



PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION

The trans-Himalaya is the region comprising the Karakoram, Ladakh, Pangong and Zaskar range and the Tibetan plateau. It is essentially a cold desert that lies in the rain shadow of the Himalaya. The general altitude of the landscape is 4000m. Temperatures in the winter can drop to -20 degrees centigrade at night and at dawn and dusk but on clear days the bright sun and the lack of humidity can make it very warm. (It still stays cold as soon as one steps into the shade).

Equipment List

As mentioned above, the conditions in the region are very variable so keeping all the factors in mind, this list below is the recommended set of equipment that one would need when visiting the snow leopard lodge.

- Thermal underwear
- Fleece jacket
- Thick down Jacket
- Breathable waterproof jacket and lowers
- Ankle length (for ankle protection while hiking) waterproof shoes with thick soles
- Hiking trousers (Down or padded trousers work well in these conditions)
- Working gloves and woolen gloves on top (the new synthetic waterproof gloves are a good substitute)
- Hand and toe warmers (depending on how one's body reacts to the temperature, these also act as good camera battery and phone battery warmers as batteries tend to die out quickly in colder weather)
- Dark (Black) shades (the wrap around kind are preferred as the sun light can be very harsh and is amplified and bounced around by the snow)
- Smaller waterproof daypack and water bottle for the day trips
- Sunscreen (SPF 50+), a good moisturizer and petroleum jelly
- Socks (thick and thin to make two layers)
- Warm night wear (the rooms are heated but we still suggest guests sleep with warmer clothes on like long trousers and full sleeve night wear and a fleece too if they feel comfortable as the temperatures can drop quite low post 12 or 1 am)
- Caps or Ski Caps – ones that cover the ears also to shield from the cold winds on bad weather days
- Head torch with extra batteries
- Walking Pole (Optional)

- Spare fully charged batteries for digital cameras
- Guests with larger cameras are suggested to carry a good tripod that can stay stable in windy conditions.
- Medication as required or prescribed by your doctor.

LEH

1. **ACCLIMATISATION** – When one flies into Leh from Delhi, there is jump in altitude of almost 3000m in 1 hour so acclimatizing in Leh is a must for anyone flying into the region. 48 hours is the minimum recommended period. In this period, the first 24 hours should be complete rest (with minimal slow walking), lots of water consumed and preferably, sleep only at night (early). It is vital that the first night is passed without too much discomfort as that means the body is slowly getting ready for the landscape.

Day 2 can involve a minimum amount of walking (like in Leh market and a few day trips out in vehicles) but for those who are experiencing symptoms such as headaches, breathlessness etc. on day 1, day 2 should be another day of complete rest.

2. **ALTITUDE SICKNESS** - the symptoms usually involve headache and breathlessness. If these are experienced, the oxygen levels and BP need to be checked immediately by a doctor or your trained tour leader and oxygen needs to be administered immediately. This will provide a considerable amount of relief and may also help the person acclimatize sooner. Doctors are available on call at the hotels in Leh and a trained medical practitioner at once attends to any complication. This is one of the reasons why staying in Leh for 2 to 3 nights is mandatory.

3. **MEDICATION** - Regarding the prescription of pills like Dimox (for altitude complications) etc. the guests are requested to consult their own doctors before arrival.

4. **HEALTH COMPLICATIONS** - People with prior health complications are also requested to run the trip by their own doctors before arrival or signing up.

5. **GEAR** - Regarding gear - Leh has many adventure shops where all the winter gear is available, so for those looking for good mountain gear and can't find it at their home towns, picking them up in Leh is also an option.

6. **LEH AIRPORT** - In Leh airport, articles like drones, satellite phones, strong chemicals etc. are usually seized so carrying them in hand luggage (or even check in bags) is something we discourage.

Also, the day the guests are leaving, the Leh airport authorities allow clothing only in the check in bags. Camera equipment and laptops need to be packed in the hand luggage only.

This is something they check seriously and often guests are made to repack if their arrangement is not in accordance with the above system.

7. **ATM** - Guests are requested to carry a minimum amount of cash as the ATMs in Leh are unreliable.

8. **ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES** - Alcoholic beverages are not served in most restaurants in Leh, including the larger hotels. In the Grand Dragon and a few other hotels, alcoholic beverages are served via room service only. We do not recommend the consumption of alcohol or smoking while on this expedition because of the extreme nature of the environment.

9. **TAGLANG LA DAY TRIP** - The day trip towards Taglang La (usually a day 3 plan when guests choose 3 nights in Leh) is something we recommend highly as it gives one an idea of the kind of landscape and terrain the guests will be living in at the lodge and also this is the day that one gets to see Blue sheep and Tibetan Partridge, both of which are seldom encountered during the rest of the trip.

10. **SNOW LEOPARD CONSERVANCY** - One morning during the initial stay in Leh is spent interacting with the team of scientists and conservationists at the Snow Leopard Conservancy India Trust to help one understand their work, the complications, struggles and also the success stories and achievements that the conservancy has gone through in the past and their efforts for the future. The lodge also works closely with the conservancy in funding and boosting these conservation efforts of the organization.

SNOW LEOPARD LODGE, ULLEY & MANGUE

1. **DAY OF ARRIVAL AT ULLEY/MANGUE** - The day the guests arrive at Ulley/Mangue, there is a jump in altitude of around 500m so the first day is usually a relaxed one with minimum physical exertion.

VEHICLES AND TRANSPORT

2. **VEHICLE SUPPORT** – The guests will have vehicles with them throughout the trip as most of our experiences involve driving to different parts of the Sham area. The advantage of Ulley and Mangue over other snow leopard viewing areas of the region is the fantastic road network that runs through the habitat making it possible to access and operate in a larger area. Toyota Innovas with experienced drivers who are well trained and knowledgeable in the wilderness of the region are used. Only vehicles available in the Sham area (the region of operation) are used to support the local communities.

Vehicles will remain with guests throughout their stay (this varies based on the booking - from airport to airport or from the day the guest leaves for the lodge from Leh to the day the guest returns to Leh) and can be used to access even further spots like Lamayuru etc. from the lodge as day trips. Day trips to farther destinations like Pangong Lake, Nubra Valley etc. either from Leh or from the

lodge is not completely included in the costs and may involve a charge.

FACILITIES AT THE LODGE

3. SETUP (IN ULLEY) – The Snow Leopard Lodge is set in two blocks at the start of Ulley village, separated by a 40-50metre walk. The main block which is the original snow leopard lodge has 6 rooms, 4 bathrooms (1 attached), the kitchen, dining and a common lounge. The second block, the annex has 5 rooms (3 rooms with attached bathrooms) and a lounge.

4. POWER SUPPLY – the lodge gets power from the local grid and in times of power outage, there is a backup generator which comes on in the evening till 10pm and then again in the morning. Multi pin chargers are also provided on request at the lodge because of the limited number of power sockets in each room.

5. HEATING – Heating in the rooms is done using electric heaters and kerosene burners (Bukharis as they are known locally). Gas heaters are used in periods of long power outages or limited of fuel availability.

6. BATHROOMS (IN ULLEY) - The lodge is a mix of attached and common bathrooms and depending on your room assignment (we allocate on first come basis usually). Out of the 11 rooms there are 4 rooms with attached bathrooms and the remaining 7 share 5 bathrooms. The common bathrooms are close to the rooms and in the same blocks (down the hallways) and do not involve much of walking to access.

7. RUNNING WATER - Running water is not available at our lodging due to the remote location but water will be provided at all times (both hot and room temperature) in buckets. Even the toilets will have to be flushed down using the water from the buckets. Hot and room temperature water will be provided in buckets on request. (24hrs)

8. OXYGEN CYLINDERS - Oxygen cylinders are available at all times in both the vehicles and in the lodges for guests who experience health complications while on the expedition. Anything more complicated and the guests will be driven to Leh (2 hour drive) to consult a doctor or hospital.

9. MEALS AT THE LODGE - Leh is completely cut off in the winter months and this makes bringing in fresh supplies a lot harder than usual. Food at the lodge is cooked using ingredients that are available at that time in the local markets and villages. Most of the food is locally sourced. The cuisine is a mix of indian, Chinese, Ladakhi and continental meals and are served on a fixed menu basis. Guest preferences are taken into consideration (if informed in advance) when these menus are setup. Specific food requests or allergies need to be mentioned in advance so that the right ingredients can be flown in on time. Both alcoholic (specifics based on availability in Leh) and soft beverages are served.

10. **LAUNDRY** – very minimal laundry can be done at the lodge.

11. **BINOCULARS and SCOPES** – Good scopes and simple binoculars are there at the lodge but those are shared by all and not for personal use.

12. **PORTERS AND MULES** – The drivers and spotters will help where they can but for guests who want dedicated help, porters/mules need to be pre-booked. (At an additional charge on a per day basis).

WILDLIFE VIEWING

13. **SPOTTERS, WILDLIFE TRACKING AND LODGE OPERATIONS** - The spotters (and driver too) are highly skilled at tracking and finding the wildlife of the region and all guests (or guest groups) will go out with one of our experts on day excursions. Refer to snowleopardlodge.com to understand more about lodge operations.

14. **WALKING and FITNESS** -The biggest advantage of Ulley is the fantastic road access that takes guests right up to the wildlife spots in most occasions. We do encourage guests to walk (simple walks) into the valleys and to some low passes as these are the best ways to connect with the starkness of the landscape and develop a real appreciation and understanding the wildlife of the region. Having said this, there is plenty to do for those who prefer not to walk. The fitness and health of the guest will be taken into account when the plans are made.

PAYMENTS AND TIPPING AT THE LODGE

15. **BEVERAGES** - The costs cover all your expenses except alcoholic and soft beverages (tea & coffee is included)

16. The staff and spotters also spend their free time making snow leopard dolls using sheep and yak wool. These are kept on display for selling at the lounge. When a guest buys the dolls, the payments go straight to the person who has made the doll, as an alternative income and the lodge is not involved in this transaction.

17. **TIPPING** - Tipping will be done separately for our 4 spotters, 10 staff and the driver who drives you to and from Leh and in the valleys around Ulley/Mangue. (Please note – the tip is not shared amongst these three separate groups).

If there is someone who has lost livestock in the course of your stay to wildlife, and if we see the animals owing to that kill, we recommend that some amount of money is contributed by the guests to that family to keep the ideas of wildlife among the local communities positive.

STAFF AND LOCAL COMMUNITY

18. The snow leopard lodge is focused on developing the local community and bringing them closer to the wilderness of the region. For this, the lodges employ only members of the local community. They are all very warm and friendly people and have been trained and learnt their responsibilities well over the recent years. The guests are still requested to excuse smaller mistakes like language differences etc. and be patient if something is not communicated properly. The manager or tour leaders are usually around to help out in these situations. Guest cooperation will go a long way in supporting the cause, changing attitudes and helping conserve the wilderness of this vast landscape.

ASSOCIATION WITH THE SNOW LEOPARD CONSERVANCY

19. The lodge works closely with the Snow Leopard Conservancy India Trust. A set percentage of what the guests are charged is contributed directly to the SLC IT who in turn use it to help the people of the Sham area with everything from small insurance schemes, carnivore proofing the livestock pens and in conservation and awareness initiatives. Guests who wish to contribute separately to the SLC IT to help them boost their conservation efforts can get in touch with the lodge via email.