

## **Two Lakes Trek – 18 or 23 days/12 days trek**

The raw and challenging Splendor of Rupshu

**Tour JTT-LA-T02:** Leh – Tsomoriri – trekking to Pangong Tso (Shyok – Deskit/Nubra) - Leh

Group tour, can be booked individually as well (min 4 pers.)

Dates: August 6 - 23, 2016

Ladakh lies north of the Himalayan Range. Though it is part of the Tibetan Plateau it lies within India. There is no religious persecution here. Though Ladakh's capital, Leh, and the nearby Indus Valley are getting more and more known for its beautiful gonpas (Buddhist monasteries), the southeast of Ladakh is an area that relatively few visitors get to see. Here, near the Tibetan border, the mountains are much less steep, jagged and folded than the ones in Zaskar, but just as high. The valleys are much higher - hardly anywhere below 4200 m - wide and desert-like. It is more of a high altitude plateau interspersed with colorful, snow-clad mountains and huge aquamarine lakes. It is part of the Tibetan Changtang area, with which it shares its inhabitants of nomads, called Changpa. Their yak, sheep and goats have to roam widely in order to find sufficient grass, and the Changpa have no other option than to follow them, living year-round in yak-hair tents called *rebus*. We'll do the same, though our tents will be of the modern kind. Starting from the stunning Tsomoriri lake, we'll wander through this vast expanse, losing track of time and space till we reach Pangong Tso.



Jeeps will take us to nearby Shyok River Lodge, a very comfortable community-based lodge in a traditional village. Here, at the foot of the Karakoram, we stay for a week practicing yoga daily, going out on walks and excursions - and generally enjoying the peaceful atmosphere of the remote mountain village. After this we'll return back to Leh by jeep along a seldom traveled road, following the Shyok River down to the idyllic Nubra Valley, home to Buddhist monasteries that cling to the mountains and lush green apricot orchards the way to the Pakistani border, and then return to Leh.

## ***Itinerary***

### **Day 01: Arrival at Leh**

Whether you arrive by road over one of the two Himalayan crossings that give access to Ladakh (highly recommended) or by flight, you'll be received at the bus, taxi or the airport by our representative and escorted to your guesthouse or hotel. We have four options for your stay in Leh: guesthouse in the city, hotel in the city, and guesthouse or hotel in the rural area of Sankar just outside Leh.



### **Day 02 & 03: At Leh**

If you have arrived by flight, two nights in Leh is the absolute minimum to get acclimatised to the altitude, but as you will be going to even higher altitudes, we take three nights. On day two, you are advised to take it easy, just wander the streets of Leh and soak up the pleasant atmosphere.

On day three, we'll take you further down the Indus Valley, to see the magnificent gompas – Buddhist monasteries – of Lamayuru and Alchi. It is an utterly scenic drive that, in itself, is worth the trip.

### **Day 04 & 05 Drive to Tsomoriri**



We'll take two days to reach Tsomoriri, as there is so much to be seen on the way. The first day, we'll drive up the Indus Valley, following the river till where the valley narrows and most habitation ends. Here we'll follow the road to Manali for a while, crossing the 5300m high Taglang La (motorable pass). After descending to the high valleys of Rupshu, we'll make camp near the stunning salty Tsokar lake.



camp, where we'll spend the night.

The next day, we'll continue over a small road through grand mountain scenery to Tsomoriri. On the way, there is a good chance of encountering the wild Tibetan horses, called kyang. These beautiful creatures are also called Tibetan ass, but actually they are one of the seven subspecies of wild horses in the world, along the wild tarpan, the Prezwalski horse, and the zebra.

At Tsomoriri, we'll check into a tented

### Day 06 – 17 Trekking from Tsomoriri to Pangong Tso

The next morning we'll start our trek, first by following the shores of this huge, dark blue lake. Next morning, when you wake up at the sound of nothingness, you'll realize the breathtaking kind of adventure you've embarked upon! The all-encompassing wide and wild mountain scenery is utterly magnificent, spellbindingly beautiful but totally desolate. It is so devoid of human influences and, in some ways, so mind numbingly stark, it makes you catch your breath. From now on, we're really on our own, though we'll occasionally encounter the *Changpa*, the Tibetan nomads that live here all year-round. Their lifestyle will be another one of the once-in-a-lifetime experiences you'll have during this trip. Can you imagine people living in tents – though made of thick, rough and black yak hair that absorbs solar energy very well – at winter temperatures of minus 30 degrees C (-22 F)? The Changpa (singular: Changpo) are a tough, raw but happy lot, and devout Buddhists as well.

The trek we'll be doing has hardly ever been done before, at least not by 'foreigners'. It is up to our horsemen – most of them of Changpa origin themselves – to guide us safely through this uncharted territory. We've got fifteen days to reach the other big lake, and that should definitely be enough. If all goes well, it will allow us to take a day off once or twice, relaxing at the camp or exploring its surroundings.

Reaching Pangong Tso will not be unlike finishing a pilgrimage with all its spiritual and emotional implications. This enormous salty lake straddles the border with Tibet (China). And, as is often the case with the most beautiful scenic pilgrim's destinations, you're unlikely to be the only



one there. The stunningly panoramic vast blue expanse has become one of the most sought after destinations with the Indian tourists after the screening of a popular film that showcased this lake as a backdrop.

From Pangong lake jeeps will take us back to Leh

### **Day 18 Flight Leh – Delhi**

After an early breakfast you are being transferred to the airport for your flight to Delhi

### ***EXTENSION: Shyok River Lodge & Nubra (5 days)***

#### **Day 18 & 19 At Shyok River Lodge**

After twelve days in a tent, sleeping on plush, comfortable mattresses, under freshly washed smooth, silky linen might come as a very welcome surprise. Shyok River Lodge is only two hours drive from Pangong Lake, elusively tucked away in a charming, traditional Ladakhi village. Here, amidst the waving, green barley fields and looking out on the easternmost part of the Karakoram Range, Shyok River Lodge will be your scenic haven for two days. During this time, you'll be taken on special village and nature walks in and around the village. You'll get a glimpse of the eastern ranges of the Karakoram and learn about the monks' way of life at the small local gompa (monastery). The village is like one big connected family who will welcome you wholeheartedly, eager to show you their homes and their unique, traditional lifestyle. If the time is right, you can see and partake in the sowing, ploughing or harvesting of the barley. However, for the less curious, there's always the option of sneaking out and relaxing with a book in the hammock among the lodge's many willow groves.



#### **Day 20: Shyok – Sumur**

After breakfast, you'll embark on a thrilling 125 km jeep drive following the untamed Shyok River, freely meandering until it merges with the Nubra River in Nubra Valley. Thanks to a new rough road, which has opened up very recently, there is no need to travel all the way back to Leh and then cross the time-consuming Khardong La in order to visit Nubra Valley. Instead, we follow the wide and wild valley of the Shyok, passing small hamlets of Ladakhi farms, crossing small rivers and sand dunes that are reminiscent of the Taklamakan Desert on the other side of the Karakoram. This very

scenic drive takes most of the day. Lunch will be had picnic style. Around lunch time, you reach Sumur, a small village near the Nubra River where you'll check into a comfortable lodge.

### **Day 21: Hundar – Turtuk - Hundar**

In the morning, you'll be taken westward, following the Nubra River down along picturesque villages hidden among lush green willow and apricot groves. As the altitude is lower here (approx. 3000 m), the growing season is longer than in Shyok, especially, fruit trees thrive well in the long, warm summers. Today, you have two options; you can ride the jeep to Turtuk, a small town not far from the Pakistani border, or do a camel safari and a walk.

The jeep drive is a scenic one, as the Nubra Valley occasionally narrows to a gorge between steep walls over which a precarious semblance of a road is cut. You'll notice the change in landscape and vegetation as you get lower, as well as the cultural changes. While in Deskit and Hundar, the people are predominantly Buddhist, here muslims are in majority.

If you opt for the 'active' program, you'll be taken on a ride through the dunes near Hundar on the back of Bactrians, two-humped camels, that directly descend from animals that worked the caravan trails to Yarkand and Kashgar. Though right on the banks of the river, the landscape is a true desert here, and riding the camels, you may easily forget you're actually in between the Himalayas and the Karakoram! In the afternoon, you can follow a small mountain trail that climbs high above the Nubra River to a remote little gumpa.



### **Day 22: Hundar – Khardong La - Leh**

After breakfast, your jeep will take you back to Leh. The road leads over the Khardung La, at 5450 m, one of the highest motorable roads in the world. Again, the drive is spectacular, and especially the dramatic views over the oasis of Leh while descending from the pass won't be forgotten easily. After reaching Leh, you'll check in to your guesthouse or hotel.

### **Day 23: Departure**

After breakfast, you'll leave Leh for your onward destination. If you're flying out of Leh you'll be transferred to the airport.

## **Prices**

Group tour (fixed dates August 6-23) INR 163250/ Euro 2180/ US\$ 2470

Individual:

2, 3 pers: INR 129,000 / Euro 1720 / USD 1960 per person

4, 5 pers: INR 124,200 / Euro 1660 / USD 1880 per person

6 -8 pers: INR 118,000 / Euro 1590 / USD 1800 per person

Single Supplement: INR 34,000 // Euro 520 / USD 450 per person.

Extension Shyok River Lodge & Nubra: INR 41,500 / Euro 550 / USD 630 per person.

*Price includes:* all accommodation (twin sharing, 2 person tents), full board except in Leh (CP, breakfast only), all transport by SUV vehicles, English speaking Ladakhi guide throughout, entry fees and Restricted Area Permit fees; village visits.

On group tour as well: Air fare Delhi - Leh and Leh – Delhi, international tour leader.

*Not included:* Tips; alcoholic drinks; laundry service; telephone calls; travel/ personal insurance; other expenses of personal nature.

## **Extension and prelude options**

After reaching Leh at the end of the trip, you most likely don't want to take the first flight out. Ladakh is a magical place that definitely warrants more exploring. Alternatively, you can spend more time on *getting there*. If you have the time, we strongly advise you to travel to Ladakh by road. It is one of the most spectacular road trips in the world. Crossing the Himalayan Range, you'll witness an amazing transition from the green, Hindu-dominated southern slopes of the Himalayas to the barren, colorful mountains of Buddhist Ladakh. To check out this tour, please click on 'The Great Himalayan Crossing' on this page: <http://www.jantreksandtravels.com/Ladakh-tours.html>.