

Across Zangskar Ladakh Itinerary

This itinerary documents the planned dates and route of a student trip to Northern India. The overall trip will take us from a small mountain village up and over Himalayan ridges, into a mostly-flat valley. The meat of the trip is crossing that valley, Zangskar, by trekking from town to town. The area is almost entirely Buddhist, and the people renowned for their kindness and hospitality. We will find sleeping accommodations in tea houses and the like, or use our tents. The trip is long and difficult, and the normal altitude will be around 12,000 ft, and two mountain passes (into and out of the valley) crest at over 16,000 ft, so a team of ponies and ponyman/guide will be employed to make the climbs and navigation easier.

August 7

Arrive in Delhi. Gather all the constituent groups, as we may not be on the same flight. See some of Delhi, get some supplies.

August 8-9

Bus to Manali. Contact ponyman. Get any other supplies needed.

August 9-14

Darcha acclimatizing and packing appropriately. Secure ponyman/guide. Tent sleeping.

August 15-24

1st leg—to Paddum. The route starts in Darcha. We will follow the Barai Nala river upstream into the mountains to a pasture called Zangskar Sumdo. A tributary stream is followed to the Shingo La pass at 16,400 ft. The trail then drops into Zangskar. Gentle walking past the dramatic Gumburanjon Mountain to the first village, Kargyak. Several more small villages follow, before the trail enters the Lungnak Gorge. Side trip to Phuktal Gompa (a monastery carved into a cliff face, suspended dramatically over the river Tsarap). Continue on to Paddum.

*Important note—at Paddum we will have encountered the most difficult climb of the trip, Shingo La, and then walked along relatively easy terrain. From Paddum on, though, the trip becomes more difficult. Many short 1-3 day trips are available based in Paddum, and are a possibility should we deem the second half of the trip too difficult.

August 25-Sept 6

2nd leg—To Lamayuru. Trail continues past Karsha (a possible stop—largest Gompa in the region), and follows Zangskar river downstream. Eight passes need to be crossed, as we go through the mountains. The first is relatively easy, the Parfi La, at 12,790 ft. Strenuous walking continues, with the next pass Hanuma La at 15,410 ft. Gompa in Linghsed offers ideal resting spot after a tough pass, and before 3 straight passes: the Margun, Kupa, and Sengi. The Sengi pass, known as the Lion Pass, is the highest north of Paddum, at 16,070 ft. After that, easy walking teaks us over the Bumiktse La pass at

14, 430ft, to the village of Potoksur. The scenic village is also an ideal spot for extended rest, before the Sirsir La at 15,740 ft. After that, the trail takes us through a gorge to the towns of Phanjila and Wanal. A small canyon rises to the Prinkiti La, at 12,140 ft, and then the trail descends to our destination, Lamayuru.

Sept 7

Bus to Leh. Stay in Leh overnight, sight see.

Sept 8-9

Either Bus back to Manali, or rent a car and do the drive ourselves. Beautiful mountain roads take us back to our staging city.

Sept 10

Bus to Delhi.

Sept 11

Fly home.

The group:

Michael Liroff '05

Rebecca Scully '05

Miles Harrigan '03

Jeffrey Kemnitz '03

John Motsinger '03

Risk Management

The main risks involved in this trip are, in order, disease, navigation, and altitude sickness. The three risks will be combated appropriately, i.e. all the proper inoculations will be taken by everyone prior to the trip, a guide will be commissioned in order to ensure our safe arrival at our destination without getting lost, and appropriate time will be spent at high altitude without trekking in order to acclimatize. A team of ponies (comes with the guide) also lightens the load on our backs, thus reducing the threat of altitude sickness problems. Beyond those risks, the threat of petty theft always looms, but beyond keeping money stashed in places other than our wallets, or carrying travelers' checks, little can be done. We will be cooking our own food, and have a pump/filtration system to ensure the cleanliness of our water.

Giving back

Aside from the trip itinerary, budget, etc, I would also be willing to contribute a trip log/memoir to the DOC library. Also, I think a slide show, with a talk on the overall experience and maybe what we learned about Buddhism in general and Indian culture in specific could be good, entertaining, and educational. Overall, I think the joy of a trip like this is sharing it with as many people as possible, so giving back to the school would be a given.

Skill sets

I led a DOC trip, and went through all the appropriate training, and Rebecca Scully is CPR/First Aid certified, and trained in orienteering. Beyond that, we all have been in the mountains a bunch, camping and hiking, and not much beyond the basic camping and first aid skills will be necessary.

Red tape

A specialized 6-month visa is required for our extended stay in India, but does not look to be too hard to acquire. A short application and \$60 charge should garner us entrance into the country.

Why India/Ladakh?

This is a special area, for multiple reasons. The place we're going, Zaskar, is a valley in the Himalayas, the most dramatic mountains in the world. Young, raw, and still growing (the Indian subcontinent is, geologically, ploughing into Asia at phenomenal speeds), they are quiet simply the biggest, most spectacular mountains in the world. Ladakh in specific is so special because, unlike other surrounding areas, it is free of Hindu-Muslim border clashes, Maoist guerilla activity, and other such risks. The estranged Buddhists in the region live a simple, poor life, but, amazingly, are considered some of the happiest people in the world (a state somewhat incongruous with Western notions of their quality of life). The chance to traverse gnarled rope-bridges across huge canyons gashed into the mountainside, visit beautiful monasteries carved dramatically into sheer cliff walls, and interact with some of the kindest, most hospitable people in the world, in one of the most amazing areas in the world, is too good to pass up.

What we are applying for

Getting to India is expensive, and accruing supplies for the trip (stoves, tents, clothes) is as well. The cost of eating and finding shelter, though, is not. Both Becca and I are current Dartmouth students and members of the DOC, and we are applying to have our in-India costs somewhat covered. This means mainly money for food, shelter, and our pony-man. The total, according to our budget, which was based on multiple books I purchased on the subject, would be \$100/person for lodging + \$170/person for food + \$220/person for our pony man (calculated at \$10/day per person for 22 days)= \$490/person, with two people applying. So \$980. I got the price for a pony man/guide through the Manali Mountaineering Institute. I know you guys only have \$1000 for the term, so that seems like a bit much to ask, so instead I'll say that we would like as much as we can get, because this trip is going to cost us a lot once you factor in a roughly \$1200 plane ticket.