passes of over 4,900m/16,000ft.

It is a land of mystical content; every village has a gompa or lakhang (monastery, or temple) and hermit monks (Yogins) still live in caves. In the summer, a rough single track road opens over the Pensi La Pass to the main township of Padum. Apart from this one township, Zanskar's people live in small villages and hamlets, whose houses are traditionally made of mud bricks with flat-topped roofs and are painted white, or ochre. The people carry on a rural way of life, much as they have done down the centuries.

The highest mountain in the region is Nun, 7,135m/23,410ft, which our MD's father tried to make the first ascent of in 1946. They failed, having climbed the subsidiary peak, White Needle, 6,400m/21,000ft, after their cookers packed in and they ran out of army leave. The first ascent was made by the French in 1953, but Steve Berry, his brother Richard and five other friends went back in 1981 and made the first British ascent. At the end of Steve's Dad's expedition, he went hunting a bear in the main valley leading to Zanskar and came across the large ancient gompa at Ringdom. The people there had never seen a white man before. One of the presents they gave him sits in Steve's office to this day. You will pass by Nun and visit Ringdom on your way to Zanskar.

Ladakh and Zanskar contain vast areas of true wilderness, huge areas of virtually unexplored mountains, long-forgotten gorges and unvisited villages in spectacular situations. Since our MD's first visit in 1981, Steve has been back a great many times and on each visit has extended his knowledge of the really off-the-beaten-track routes. Some of the best treks through the wildest parts of Ladakh can only be done in September when the river levels are low, because the often narrow gorges contain rivers which need to be waded across and this can only be done toward the end of the summer season.

As a company, Mountain Kingdoms has taken people through the gorges between Zanskar and the Indus valley several times previously. That is to say, the route that runs between Zangla in the Kingdom of Zanskar and Hemis Monastery in the Indus valley. Clients and trek leaders alike have always raved about how extremely exciting, adventurous, dramatic and great fun this route is. However, until 2009 we had not attempted the remote trek that runs between Ringdom gompa and the Zanskar valley. Here is what Steve has said about the trek:

"Of all the trips I have ever done in the Himalaya, this trek ranks alongside the very best, including my visits to Lunana in Bhutan, Mount Kailash in Tibet, and Upper Dolpo in Nepal. It contains certainly the most dramatic and adventurous trekking of them all. Virtually every day there are jaw-dropping gorges to pass through, rivers to wade across, exciting and quite exposed cliff paths to negotiate and a whole collection of passes in excess of 16,000ft from which tantalising views beckon you onwards. You see wildlife, including herds of ibex and blue sheep, fresh snow leopard paw prints and the tracks of brown bear. On the first half of the trek as far as Zangla, we saw no other Europeans on the trail itself, meeting only four Belgians at the village of Lingshed. On the final section, we met a tiny handful of people and you could say we virtually had the whole trek to ourselves. We went for days on end without seeing any human habitation and at other times we passed through extremely pretty Ladakhi villages with their beautiful monasteries and genuinely friendly people."

The former kingdom of Ladakh

Ladakh lies embedded in the mountain world of the Karakoram in the north-west, the Himalaya in the south west and the Trans Himalaya at its core. Its position at the upper course of the Indus made it the important connecting point of the trade routes from northwest India to Tibet and to Turkestan. The main chain of the Himalaya prevents the Indian summer monsoon from advancing this far. Likewise the extended cold winter has little snow due to the position of the mountains in the rain shadow. Winter is followed by a short, dry and relatively warm summer. However, all year-round there are great daily changes of temperature, with strong winds blowing in winter. As a result of the dry and harsh climate, only sporadic high steppes are covered with grass, while arid and semi-arid deserts dominate an otherwise grandiose mountain world.

History and religion

Following its demise, the first Tibetan Empire was divided among three brothers in 1020. One of them moved to Ladakh and founded the first royal dynasty there. In the following centuries, the Ladakhi Kings extended their ruling territory. Lhachen Utpala (1080-1110) expanded his kingdom up to the realm of the related dynasties of Purang and Mustang (in present day Nepal). New importance was attached to the culture of the Ladakhi monks when the reform sect of the Gelugpa created by Tsongkhapa led to the re-establishment of monasteries in the 15th century. Family feuds had ended at the beginning of the 15th century with the division of the Empire. Lhachen Bhagan unified Ladakh in 1470 and founded a new dynasty, Namgyal. His successor was able to stand ground against an invasion from East Turkestan. Yet over the years Ladakh was to be plagued repeatedly by plundering, ravaging Islamic armies. During the reign of the powerful Kings Senge Namgyal (c.1570-1620) and Deldan Namgyal (c.1620-1660) the Empire was not only further extended, but blossomed anew culturally in Ladakh. It came to an end when the great fifth Dalai Lama of Tibet (Nawang Lobsang Gyatso, 1617-82) convinced the Mongolians, whom he had converted to Lamaism, to enter a military campaign against west Tibet and Ladakh. The Ladakh king, Delegs Namgyal, turned to Kashmir for help. In the Battle of Basgo (c. 1685) the Tibetan-Mongolian army was stopped. Yet from then on Ladakh remained under the influence of the Islamic empire of the great Moguls. Finally it was invaded by a Kashmiri general, Zowara Singh in 1837. The King was shelled in his palace in Leh, and finally ceded rule to Kashmir. Its history remained unalterably tied with the history of Jammu and Kashmir, but the country did not forfeit its Lamaistic tradition.

Special notes

Trekking advice

This trek is suitable only for experienced trekkers! The vast majority of the paths are well-formed, but there are times when you may have to traverse scree slopes, and where sometimes the cliff paths are narrow and exposed. There are also many passes to cross, so please have a look at the altitude tables at the back of this detailed 'Day-by-Day Itinerary' which will give the experienced walker a clear idea of the amount of trekking involved.

Jeep tracks

There are one or two places where jeep tracks have appeared between one village and another and these may be followed in a few places that have widened or replaced the existing paths. This is particularly true in Yulthung and Nyerak.

Your trip itinerary

Day 1: Fly London to Delhi.

On arrival in Delhi you will be met and transferred to your hotel. The rest of the day is free for you to relax after your long flight.

Overnight: Holiday Inn New Delhi International Airport, Delhi

Day 2: Fly to Leh, 3,500m/11,500ft.

At a very early hour, 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 approximately 70 minutes. You will be met on arrival and driven through Leh to check in to your hotel for your overnight stay. We recommend that the rest of the day be spent resting to help adjust to the altitude.

Overnight: Kang Lha Chhen Hotel or Similar, Leh (Meals: BLD)

Day 3: Gentle sightseeing and time at leisure in Leh.

You will again take it easy today and take a tour of the town, as you gradually acclimatise to the high altitude. The characteristic large chortens, prayer flags and mud brick houses with flat roofs are a dramatic culture change from the hot, teeming frenetic rush of Delhi and you will soon see that Leh is a very Tibetan looking town. The 16th century Royal Palace, which dominates the town, is very reminiscent of the Potala in Lhasa and other Tibetan Buddhist monasteries. You will visit the palace and also poke around the nearby bazaars, but if you're feeling really keen and strong, you can walk out to one of the villages just to the north. Or you could meander slowly up the many steps to Tsemo Gompa and Shanti Stupa from where there are great views. Alternatively, if feeling less energetic, the Central Asian Museum, situated just north of the main bazaar is an excellent introduction to the region.

Overnight: Kang Lha Chhen Hotel or Similar, Leh (Meals: BLD)

Day 4: Drive to Urgain Pa Village in Sapi – approximately 8-9 hours, with visits to Alchi and Lamayuru on the way.

Today you set off on your exciting journey with the opportunity to see two historic gems of the Indus valley on the way. From Leh you drive west on the main highway, alongside the River Indus, and reach Alchi, a pretty village set in picturesque apricot orchards above the river Indus. This village has one of the most ancient and attractive temples of this entire region. A visit here is a step back in time. Alchi temple has somehow miraculously survived war and earthquake relatively intact for over 1,000 years and its stunning frescoes are said to be among the best-preserved examples of Buddhist art from this period to be found anywhere. These wall paintings are in a different style to those you will see in other monasteries of the Indus Valley - their style is said to be more Indian or Indo-European. The various chapels which make up the complex, house a stunning array of magnificent images, wood carvings, stucco art and statues. The sheer artistry and originality found at Alchi sets it apart from other monasteries of the region.

From Alchi you continue driving west to reach Lamayuru, which has another monastery famed throughout the region. Generations of trekkers along the Zanskar trail used to know the distinctive sight of the monastery at Lamayuru as either the start or end point for the traverse of Zanskar. The monastery and village have one of the most spectacular settings in Ladakh, being surrounded by a moonscape of strangely eroded spires, columns and organ pipes. Lamayuru Monastery was originally founded by the famous Indian scholar, Naropa, in the 11th century. It belongs to the Red-Hat sect of Buddhism and today houses around 150 Buddhist Monks. The monastery itself is made up of a number of shrines and has a very fine collection of thangkas and some magnificent wall paintings.

The oldest part of the monastery, which dates back to the 11th Century, can be explored by venturing down crumbling, narrow streets below the main monastery complex and there is one particularly interesting temple with some rather spooky protector images.

From Lamayuru you continue your drive west to reach the village of Urgain Pai, Sapi, located south of the town of Kargil. This is a small village of some 15 households and you will camp here for 2 nights to give you the opportunity for a good acclimatisation walk tomorrow. After meeting the trek crew, settling in to your tents and enjoying a welcome hot cup of tea, you might like to stretch your legs with a walk around the village and through nearby fields, perhaps encountering villagers busy with the harvest.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 5: Acclimatisation walk to Sapi Lake, 4,500m/14,764ft - 3-4 hours.

The walk today is good for acclimatisation and is not too far, but you take it steady to get the full benefit of a first walk at altitude. It is a beautiful walk following a relatively gentle trail up a valley with impressive cliffs to your right, trekking beside a rushing mountain stream and through meadows of wild flowers. Finally you reach Sapi Lake itself, a large, serene and beautiful lake sitting at the base of several snow-capped peaks and fed by an impressive glacier. After admiring the views you will return back down to camp.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 6: Trek to base of Rusi La, 4,430m/14,534ft - 5-6 hours.

In this region you are in Kargil district which is predominantly a Muslim area in contrast to the Indus Valley which you drove through yesterday which is primarily Buddhist. Here the villages you pass are mainly Muslim with small mosques rather than gompas. Their houses themselves look just like Tibetan village houses, that is to say, made of mud bricks with a flat roof. Although there is a bit of a mix of Buddhism and Islam in this area it is predominantly Muslim and will continue so until you reach Ringdom Gompa on Day 9 when you will again be back in a Buddhist culture.

But, a journey of a thousand miles has to start with a single step, and today you start out towards Zanskar. These first three days are further essential acclimatisation before you set out on the main trek from Ringdom Gompa. This country is in marked contrast to the gorges you will see later on and the land is generally greener than the typical Ladakh high desert you will encounter later. Leaving camp your path climbs steadily up and around a blunt rocky peak. After an hour you reach an indistinct ridge which you follow upwards, at one point getting quite close under the rocky peak, before contouring around to reach a small unnamed pass, 4,375m/14,354ft. Probably three hours to this point. Here you will see there are lots of marmots in evidence, and listen out for their shrill cries of alarm at your approach. There follows a shallow descent which takes you to a lunch stop under a big rock slab with boulders at its base. You then curve round to enter a high valley at the head of which is a cirque of impressive rocky peaks and a long, high ridge. Your camp site is in a flat area under the lee of a large lone lump of rock with a stream below. There are fabulous views from the campsite. These first three days are each 6km each, so easier days to set yourself up with a good acclimatisation base before the main trek, with longer days, begins.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 7: Cross Rusi La Pass, 4,900m/16,000ft. Trek to pasture camp, 4,261m/13,980ft – 5-6 hours.

From camp it is a long, slow, steady pull for about an hour to reach a cairn on a ridge. Then walking up the ridge you reach a saddle after about half an hour or so and then climb steeply up to reach the top ridge. Here it might be quite windy, though there are great views in all directions and you may well be able to see Mt. Nun, 7,135m/23,410ft. From the ridge proper, you can see the pass ahead just across from you. It entails a shaley traverse possibly between banks of old snow. Of course, the amount of snow might vary from year to year. From the prayer-flagged pass you can, if you feel keen, walk up a further ten or fifteen minutes along the ridgeline to another cairn for even better views.

Then it is a long way down the scree mountainside on the southern face to a dry gully where you may have lunch on some large slabs of rock. Then it is on down and down, eventually through nice meadows with a stream to one side. At the bottom of the valley the river turns right. Here you will climb (6-7 minutes) up a steep shale bank and then contour around another stream valley to the left. The campsite is at the head of this valley - a very pleasant spot with a huge rock peak blocking the end of the valley. In the afternoon, you might like to go back down and watch the marmots. Try tempting them out their burrows with a line of biscuits from the entrance.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 8: Cross Chardo La pass, 4,380m/14,370ft – 2½ hours. End first stage of the trek. Meet jeeps in Bealchum. Drive to Namsuru, 4,261m/13,980ft.

It is fifteen minutes easy walking to the pass itself, which is actually unmarked for a change, and gives good views down into a deep, deep valley. In 2018 fresh snow leopard tracks were seen on the path down from the pass. Towards the bottom of this you can see a patchwork of fields and a village. Bear in mind that the people in these villages will have seen very few foreigners at all, if ever. Beyond the village the valley deepens into a gorge with the occasional small hamlet or village in the bottom and signs of electricity appearing. Again, these villages have small mosques. The people will almost certainly be busy out in the fields bringing in their crops.

You will meet the jeeps in the first village at the start of the road and you will be driven on the road to your campsite while looking at the beautiful scenery as you wind your way down to the much larger Suru valley.

Driving up the Suru valley, you can appreciate that this is a much wealthier region with lots of cultivation and many orchards and larger settlements. As you drive further up the Suru Valley, you eventually come round a corner to be confronted with fantastic views of Nun and Kun framed at the end of the main valley. The twin peaks of Nun and Kun are the highest for 400 miles in every direction, Nun being slightly higher than Kun. It is the highest peak in Kashmir and Ladakh. The road you are now driving on is the one road that leads all the way through to the Kingdom of Zanskar over the Pensi La Pass, 4,401m/14,439ft. On your way up to Namsuru, there is a police post where your passports will be checked, before arriving at a lovely open campsite in fields beside the main river. Between walking and driving, it should take around 7 hours from camp to camp.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 9: Optional walk over the Parkachik La - 3-4 hours. Drive to Ringdom Gompa, 4,100m/13,451ft - 3-4 hours.

If the weather is fine, then we strongly recommend that you make the short 3-4 hr trek from Namsuru over the Parkachik La and down to the road on the other side, where you can then carry on the drive through to Ringdom Gompa. This little trek cuts off a huge bend in the road (approximately 2 hour drive) as it skirts past the Parktik Glacier. From this pass, there are absolutely sensational views of Nun and Kun. It should only take a couple of hours to walk up to the pass, and even less to descend to the road. There is plenty of time to do this little side trip and it is well worth it, passing a well-constructed old Mani wall and chortens on the ridge above the pass giving indications that this has not always been a Muslim region. It is lovely to look down on patchwork of fields - with many people cutting and stacking the harvest. You will no doubt see some local children as you walk through the village.

There is a small basic tea shop where you will meet up with the vehicles at the river bridge beneath the glacier. The road now carries on up the valley following the Sangpoo River for about 35-40 km. Every winter the road gets closed by snowfall and avalanche and usually opens each year in June or July after the Indian army have cleared the way through. It is compelling scenery for the total length of the journey. You may well want to stop and take photos.

After you meet the vehicles again, having trekked over the Parkachik La, the road climbs gently, but steadily up to Ringdom Gompa passing through Gulmatongas where there is a police post. Our MD's expedition in 1981 crossed the river here and climbed up the Shafat Glacier to reach the White Needle Peak and the east ridge of Nun. The drive is lengthy, and somewhat bumpy in places, but there are extensive views and marmots in abundance. You eventually arrive at Ringdom Gompa which sits on top of a solitary rocky outcrop in the middle of an otherwise large, flat valley. The village of Ringdom is a few kilometres from the monastery itself, and

your passports will be checked again here. There are innumerable excellent camping spots, but ideally you will camp on the side of a knoll at the entrance to the valley ready for tomorrow morning. Depending on time available, you could visit the monastery in the afternoon.

Ringdom Gompa
The monastery was built in the 16th century and at present has about 40 resident lamas. Everything about it seems incredibly ancient. The main temple and assembly hall have some impressive statues. It is a Yellow Hat, Gelukpa monastery.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 10: Trek to Hell Camp, 4,320m/14,173ft – 10 hours.

After breakfast start trekking up the large valley heading east-northeast, which leads to the Kanji La. This is the way you will follow, but instead of crossing the Kanji La, you turn off to go over the Pudzong La Pass. For the first hour, or so, you walk on the riverbed and then the path gradually contours up the right-hand mountain-side. A huge, contorted cliff appears on the other side, thousands of feet high. Then below you, instead of sloping banks leading to the river plain, the river emerges from a square-cut gorge. This box canyon is made up of glacial deposit which the river, over millennia, has cut through. Your path has contoured the mountainside well above this. You may hear lots of squeaking marmots and see eagles soaring above. The gorge below is certainly very impressive and after some time, you will see an equally impressive side gorge entering from the other side of the river. After three hours, you stop for lunch at some old shepherds' stone huts, and one hour after that there is an easy river crossing.

There is a camp just before the Kanji La turn off, but this is very small and not suitable for a group with a number of tents, so it's much better to continue to a nicer and far more spacious camp another 3 hours or so up the valley. This has a very unappealing name being called Hell Camp. Although this does not sound encouraging, it is actually a nice camp and the 3 hours extra trek from the small restricted site is well worth the extra effort, making this a long 24km day. You will therefore continue to contour along parallel to the gorge below, with the path rising slightly. In about 40 minutes you will reach the Kanji La junction and 20 minutes or so beyond here, look back and you will see framed in the end of the valley magnificent views of the peaks of Nun and Kun.

The gorge loses its vertical sides and another 2 hours further you come to the first of two rivers coming in from the right (at approx 21.5km). This valley is deep and rocky and you boulder hop across the river before the path zigzags up the far side. Approximately one hour beyond this is a second river coming in from the right, which you must wade across. The camp site is on an open plateau just beyond this crossing.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 11: Cross the Pudzong La Pass, 5,040m/16,535ft – 6 hours.

This is an amazing day! From Hell Camp you turn up a stunningly beautiful valley with a snake-like stream coming down from a wall of snow-covered peaks at the end. You toil up the right-hand side of the valley wondering where the hell the pass is. It looks seriously difficult ahead, but in fact the pass itself is hidden out of sight. You carry on now to a shoulder which provides quite a nice rest spot and then descend to the river bed. This is about one and a half hours from Hell Camp. You now have to cross the stream several times, but at this time of the year it should be just easy boulder-hopping. You are now in the upper part of the valley and you may well come across snow banks covering the stream. Eventually, you exit the rocky river bed, finally climbing to a shoulder where some years there is the start of the snow approaching the pass. By now you will be able to see that your path leading to the pass is either an easy trail on broken shale or an easy snow-slog. Crampons and ice axes are unnecessary and it is unlikely you will need gaiters. 3 km distance from camp to pass with a 500m gain.

So having taken three hours to get to the pass, it is now only a two hour descent to the valley some 900m/3,000ft below. Leaving the pass, snow slopes and then rocks lead to a gulch down which the zigzag path brings you out past fantastic pale gold rock walls and towers on either side to the wide valley. There are breathtaking views looking right down the sweeping valley to where you are going to camp tonight. We should say here also that the views from the Pudzong La are superb - snowy peaks in every direction. You will stop for

lunch once out of the steeper sections although it may be cold and windy and you may wish to hurry on. The camp is at 4,150m/13,616ft amongst an area of clumpy small trees and bushes between the junctions of two streams, with fabulous views. Ahead, and framed at the end of the valley, is a distant pointed rock peak.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 12: Trek to Sumdo Camp beyond Dibling, 3,795m/12,450ft - 5½ hours.

Leaving camp, you stroll easily down the left-hand side of the valley past some deserted houses and some unworked fields. Another hour from here brings you to the pretty village of Dibling where there are some 14 houses and a gompa. The monastery, as with virtually all Ladakhi villages, sits above the village and it is well worth the walk up to have a look around. It is a 75 year old, Yellow Hat temple (you are allowed to take photos inside), whose main figures are Shakyamuni Buddha, Chenrizig, Maitreya (Buddha of the future), and Zongkhapa (founder of the Gelukpa Yellow Hat Sect). It is indeed a pretty little village with substantial houses, nice chortens and surrounded by good fields. In fact, you may find that the village is empty as virtually everybody is out in the fields dealing with the harvest. Nevertheless, your Sirdar and his crew ought to be able to find somebody with a key to open up the temple for you to have a look around. That is, of course, if the resident monk is not 'at home'. It is quite incredible to think that this is the only village in this valley and that it is cut off from all other parts of Ladakh and Zanskar by very high passes. Again, it enjoys a Shangri-La setting and the people will have seen very few Westerners.

Leaving the village, you follow an improved footpath and after a while some parts of the path are exposed, exciting and dramatic. You should get into camp reasonably early today and could well have time for washing clothes, etc. You camp on a lovely area overlooking the river below next to a river coming in from the left. The Ladakhi word for river junction is "sumdo", hence this is the first sumdo beyond Dibling.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 13: Trek towards Barmi La base, 4,215m/13,828ft – 5-6 hours.

Another amazing day with fantastic rocky scenery! Cross the river on a new (but very small!) bridge, with then a ten minute climb out of camp to a small col with prayer flags and then the path traverses sloping into the gorge. After an hour or so, you have a scrambly, airy path up and over the cliff. Sections have been traditionally engineered with branches and stones. It's in a sensational position - very exciting! There are further bridge crossings today. Eventually you cross the main river again to take you back to the left bank. The scenery is jaw-dropping - beetling cliffs with choughs and pigeons soaring the heights. Even eagles might come to see who these strangers are. You may encounter local people from the village of Dibling whose nearest place to shop is the village of Lingshed. It is some 9.5 km and three to 3.5 hours down the gorge to reach Lingshed Sumdo, 3,700m/12,139ft. Here a river and a path come in from the left and this is the route you will follow now towards the camp before the Barmi La Pass. You hop across the stream a few times and then this gorge gets even tighter and winds backwards and forwards, climbing all the time. Stop for lunch before the path makes a long, straight rising traverse ahead of you. After the traverse, you re-enter a narrow section of the gorge and look back now for fabulous views of snow-capped peaks framed by the wall of the gorge. Shortly after the 'narrows', you come out to a flat area to camp. You might decide to continue on for an extra hour, and ascend an extra 200m to a pleasant campsite on a small rounded plateau high in the valley at 4,215m, thus making tomorrow's climb a lot easier. Total distance today 16km in 6 hours.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 14: Cross the Barmi La Pass, 4,700m/15,419ft. Trek to Lingshed, 4,010m/13,156ft - 7½ hours.

It is under two hours to the pass and an easy gradual path until the last 300 metres which is a little steeper. There are one or two places where you would not want to slip on the narrow path! Looking back, the views are inspiring - ranges of snow peaks. The pass itself is broad, with a chorten and prayer flags. It is such a thrill to get to the pass and look down into the valley containing the village and monastery of Lingshed and the peaks marching off into the far distance. It is a long and hot descent, but the views of Lingshed and its wonderful monastery go on improving.

You now drop right down past houses and fields to traverse along and then around the Lingshed rock amphitheatre, and later climb back up again to reach the monastery and the camp site just above that. You will feel pretty flaked out by the time you get to camp. However, there is a small shop (If you are extremely lucky, there might even be bottles of beer in the shop). The camp site itself though is a bit stony and dusty, but with plenty of water from a pipe for washing or laundry. The monks and the young lads at the monastery are particularly welcoming and friendly and each evening they have a Puja (prayer session) which foreigners are welcome to attend. This is an excellent experience, sitting quietly watching the young boy monks being slightly naughty behind their elders' backs. You will probably be served yak butter tea and the ground barley flour, known as tsampa. All this time, the elder monks chant prayers, with the young monks joining in where they know the words. You enter the monastery through alleys and corridors and through a kitchen which is straight out of Gormenghast, to a plain room with big windows overlooking the valley. This simple room is where the puja is held each evening. After the prayer session, a monk will probably be able to show you around the main temples. In the past the group bought prayer flags from a little shop to place on the passes and a monk from the monastery came to camp to bless them with a puja for a successful trip.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 15: Cross the Murgum La Pass, 4,310m/14,140ft, cross The Kiupa La Pass, 4,465m/14,649ft, continue trekking to Yulchung, 4,000m/13,123ft - 7 hrs.

The path winds its way from the monastery, climbing steadily under huge rock walls to a chorten which you reach after 30 minutes. There are great views of the whole valley from here, and then you continue to climb to another large chorten, which is not actually quite a pass. It is an hour or so from camp to this point. So it is only about an hour and a half to the Murgum La and from here you look down into a deep valley with a small hamlet at the bottom and a steep mountainside blocking the way forward. Look closely and you will see the path zigzagging straight up this to the Kiupa La Pass. The village, or hamlet, at the bottom is Kyumpata.

First though, you have to drop right down to the river, 4,040m/13,254ft. This is 3 to 3½ hours from Lingshed. Just before reaching the river, there is a nice little shelter with a small shop attached. Having crossed the river, you then start the long haul over the Kiupa La Pass. Take it slowly, you've got plenty of time. The path is pretty exposed in some places. There is a very nice chorten at the top, and on the other side of the pass you can see the main path to Lamayuru contouring round to the left. However, you head now straight down a shallow slope covered in strange plants and rhubarb and a little way down you come to a large mani wall, where you might stop for lunch. After lunch, you follow a rather indistinct path which funnels you down through two large rocky outcrops. It is almost like a secret path and brings you out above the village of Yulchung.

The walking for the remainder of this day and virtually all of tomorrow is determined by new jeep tracks, which are unavoidable. Despite the dusty road, the scenery and position are still completely brilliant of course.

Coming down towards Yulchung, you see only one large house standing above a patchwork of fields, and above it there is a small temple built near the top of a pile of rock which clearly drops into a gorge on the other side. However, the main thing dwarfing everything is a complete amphitheatre of orange/dun/grey rock mountains/cliffs/pinnacles. These are so vast and intricate that you may well spend ages just gazing in wonder picking out more and more features and looking at things through your binoculars. Harvest, like everywhere else in Ladakh, will probably be in full swing, and there may well be Ladakhis working in the fields below you. At this point, you cannot see the other houses of the village. It is most likely that you will camp on some disused terraces above the fields. If you look very carefully, you might be able to pick out a natural rock arch on the summit of one of the right-hand ridges, shaped like an eye. There are also strange, almost perfect small slender spires of rock, and much of the mountain is laced through with quartz. There are gorges within gorges, mountains in front of one another, and some that have little snow caps at the back. When the sun goes down, the colours are just glorious. It is also easy to imagine the faces of animals and demons in the great amphitheatre of mountains opposite you.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 16: Descend to the Zanskar River, 3,340m/10,958ft, trek to Nyerak village, 3,680m/12,073ft - 5½ hours.

Please note that much of today's walk is along a dirt road. The day starts easily, traversing above the fields to the large house ahead of you. As you get close to the house, the other houses that comprise Yulchung come into view. They are equally magical. You may well indeed get invited into the large house which is a truly beautiful example of a typical Ladakhi village farmhouse. It has a particularly impressive shrine room, and large kitchen. Behind the house, the road rises easily to a col which looks down into a dizzying gorge. The route undulates along a broad "shelf" of rolling hillsides which are basically the top of your side of this stupendous gorge. You walk over a small pass, the Chuchokhuri La, 4,005m/13,140ft. It is about an hour and a half to here. There now follows a steep descent to the Zanskar River far below. As you get lower, you will be able to see the river twisting its way through its own gorges. Soon you come to an ancient wooden cantilevered bridge high above the river, which you cross. It is actually only about 2¾ hours from camp to this point. Look out for the natural stone xylophone by the small chorten here - try hitting the stones to hear its clear metallic sound. You now have the start of a big climb in front of you, but will only complete part of it today, and it will only take approximately an hour to get to the village of Nyerak with a small temple above the main village. You will look for welcome shade here beside the small stream for lunch. An earlier group discovered the perfect camp spot which is 1½ hours above Upper Nyerak on an open flat area, close to small green wooden valley.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 17: Cross the Labar La Pass, 4,925m/16,158ft and trek to river camp - 8-9 hours.

From camp you have to grit your teeth, put yourself on autopilot, and trek slowly upwards. It is one of those paths where you think the pass must be after the next rise, only to find that it isn't. At one point you follow a disused watercourse that comes to two small ponds that used to be the camp site in previous years.

From these two (probably dry) ponds it is a steady pull past two little tops to the main pass, which is reached in just under two further hours. You now head down into really remote mountain country, possibly with the chance of sighting bear tracks on some snow patches, and lots of evidence of ibex or blue sheep. You are now heading down into the depths between imposing rocky mountains, with scree slopes on either side, made all the more dramatic by the feeling of complete remoteness. You head over a small pass wondering what might be on the other side as the impending cliffs look like they will block the way forwards.

Reaching this second pass, mountains with gigantic contorted strata lie ahead and there is a steep narrow descent between two unusual white cliffs. It looks like the gods have literally torn the two cliffs in half. It takes a little under four hours to be between the jaws of these two cliffs. Having passed through, you find yourself suddenly out of the mountains and into a sharp valley with a river running in its flat base. There are the usual stunted willow and bushes, and on either side there are eroded conglomerate strata very often shaped as pinnacles with large improbable boulders perched on the tops of the pinnacles. You wander happily down the valley to find even more weird pinnacles the further down you go.

You will stop on one of the wider sections of river terrace here to camp tonight, reflecting on the lengthy ascent you completed this morning, and the corresponding impressive and considerable descent you have made this afternoon.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 18: Trek down river and gorge to Namtse La Sumdo - 6-7 hours.

Today will be another wonderful and interesting day. Leaving camp you gently descend, criss-crossing the river among the willow (the path can be overgrown here with buckthorn so best to wear long trousers on this day) before coming upon an intriguing very narrow rocky gorge with a massive chock stone above you. Just beyond here is a steep rock step on the left side, which has been made passable by the ingenious placing of branches and large flat rocks. It may be that the crew has to re-build part of this in order for the horses to ascend. You soon drop down to the riverbed again, boulder hopping across the stream. Further on, the path takes you steeply up to the left on a well camouflaged route that picks its way through a jumbled section of fractured blocks to arrive high above the river junction hidden in the chasm below. You pass an impressive upside down

V-shaped geological fold as this exciting exposed path now bends south east on a downwards traverse to the river and cross the river. Here you scramble steeply up again to traverse the shaley trail high above the river where amazing rock slabs - smooth, flat, gigantic - cut across the landscape. The path is occasionally very narrow and you will need to place one foot carefully in front of the other. The horses may also follow the high way but they may take the route along the river with the bags unloaded and manhandled past a difficult section. Looking down you see the incredible slotted canyon, barely one animal width and maybe 200 yards long, which the horses must pass through if they take the river route. Finally you leave the gorges, following the valley gently upwards to the flat open campsite on a plateau sited under striking ranks of rock pinnacles.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 19: Cross Namtse La, 4,465m/14,649ft, descend to Honia, 3,525m/11,565ft and trek to meadow camp before Zangla, 3,485m/11,434ft - 8 hours.

Your trek begins today with a steep little pull up to a tiny "pass". This takes less than 10 minutes, and beyond stretches a delightful small valley no more than three or four hundred yards across. The flat bottom has a small stream and is full of stunted willow. On either side are conglomerate pinnacles of all shapes and sizes. The path up this lovely valley rises gently and you spend about two hours walking up, occasionally hopping across the stream, sometimes walking through the trees, until the stream and the trees are about to peter out.

The route rises up the now dry valley and gains a dry gulch. The way to the pass is not obvious, but you turn to the right and continue walking up a dry valley. The pass arrives unexpectedly and the way ahead looks steep and uninviting. It's about 3 hours to the pass from the camp.

Again, grand scenery and giant cliffs. It is stony underfoot nearly all the way down and care needs to be taken as there is potential for ankle twisting in this section. So, now it is less than 3 hours down to the Zanskar valley and as you get closer to the bottom of the gorge, there are phenomenally impressive 1,000-1,500ft high vertical walls on the right. Honia is a place with one house and a lot of stone-built yak pens. Just as you get out of the gorge, there is a well-built wolf/bear trap. Quite suddenly, in fact, you come out of the confines of the gorge, and the Zanskar valley and river is spread out below. You have arrived at the Kingdom of Zanskar!

After so long in remote and uninhabited country, it is a bit of a shock to see a road again, although there is almost no traffic on this, and as you walk along it to your campsite you will may see no more than a couple of vehicles. However, it is a pleasant walk now on the level for less than one hour to a campsite on meadows beside the Zanskar River a couple of kilometres before the village of Zangla.

There are two water springs here, a clear one for cooking, and a clear water but weedy one for laundry etc, and probably you will do your laundry this afternoon, so it's all completed and drying before the full day off tomorrow.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 20: Rest day in Zangla. Possible visit to Padum.

It is good to have the luxury of a day off with perhaps a slightly later start to the day and more time to wash bodies and clothes. The crew might well set up the mess tent as a place where you can strip off and wash - hot water should be plentifully available. We will arrange a vehicle round to this point to re-supply you with fresh vegetables and other necessities; therefore a vehicle will be available to drive you into Zanskar's main township of Padum. It is only about an hour's drive. Assuming he is at home in Zangla, you should be able to visit the King of Padum, Punchok Dawa. Mountain Kingdoms Ltd supported Punchok Dawa in his efforts to build a traditional bridge made entirely of interwoven twigs on the edge of the town of Padum. This project took 5 years to complete. Punchok and his wife, Dolma, used to live in a large house in the old part of town and not far from the place where the traditional bridge has been built, but more recently he has moved to Zangla. Punchok Dawa himself is a retired schoolteacher and therefore speaks very passable English. His stories of his ancestors and the history of the Kingdom of Zanskar make fascinating listening. According to Osmaston & Crooks, two noted British scholars of Ladakhi culture, he is a direct descendant of the early kings of Tibet.

In Padum there are 3 very basic internet facilities and you could also catch up with your emails and maybe have

lunch at one of the hotels in town. Hotel Ibex has slow service, but a pleasant open garden to sit in away from the noise of the town's main road. Perhaps visit Karcha Gompa after lunch and return to camp in the afternoon.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 21: Trek to Sumdo before Charcha La, 3,845m/12,615ft – 7½ hours.

It is 45 minutes easy walking to the village of Zangla. There is an interesting large boulder on the path up to a gompa, marked with hundreds of line drawings of chortens. An earlier group visited Zangla Nunnery School and were invited in for breakfast of Tibetan tea and chapattis. From here the path leads up and past the old castle, which is perched high above the village on a buttress of rock. It is in a dilapidated condition, but some Hungarian archaeologists have been attempting some renovation in recent years. The famous explorer Alexander Csoma de Körös had lived in the castle during his time in Zanskar. It may even be possible to look inside if anyone can be found with the key.

It is then 20 minutes easy traverse from the castle towards the gorge due east to an irrigation channel which you follow for half an hour to where the gorge proper starts. At the very beginning of the gorge is a huge fin of rock on top of which you can clearly see the remains of an even more ancient fortress. It is such an improbable place to have a castle - who built it and why? It really is an astounding feat of building and very mysterious. This place marks the beginning of the gorge. Really, we have run out of superlatives to describe the next 3½ hours. Firstly, you will need to put on river crossing shoes / sandals, as you will be wading through the river many times today. In between crossings, you just continue to walk in your river shoes /sandals, as it would be completely impractical to swap from trekking boots to river shoes /sandals every time you cross the stream. It is therefore important to have a comfortable pair of river shoes/sandals, which will also be comfortable for walking over loose rock, scree or general mountain trails between each wet crossing. You will cross the small river 18 times. However, it is never deeper than the knees. Watch out for small fish, like minnows, in small side pools.

This section is constantly exciting with non-stop breathtaking cliffs and contorted mountain strata. Thrown in are the unusual and the bizarre - thin fins of rock, giant slabs arching heavenwards, narrow passages with cliffs thousands of feet high above and caves high up in the rock walls, and different types and colours of rock. It is in fact an easy hike, though rocky underfoot, and great care is needed. The river flowing down the gorge is the Zumlung Chu. There are rose-hip and buckthorn bushes all the way. Somewhere you will stop in the shade in the gorge for a quick lunch. Near the end of the path up the gorge, you rise to a natural cleft and shortly after that you are spat out and some way later come to a river junction. This is a lovely place with stunted willows. You turn left (north) at this river junction and up for about an hour to an upper camping spot at Charcha La Sumdo. There is a large open cave on the cliff side above you, reputed to be the home for some large bats. The trekking crew were calling them winged dragons! But sadly, past groups didn't see any of these!

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 22: Cross Charcha La Pass, 4,910m/16,109ft, trek to Chupchak, 4,495m/14,747ft - 7½ hours.

It is a big day today and we suggest an early start. It is over 1000m height gain to the pass. From camp you turn right and climb steeply up to another flat area called Charcha La Base. From there, you keep straight ahead, zig-zagging up the V shape valley before the terrain opens out again to another flat-ish shaley area. You keep going generally ahead and up, aiming for an area of sparse green tussocks, just beyond which is a rock outcrop where the path makes a distinct turn to the left. The route now becomes a series of zigzags across and up steep scree, eventually making a rising traverse left and leading you up to a rocky bluff. It's good to take a moment to look back at this point to the sweeping valley below you, the way you've just come. From here, the final steep rocky and shale section leads to the pass.

If you get up early, then the sun does not hit you until after this, so you make good height gain in the shade. You actually don't see the Charcha La until you are virtually on it. The path up to it looks improbable, but it does exist! Achieving the pass can be quite an emotional experience! Again, there will be evocative views of wild, remote mountain country.Then it is off easily down and following a riverbed, which is dry to begin with. There may even be patches of snow. The stony path leads down into a deepening gorge and you will follow the river through a series of amazing tunnels. Again, fantastic rock peaks all around. Thereafter, the difficulties are over and you continue wearily down to a sumdo to camp.
This place is called Chupchak, new maps mark this clearly, but if you have an old map it may have been

wrongly marked. The crossing of the pass is a fine achievement, and brings you into the main river sections for the next couple of days.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 23: Trek to Tomto, 3,790m/12,434ft - 8-9 hours.

Chupchak is at the first major sumdo (junction) after the Charcha La and from here you will walk, dry footed for two hours, to the right-angled bend, considerably further on. At the right-angled bend there is a big junction and you will turn right, but at this junction you will need to put on your river shoes / sandals again and will need to stay in them all day as there are many river crossings; a previous group counted 45 river crossings, often fast and powerful flow with uneven rocky bottoms (although never above knee deep), so again it is imperative your shoes are comfortable for the stony and often rough sections between crossings. You are now following down the Zumling Chu River and as the day wears on it becomes more and more impressive. You go past a side valley at one point, at the end of which is an interesting-looking big snow peak. It is rough, stony ground, and concentration is needed. At one point the gorge becomes narrower and narrower and the leviathan cliffs rise straight out of the earth in titanic twisted slabs. Look out for a Buddhist cave strewn with prayer flags in the cliff on the opposite bank. It is less than an hour from here to camp. It is a tiring day and although you come across possible camp sites, it is best to press on to a final camp which is at a junction of three valleys with another river coming in from the right side. You will camp right under the gorge cliffs with magnificent rock scenery on every side. It is a truly awesome place to camp.

Today is a very long day, 29km, which although is all downhill along the river, with 900m of descent, there is still 250m of ascent over spurs and rock ridges etc, so you need to be prepared for many hours of trekking and river crossings.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 24: Trek to Nyari Nyarsang, 3,770m/12,369ft - up to to 7½ hours trekking depending on campsite used.

A much shorter but still fantastic day! If it's possible, this may even be the best day for gorge scenery. There are river crossings the whole way so, again, river shoes/sandals needed. There are astonishing upturned strata hundreds of feet high, rich colours, even in one place bright red rock, a real powerhouse of nature, a complete wonderland. It is about an hour and a half to walk down to Tilat Sumdo. Wading through the various river crossings is a cold shock straight after breakfast! The scenery makes up for it, and Tilat Sumdo is a particularly impressive junction and you may see snow leopard tracks in the trail dust. After Tilat Sumdo you will join a different river and follow it upstream now, and this river is a bit deeper, faster and wider, and could be above knee level depending on water levels at the time. Then, after some incredible boiler plate slabs, you suddenly come to a camp site at the sumdo at Nyari Nyarsang. This is a lovely spot at a junction with a side valley and stunted willow gives some shade. However, it is a very dusty camp site, so you may continue for 2 further hrs. through an amazing gorge, and up along the valley beyond to a shaded but stony campsite beside the stream and merely have lunch here in the shade of the sumdo.

If you continue, you head up yet another extraordinarily beautiful valley. The question is, "does one ever tire of cliffs that crick the neck?" You are in and out of shade, which helps on a hot, clear, sunny day. There are lots of stream crossings, but all these are boulder-hops. After half an hour, you pass between a larger than usual pointed peak of glacial conglomerate on the left and a cliff that defies belief on your right. Almost straight away, you come to some very memorable slabs on your left which are almost like a huge blister on the mountainside. Shortly after this, the gorge narrows right down, and rears up steeply in front of you. An ancient and intricate path winds its way up on the sort of path you would expect to find in a Boy's Own Annual or an Eagle comic. The path in places has long ago been engineered with old tree trunks and stone, and zigzags to a "pass" where there is a cairn of stones with upright branches and tattered prayer flags. You may have to unload the horses at this point as the path is steep and narrow and could be dangerous for them. In 2009, and again in previous years our boys engineered the path to an extent that the horses were able to get up without unloading, but we imagine the state of this path varies from year to year. The crux is in the first half and expect to see the horses being pushed and pulled up some sections.

There will be lots of dust and shouts of encouragement. Beyond here, the gorge opens out again and you continue wandering up about an hour to a beautiful camping spot where the tents will be shoehorned in among the willows.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 25: Trek to Rabrang, 4,310m/14,140ft – 5½ hours. Continue to Zalung Karpo La Base.

It's around 4 hours to the old camp at Rabrang. One or two bends before the camp, the valley really widens out and a big snow peak appears on your right. It has no name on the map, but is given as 5,700m/18,700ft. You may very well see herds of blue sheep in this region. Rabrang is a nice, clear camp site on a shelf above the gravel river bed with fantastic views. In the past our group got to here for a relaxing picnic lunch spot, before continuing onto the Zalung Karpo La Base another 60 minutes along the valley for tonight's camp in the lovely bowl there, perfectly placed for the start of tomorrow's ascent to the pass. So you take the grassy plateau just above where you had lunch and walk along this as far as you can, before descending to the gravel bed. Before the camp the path turns left up a small slope with evidence of a small stream sometimes, and so and you could easily miss it. This then brings you quickly into an enclosed bowl. This is a delightful camp site with outstanding vistas from the ridge up behind the bowl if you feel like a walk up to watch the sun setting on the snowy peaks behind.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 26: Cross the Zalung Karpo La Pass, 5,090m/16,699ft. Trek to Tikyu, 4,615m/15,141ft, or beyond – 7½ hours.

What a name for a pass! The very name just rolls off the tongue and is very evocative; actually it means 'white stone windy pass' and you will see why when you get to the top. Leaving camp you again have the opportunity to see blue sheep today, on both sides of the pass. To begin with in front of you now is a steep gully hemmed in by perpendicular rock walls. The path zigzags up on the right side of this and the positive thing to think is that at least you are going to knock off some of the height pretty quickly. You do, in fact, climb some 200 metres in half an hour. Coming out of the gully, the ridge soars above, looking a long way above you, but at least the path is gently sloping, almost level, and you follow this for 45 minutes, gaining only 120 metres. You will however not ascend the ridge directly in front of you heading to the pass but will turn slightly right and head up the subsidiary pass slightly to the south before heading up over the main pass 5 minutes above this one. So firstly you come to a funny, narrow slot in a dry watercourse, which is about 100 yards long. The real climb to the pass starts from the end of this slot. It then takes you about an hour and a half of patient, slow zigzags to reach the crest of the ridge. The path is good and nearing the crest there may well be a fair amount of old snow. Having gained the ridge, you hurry on up to its true summit, not far, where there are piles of prayer flags and a 360 degree view; in fact, a fabulous panorama. You could dig out the map to identify the mountains.

The highest mountain in the Zanskar range, Kang Yatse, 6,400m/20,997ft, does not look the highest, but can be identified because there is a very striking steep snow ridge leading to the summit which you look face on at from the pass. In fact, many of the satellite peaks for Kang Yatse look very attractive and are contained mainly in one big group. Climbing the Zalung Karpo La will give you such a sense of achievement, and hope the weather is fine and sunny so that you can enjoy the magnificent views for as long as you want. With an eagle eye and a pair of binoculars you can, in fact, see Mount Nun, 7,135m/23,410ft, in the far distance and it is with a sense of pride you can look at it and know that you have walked almost all the way from over there. It is now an easy path down through a bare valley. The valley becomes prettier the further down you go and in under three hours you arrive at Tikyu. There is a nice camp site next to a stream on a grassy area here. But again it's a good idea to continue down the valley for another 90 minutes further to Langtang Chen 4,310m, another airy campsite, with a burbling fresh stream beside plenty of grazing and cliffside views, providing a slightly less exposed, and lower, but still cold campsite for tonight. This is also a good location for tomorrow's start. Actual walking time today 7½ hours.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 27: Cross Konka Nongpo La Pass, 5,190m/17,027ft, and trek to Nimaling, 4,850m/15,912ft - 6½ hours.

Yet another great day! Although the pass is exactly the same height as the Zalung Karpo La, you don't have as much ascent to make to cross it. From the campsite, the path splits. One path continues down towards the Markha Valley and your path rises slowly away from the river and contours around the mountainside. Here you will notice granite boulders for the first time. The path climbs in a succession of "shoulders", five in all. There is an ascent of 725m/2,379ft to the pass, which takes about three hours. As you climb higher, the back side of Kang Yatse II, 6,175m/20259ft, appears. Again, there is a good chance of seeing ibex or blue sheep today. The last 50ft or so, to the chorten on the pass, needs some care and now you can look down towards the plains at Nimaling. It is said that you can see Stok Kangri, 6,121m/20,082ft from here, but you may find it difficult to identify. You may remember this is the peak you can see from Leh. You carry on slowly down now, and easily to Nimaling, where there is plenty of choice of camp sites. On the way you will pass beneath the snow peaks of Kang Yatse and will enter and cross two deep side valleys, the second of which is the Kang Yatse Base Camp, and you may see some tents here from late season teams attempting one or more summits. The path across these hillsides is indistinct but keeps on in a roughly straight line until you can see Nimaling settlement and tents, clearly below you, and you can then descend through the rocks and abundant pica runs to your final camp site.

In the summer months there is a permanent tented settlement here, consisting of people grazing their yaks on the summer pastures, but also providing trekkers with a small shop. If you are extremely lucky, there might even be a bottle or two of beer available. You are now nearly at the end of your extraordinary travels through Ladakh and Zanskar and it is time to organise an evening party for your Sherpa crew and horsemen. Your trek leader will organise a tipping ceremony and it will be no surprise if the cook produces an end of trek cake. Although you have one more long-day's trekking to get to the road-head, you will then part company with the crew, and so it is best to organise a party on this night. This is your highest campsite at 4,850m/15,912ft.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 28: Cross the Kong Maru La Pass, 5,216m/17,257ft, end trek at Chogdo, 3,990m/13,091ft - 6 hours. Drive to Leh.

This is a very long and tiring day but, although the pass is the highest that you cross in the whole of the trek (because you have slept at Nimaling) it is really not that far to climb - less than 500m to get to the pass which you can achieve in under two hours. On a good, clear day, the peaks of the Karakoram are visible in the far distance. The prospect of hot showers, cold beers, comfortable beds and clean clothes keep you motivated on the long but fascinating descent. In any case, this is a day that is very beautiful in its own right, a totally magical landscape all the way down, and quite different from anything you saw in the gorges section of the trek. Here you see an incredible variety of colours as you trek down to Chogdo. The greens and purples are particularly amazing and in some parts the river bed is just all green/blue stones. There are also extraordinarily impressive vertical straight strata with big fins of rocks and eroded pinnacles with large stones on top. There is one lovely section after a narrow slot with unusual cliffs and green stones in the river bed. Later there are vertical sections of strata, an impressively built stone embankment and path on the north side, a ridge of strata looking like the Great Wall of China on the Southern ridge and sections of hoodoos and fascinating geology all around you.

You might like to stop for lunch at a place where there are a couple of cafes underneath old parachutes. The path from here is easy and gentler, sloping down pretty valleys and eventually a small settlement comes into sight and you breathe a sigh of relief as you know it is not too far from here to where the vehicle will be waiting. The transport will meet you at at Chogdo, 3,990m/13,091ft.

It is strange to be back into "civilisation". Sitting in a car for the drive back to Leh is almost an alien experience.

Overnight: Kang Lha Chhen Hotel or Similar, Leh (Meals: BLD)

Day 29: At leisure in Leh.

Time to relax, maybe put your clothes in for laundry, shop for presents for family and friends and just revel in that excellent feeling of satisfaction of knowing you have completed such a long, hard trek and to reflect on your great achievement.

Leh Rocks and Minerals Museum next to Sankar Gompa, is worth a visit if it's open. The newly opened Central Asian Museum, located just north of the main bazaar is excellent. Leh-Ling coffee shop on the first floor of a bookshop is a pleasant place to sit especially if you can get a window seat and look down on the main bazaar - nice coffee, cakes and free Wi-Fi. Bon Appetite restaurant is an excellent place to eat this evening. We suggest a celebration meal - you might like to consider a relatively new restaurant that has started up, run by two princesses. It has a very nice ambience and good food but it's not easy to find and we suggest you do a little recce during the daytime to find it.

Overnight: Kang Lha Chhen Hotel or Similar, Leh (Meals: BLD)

Day 30: Fly to Delhi. Transfer to hotel. Afternoon at leisure.

It will be an early morning flight right over the top of the Greater Himalaya down to Delhi and on the way you should be able to pick out some of the places that you have trekked through in the last three weeks.

In Delhi, you will transfer to your hotel and have the rest of the day at leisure.

Overnight: Red Fox Hotel or Similar, Delhi (Meals: B)

Day 31: Group transfer to airport. Fly to London.

Today you will transfer to the airport and fly to London. **(Meals: B)**

Our grading system

Zanskar Dream Trek is graded as a Strenuous trekking holiday, as described below.

Strenuous
Our strenuous trekking holidays can involve anything from 10 to 30 days on trek and are often in remote areas, far from 'civilisation'. Rest days are interspersed but there may be up to 7 consecutive days of hard walking. Most treks reach altitudes of at least 4,900m/16,000ft and there will be a great deal of ascent and descent. The majority of our strenuous treks utilise camping, tea house or mountain lodge accommodation.

These holidays are suitable for fit individuals who have regular experience of mountain walking.

Trip altitude

Important - please be aware that this trip involves travel at altitude. 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 as a good source of information.

Altitude chart

			Height		Daily	
Day	Location	Hours' trek	m	ft	Ascent	Descent
2 & 3	Leh	n/a	3,500	11,482	-	-
4	Alchi	n/a	3,500	11,482	-	-
5	Sapi Lake		4,500	14,764		
6	1st Pass		4,375	14,354	701m/2,300ft	40m/131ft
	2nd Camp	5	4,430	14,534		
7	2nd Pass		4,885	16,027	574m/1,883ft	731m/2,398ft
	3rd Camp	6.5	4,225	13,861		
8	3rd pass		4,380	14,370	66m/217ft	933m/3,061ft
	End 1st trek at Bartoo	3.5	3,530	11,580		
	Start of 2nd trek					
9	Ringdom Gompa		4,100	13,451	385m/1,263ft	171m/561ft
	Kanji Nala River Camp	6.5	4,320	14,173		
11	Pudzong La Pass		5,050	16,568	842m/2,762ft	902m/2,959ft
	Camp in Dibling Valley	6	4,235	13,894		
12	Camp at Sumdo	5.5	3,870	12,697	136 m / 446ft	463 m / 1,519ft
13	Camp before Barmi La	5	4,005	13,140	305 m / 1000ft	133 m / 436ft
14	Barmi La Pass		4,680	15,354	837 m /2,746ft	795 m /2,608ft
	Lingshed Gompa Camp	7.5	4,010	13,156		
15	Murgum La Pass		4,310	14,140		
	Kiupa La Pass		4,465	14,649	855m/2,505ft	819m/2,687ft
	Yulchung Camp	7	4,000	13,123		
16	Zanskar River		3,420	11,220	1,419m/4,655ft	702m/2,303ft
	Camp before Labar La	8	4,700	15,420		
17	Labar La Pass		4,925	16,158	496m/1,627ft	1,343m/4,406ft
18	Camp near Namtse La Sumdo	9.5	3,810	12,500		
19	Namtse La Pass		4,465	14,649	703m/2,306ft	1,007m /3,304ft
	Camp below Zangla	8	3,485	11,434		
20	Visit Padum		3,505	11,500		
21	Camp at Sumdo before Charcha La	6	3,845	12,615	538m/1,765ft	141m/463ft
22	Charcha La Pass		4,910	16,109	1,118m /3,668ft	448m /1,470ft
	Camp at Chupchak	7	4,495	14,747		
23	Camp at Tom Takh	9	3,790	12,434	27m/89ft	687m /2,254ft
24	Camp at Nyari Narsang	3.5	3,770	12,369	64m/210ft	72m/236ft
25	Camp at Rubrang	6.25	4,310	14,140	614m/ 2,014ft	14m/46ft
26	Zalung Karpo La Pass		5,090	16,699	835m/2,739ft	475m/1,558ft
	Camp at Tikyu	6.5	4,615	15,141		
27	Kanga Wampo La		5,090	16,699	797 m/2,615ft	598m/1,962ft
	Camp at Nimaling	8	4,815	15,797		
28	Kangmaru La Pass		5,200	17,060	436m /1,430ft	1,474m/4,836ft
	Roadhead Shang Sumdo	7.75	3,745	12,287		

Please note. These altitudes were taken from a wrist altimeter and therefore cannot be relied upon to be absolutely accurate. Timings are camp to camp, including a stop for lunch.

What the price includes

Mountain Kingdoms aims to offer the best value for money. We do not charge extra for meal packages or apply local charges and try to ensure that all the key elements of your holiday are included.

What's included:

- ✓ A Mountain Kingdoms appointed Western leader
- ✓ Economy class return air fares from the UK & UK Departure Tax (flight inclusive only)
- ✓ Single, timed group airport transfers for international flights on arrival and departure
- ✓ All internal flights
- ✓ Good standard hotel accommodation in Delhi, twin share, bed and breakfast basis
- ✓ Best available hotels in outlying towns 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 porterage or horses/mules
- ✓ Sightseeing where specified
- ✓ Carbon offsetting with the Ecoan Tree Planting Project (for clients taking our flight inclusive option)
- ✓ A free high-quality Mountain Kingdoms kit bag
- ✓ The opportunity to attend one of our pre-trek meets in the Cotswolds

Airport transfers

The cost of a transfer to/from the airport is included in the price of your holiday. This is a single group transfer which is arranged to coincide with the timings of the group flights. If you book your own flights which arrive/depart at different times to this, or we book flights at your request that have different timings, we will be happy to provide a quote for a separate transfer. Please contact us should you require any further information.

What's not included:

- × Travel insurance
- × Visa fees
- × Lunch and evening meals in Delhi
- × Tips

Water-to-Go Reusable Bottle Campaign

We have joined the campaign to help cut down on the use of plastics and, in particular, single-use water bottles. To do this we have teamed up with the revolutionary company, Water-to-Go who have developed a multi-use drinking bottle with a reusable filter that eliminates over 99.9% of all microbiological contaminants. This makes water from virtually any source safe to drink and significantly reduces the need for travellers to buy bottles of water wherever they are in the world.

Our clients who are not given a free Mountain Kingdoms kit bag for their holiday (these are required for certain treks), will instead receive a free Mountain Kingdoms Water-to-Go bottle. These unique Water-to-Go bottles can also be purchased from us at a discounted rate.

For further information about our campaign visit For further information about our campaign visit https://www.mountainkingdoms.com/water-to-go-reusable-bottle-campaign.

Your accommodation

We will endeavour to secure the hotels named in the itinerary but if our first choice of hotel is not available we will book a suitable alternative of a similar standard.

Holiday Inn New Delhi International Airport, Delhi

The Holiday Inn is situated just 4kms from the airport and offers the facilities you would expect from a good quality hotel. It is also just a short walk from a metro station.

Kang Lha Chhen Hotel or Similar, Leh

We use the Kang Lhha Chhen Hotel, certainly one of the best hotels in Leh, or if unavailable we will use the Spick & Span Hotel or similar

Camp

On our camping treks, the following are provided: a sleeping tent, a dining tent, a toilet tent exclusively for your group to use, and a kitchen tent. There are camp chairs or stools, a kerosene / gas lamp or candles for reading in the dining tent at night, a dining table, crockery and tableware. The staff put up and take down the tents, make the tea, cook the food, wash the dishes, and load the porters or pack animals. Your kit bag is carried for you either by porters or pack animals and you just trek with a light day sack.

Red Fox Hotel or Similar, Delhi

This is a pleasant, modern hotel conveniently located next to Delhi airport. Rooms are comfortable with all facilities.

Meal arrangements

Bed and Breakfast in Delhi, all meals in all other hotels and on trek (30 x breakfasts, 28 x lunches, 28 x dinners).

Flight arrangements

Flight inclusive from price

Our 'Flight inclusive from' price is based on the best fare available at the time of printing. As airfares change on a constant basis, this should be used only as a guide price. Rest assured that, at the time of booking, we will endeavour to get the best possible price for the flights you need. Remember, the earlier you book the greater your chances of securing the best fare.

Flight inclusive packages booked through Mountain Kingdoms are protected through our ATOL bonding scheme.

Flight upgrades and regional Airports

Please call us on +44 (0)1453 844400 for flight options from regional UK airports, Business Class upgrades, alternative airlines and stopovers. Please also check our website for the most up to date flight inclusive 'from' prices.

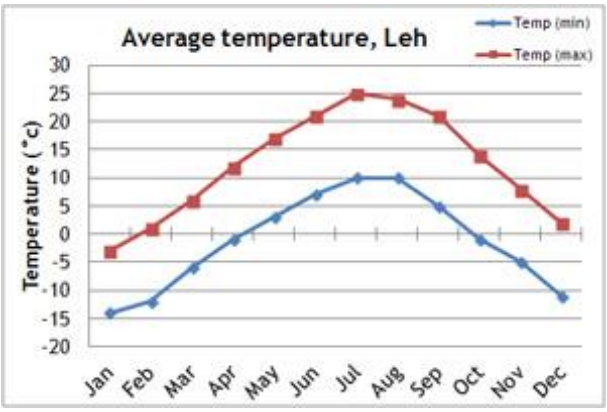
Further information

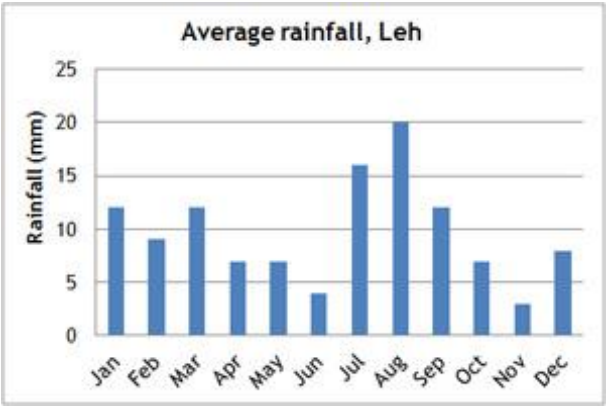
When we receive your booking, we send you a full Trip Dossier which contains details of any visas and vaccinations required, a suggested gear and clothing list and lots of useful information. If you do have queries at this initial stage do call us on 01453 844400 and we will be pleased to offer advice.

The nature of adventure travel

Every effort will be made to keep to this itinerary but we cannot guarantee that things may not change, either before you travel or while you are away. By its very nature, adventure travel involves an element of the unexpected, particularly in more remote areas. A variety of factors such as adverse weather conditions, changes to local schedules and difficulties with transportation can all contribute to the need to make changes to the itinerary, often at the very last minute. Our Operations Manager and your Trip 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.

Climate information





Extensions

Extending your holiday

If you would like additional inspiration on how or where to extend your holiday please call us on 01453 844400. Alternatively, you can download a range of extension information sheets on our website, at www.mountainkingdoms.com.

Additional accommodation in Delhi

If you would like to stay longer in Delhi we can arrange additional nights and upgrades from our selection of first rate hotels such as the Oberoi Maidens in the city or Claridges Hotel in New Delhi.

Agra, Taj Mahal & Jaipur

We offer various extensions to Agra, from a one-day visit to see the majestic Taj Mahal to a six-day trip to visit both the Taj and the Amber Fort at Jaipur. All options travel to Agra on the Shatabdi Express and include the services of an English speaking guide, sightseeing and private transport.

Why book this holiday with Mountain Kingdoms?

- Our MD, Steve Berry, who did the reconnaissance trek for this trip, thinks that this is the best trek he has ever done. Steve has done upwards of 60 or 70 treks in the Himalaya.
- It is unique to Mountain Kingdom and deliberately avoids the more popular routes and is completely off-the-beaten-track. Large chunks of it are through uninhabited wilderness.
- It is very exciting, challenging, and highly adventurous. There are very many fun river crossings, exposed cliff paths, and high passes to cross.
- The trip will be led by a highly experienced Western Leader who will be equipped with a full medical kit.
- We have carefully designed the itinerary to give excellent acclimatisation.
- Assuming he is at home, and not busy, you have a very good chance of meeting the King of Padum, Punchok Dawa.
- The trek is resupplied with fresh vegetables on two occasions giving a more varied, healthy menu.
- We use the best camping equipment available - modern dome tents for sleeping and good quality mess tent, toilet tent and kitchen tent.
- Domestic flights and all meals in Ladakh are included in the cost of the holiday.
- As part of our commitment to 'Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency', we will be carbon-offsetting all international flights booked through us by donating funds to the Ecoan Tree Planting Project in Peru.
- you wish to fly with a specific airline, from a regional UK airport or on alternative dates to the main group we would be happy to arrange this for you. Please contact our Flights Manager, April, for flight options, quotes and further information.

If we've tempted you to take your next holiday with us, we advise you to check availability and you can do this via our website: www.mountainkingdoms.com or by calling the team on +44 (0)1453 844400. Bookings can be made online, by phone or by completing a booking form and returning it to us. We can also provisionally hold places if you need time to consider your options.

What our clients say

A truly unique experience, unlike any previous trek I've done. Remote, challenging, more like a mini expedition it certainly pushed me to my limits and perhaps a little beyond on occasions. The trek team were excellent, certainly the best I've ever had, and the scenery was just amazing. If you're looking for a challenge, don't mind some "exciting" paths and want some of the best mountain scenery around, this is the trek for you.
-Paul Jones, Gloucestershire

I particularly enjoyed following the Zumlung Chu through the canyons. This part of the trek provided the 'adventure' component of this trip. I found the river crossings fun despite the fact that on those particular days we were crossing the river 20-30 times. We hardly saw any other trekkers. It was good to get way to remote areas. The setting of the monasteries perched on high the cliff sides was just spectacular. Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed this trip. I like the fact that Mountain Kingdoms are able to offer innovative and interesting routes on their treks which few, if any, other companies offer.
-Mr J R, Hertfordshire

We enjoyed the unusual routes and destinations. High quality rather than low cost.
-Mr & Mrs H, Berkshire

What I enjoyed about travelling with Mountain Kingdoms was the superb "out of the way" routes. Well supported trek.
-Ms H, Stirlingshire

The trek was, by far, the most memorable and most enjoyable trek that I have ever done. Whilst the trek was tough and challenging (and at times not for the faint hearted), the scenery was sensational, the trek crew were exceptionally good and the food excellent. It is refreshing that you have discovered a new, remote, trekking route which, in my opinion, must rank as one of the world's best 'new classic', trekking routes.
-Mr B, Torquay

The whole trip was great – thoroughly enjoyed – well organised and well lead! Excellent does not do a good enough description of the quality and variety of food we were given! Equipment standards were excellent and very comfortable. The trek leader was exceptional, was organised and knowledgeable. I had a great holiday and a great experience that will bring me back to Ladakh and Zanskar. Thank you everyone at Mountain Kingdoms.
-Mr W, Scotland

Having done a number of treks in this part of the world, this was a truly unique experience which has left indelible memories of vast and untamed landscapes, with extraordinary rock formations such as I have never seen before. We were superbly looked after by our crew who, after each day's hard trek, fed us like kings and anticipated our every need - who could want for more?
-Mrs R, London

Mountain Kingdoms – distinctly different

Truly independent

In an age where many so-called 'independent' travel companies have in fact been bought out by multi-national giants, we remain fiercely independent with all the benefits this offers our clients.

Value for money prices with an emphasis on quality

We are not in the business of cutting our itineraries and services to the bone to offer eye-catching cheap prices. We use some of the best airlines, and typically 3 or 4 star hotels in cities. We include the majority of meals and private transport for road travel. We use excellent equipment and appoint well-trained staff and leaders. Last year, over 98% of our clients rated their Mountain Kingdoms holiday as 'excellent' or 'good'. We are members of AITO and bound by their quality charter.

Complete financial security

You can book with us confident that your holiday has full financial protection. Flight inclusive holidays are financially protected by the Civil Aviation Authority under ATOL licence number 2973 and 'Land Only' holidays are covered by a bond secured with ABTOT.

No Surcharge Guarantee

Your peace of mind is important to us so we have a No Surcharge Guarantee on all Land Only and Flight Inclusive bookings. This means that there will be no change to the price of your holiday once we have confirmed your booking, regardless of fluctuations in exchange rates or fuel prices.

Award winning Responsible Tourism

We feel strongly that all our holidays should benefit local communities, protect the environment and respect local traditions, religion and heritage. You can read more about the charities we support and our Responsible Tourism commitments and initiatives on the following page or at www.mountainkingdoms.com.

Genuine small group travel

Almost all of our holidays have a maximum group size of just 12, plus leader. This provides more contact with your leader, readier access to off-the-beaten-path areas, greater interaction with local communities and a reduced environmental impact.

Loyalty Discount

If you have previously travelled with us we recognise your loyalty with a discount on future trips.

Booking your holiday – it couldn't be easier

Once you've chosen your Mountain Kingdoms holiday you can book online, call the office or complete and post a booking form which can be found in our brochure or downloaded from our website. If you would like to a hold a place on one of our trips, whilst you make up your mind, please give us a call to make a provisional booking. This is a no-obligation, no-cost booking and we will hold your place until space comes under pressure or we need your decision.

Comprehensive information

When we receive your booking we send you a full trip dossier which contains details of visas and vaccinations required, a suggested gear and clothing list and lots of useful information. In fact, everything you need to know to give you peace of mind and allow you to prepare for your trip of a lifetime.

RESPONSIBLE TOURISM STATEMENT
CLIMATE EMERGENCY PLAN

TOURISM DECLARES
CLIMATE EMERGENCY

For over 33 years, Mountain Kingdoms has been offering people the chance to visit amazing places on this extraordinary planet. We now offer trips to all corners of the world, but we are conscious that inevitably our holidays have a detrimental impact on the world around us, and we want to do all we can to reduce our carbon emissions. We are a signatory to Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency, along with a growing number of like-minded, reputable tour operators. For more information, please visit www.tourismdeclares.com

From 2020 onwards, we will be focusing on how we can reduce the carbon emissions that our holidays produce, and how to counterbalance this carbon by supporting carbon offset measures. Here are some of our current and future plans to minimise the impact of our business as a whole:

Carbon Offsetting

Already doing:

- ✓ We have been offsetting carbon since 2007, but will be increasing our donations to the **Ecoan tree planting project** in Peru this year. This is with a trusted partner where the funds go directly to a project where the community plants trees on its own land.

Will do:

- ✓ We are working on making our carbon offsetting more accurate and targeted.
- ✓ In future, we will add to that a further estimate for carbon produced by hotels, local road travel, trains and internal flights to arrive at a carbon offset sum for each trip we operate.
- ✓ Carbon offsetting will be included in our holiday prices. For our Flight Inclusive holidays it will include the international flight and any emissions produced by inland travel and accommodation. Our Land Only prices will include the cost of offsetting emissions caused by inland travel and accommodation.

Reducing Carbon Emissions

Already doing:

- ✓ We already offer the majority of our customers a free filtered water bottle which means they can instantly cut down on their single-use plastic consumption. This will be an ongoing project.
- ✓ We already predominantly use locally owned hotels, but will continue to ensure that, where possible, we use these rather than multinational chains.
- ✓ We have joined the Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency initiative to stand alongside like-minded travel companies, to work together to initiate best practices to make tourism as sustainable as possible.

Will do:

- ✓ We will re-evaluate our flights to make sure we are using the most fuel efficient airlines with the youngest fleets and, where possible, direct flights for each trip.
- ✓ We will stop offering unnecessary optional flights – for example our Everest sightseeing trip.
- ✓ We will eliminate unnecessary staff flights wherever possible.
- ✓ We will look at minimising internal flights.
- ✓ We will be asking all our worldwide agents and suppliers to look at their own carbon footprint and encourage them to reduce it.
- ✓ We will promote our more low impact trips to give customers an informed choice.

As part of our wider commitment to Responsible Tourism, we will continue to support a number of charities with whom we have had a long standing relationship over many years. These include: Shiva Charity in Nepal (Ginette Harrison School), Simien Mountains Mobile Medical Service and Porter Welfare, as well as setting aside a sum for emergency disaster relief should the need arise.