



Yoga & Trekking through Nomad Country – 29 days / 12-day trek

The raw and challenging splendor of Changtang (Ladakh)

Tour JTT-LA-TY02: Leh – Tsomoriri – trekking to Pangong Tso – Yoga at Shyok River Lodge – Deskit/Nubra Valley - Leh

Group tour

The combination of yoga and trekking can be an awesome experience. Both invigorate and bolster the body and mind like no other. Those who are into trekking know what a terrific refurbishing of body and mind it can be. Regular sports don't even come close to it. Though trekking seems to be mainly legwork, it's actually the whole lifestyle of exploring and sleeping under the stars that is so rejuvenating. Of course, the practice of yoga address all body parts, many of them unused in daily life. It is a spiritual practice for most people that is accompanied by a form of concentration which purifies and reorganizes the mind, leading to meditation. To make matters even more spectacular, we'll trek through some of world's highest mountains, along ancient caravan routes and amidst the unique 'Tibetan' culture of the Trans-Himalaya.



Ladakh is located north of the Himalayan Range. Although it is part of the Tibetan Plateau it lies within India. There is no religious persecution here. Although Leh (Ladakh's capital) and the nearby Indus Valley have become more popular for their beautiful gompas (Buddhist monasteries), the southeastern part of Ladakh is an area that relatively few visitors get to see. It is part of the high-altitude plateau of Western Tibet called Changtang - a landscape of wide and desert-like valleys interspersed with colorful, snow-clad mountains and huge aquamarine lakes. The altitude drops below 4200 m hardly anywhere. Being part of the Tibetan Changtang area, its inhabitants are mainly Tibetan nomads, called Changpa (singular: Changpo). Their yak, sheep and goats have to roam widely in order to find sufficient grass. The Changpa have no other option than to follow them, living year-round in yak-hair *rebus* (nomadic tents).

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, until we reach Pangong Tso. Then Jeeps will take us to a very comfortable

community-based lodge located nearby in the traditional village of Shyok River. We'll stay here at the foot of the Karakoram 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 head back to Leh by jeep along a seldom-traveled road, following the Shyok River down to the idyllic Nubra Valley. This is home to many Buddhist monasteries that cling to the mountains and lush green apricot orchards. We'll travel all the way to the Pakistani border and then return to Leh.

Supporting a green and just society

While trekking through Ladakh we'll be in an area where development is of the traditional kind and people generally live off the land like they've done for centuries. As you will find out on the trek and during your stay at SRL there are many positive things to be said about this traditional life (read f.i. Helena Norberg's book *Ancient Futures, learning from Ladakh*, ISBN 9780712606561). But that does not mean that Ladakh is heaven on earth for all its inhabitants. There is definitely room for improvement, especially in terms of income, health care, education and environment. As a small token of respect and gratefulness to the cultural and natural beauty that we'll enjoy while traveling the area, we think it is only natural to lend a hand with some of these issues. On this tour we'll trek through an area inhabited by real and semi-nomads of Tibetan origin. As these people, called Changpa, are constantly on the move, their children are in danger of missing a proper education. The SOS Tibetan Children's Village NGO has set up a boarding school for Changpa kids. We have visited this school several times and believe us, they are very well run. The children are taught general subjects like English and maths and geography, but also a full day in every week is spent on Tibetan culture, the language, customs etc. The atmosphere is joyful yet disciplined and there is a strong sense of community and belonging. However, they have to make do with very limited funds. As we'll be more or less passing one of these schools on the trek, we thought it a good idea to support it by donating 5% of the 'land cost' (the amount spent on local travel arrangements). For more information:

<http://www.soschildrensvillages.ca/News/News/Pages/Help-in-Leh-Ladakh.aspx>.

Itinerary

Day 01: Arrival at Delhi

At Delhi Airport you will be received by our representative and taken to your guesthouse not far from the airport for overnight stay.

Day 02: Flight Delhi - 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 or taxi stand by our representative and escorted to your guesthouse or hotel. You can choose to stay in the bustling centre of Leh or just outside the city in the rural community of Sankar.

Day 03 & 04: At Leh; day walk Likir - Ridzong

If you have arrived by flight, two nights in Leh is the absolute minimum to get acclimatized. We plan to take three nights, as we will be going to even higher altitudes. 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 some magnificent gompas (Buddhist monasteries). We'll drive down to Likir Gompa. After visiting this picturesque monastery set atop a hill, we'll do a 5 hour walk along the beautiful village of Yangthang and down a narrow gorge to the hidden monastery of Ridzong, where the cars will be waiting. This day walk entails little climbing, and is a good way to get into the swing of walking. On the way back to Leh we'll visit the ancient gompa of Alchi. This is considered the oldest (roughly 1000 years old) and artistically most important gompa of Ladakh.



Day 05 & 06 Drive to Tsomoriri

We'll take two days to reach Tsomoriri, as there is so much to see along the way. On the first day we'll drive up the Indus Valley, following the river until the valley narrows and there is not much habitation. Here we'll follow the road to Manali for a while, crossing the motorable pass of Taglang La (elev. 5300 m). After descending to the high valleys of Rupshu we'll make camp near the stunning saltwater lake of Tsokar.

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 kyang, wild Tibetan horses, one of the seven subspecies of wild horses in the world (along with the wild tarpan, the Prezwalski horse, and the zebra).

Day 07 – 18 Trekking from Tsomoriri to Pangong Tso

The next morning when you wake up to the sound of nothingness, you'll realize the breathtaking kind of adventure we've embarked upon! This is where we start our trek. The all-encompassing, wild mountain scenery is spellbindingly beautiful (but totally desolate!) It is so devoid of human influence, and in some ways so mind-numbingly stark, that you may find yourself stopped in your tracks, in awe, with the need to catch your breath. From this point we're really on our own, though we'll occasionally encounter the *Changpa* who live here year-round. A glimpse of their Tibetan nomadic lifestyle will be yet another once-in-a-lifetime experience on this trip. Can you imagine people living in tents made of thick, rough, black yak hair at winter temperatures of minus 30 degrees C (-22 F)? The *Changpa* are a tough, raw, but happy lot and they are devout Buddhists as well.

During the trek we will do light yoga exercises every day. In the morning we'll have a yoga warm-up mainly aimed at stretching and improving blood circulation before we start the walk. After lunch there will be a brief meditation.

This particular trek has hardly ever been done before - at least not by 'foreigners'. It will be up to our horsemen (mostly of Changpa origin) 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, the pace will allow us to take a day off once or twice along the way, relaxing at the camp or exploring its surroundings.

Reaching Pangong Tso will not be unlike finishing a pilgrimage - with all of its spiritual and emotional implications. This enormous saltwater lake straddles the border with Tibet (China). As is often the case with most beautiful and scenic pilgrim destinations, we're unlikely to be the only ones there. Since the screening of a popular film that showcased Pangong Tso as the backdrop, this stunningly panoramic vast blue expanse has become one of the most popular destinations among Indian tourists.



Day 19 - 25 At Shyok River Lodge: YOGA RETREAT

After twelve days in a tent, sleeping on plush, comfortable mattresses under freshly washed, silky-smooth linen may come as a welcome surprise indeed! Shyok River Lodge is only two hours drive from Pangong Lake. It is elusively tucked away in a charming, traditional Ladakhi village amidst green, waving barley fields and looking out on the easternmost part of the Karakoram Range. This community lodge will be our scenic haven for two days.

Though accessible by road, the village of Shyok sees very little traffic. Guided by our inspiring yoga teacher Ivonne, we will practice yoga asanas, basic pranayama and meditation every day. There will be yoga sessions in the mornings, while the afternoons will be free or spent on excursions. Late afternoon again there will be yoga sessions for those who are interested. The level and intensity is up to you. Naturally, you are always free to skip, exchanging your yoga mat for the hammock among the willow trees and a good book.



We'll start the day with some pranayama and meditation before breakfast. The main asana class is from 11.00 to 12.30 (after breakfast is digested and before lunch).

Another more relaxing late afternoon class of 1 hour will be given around 6 PM and a meditation some time after dinner and before sleeping.

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So daily schedule is as follows:

07:00 AM - 07:45 AM pranayama/meditation

11:00 AM -12:30 AM yoga asanas

06:00 PM - 07:00 PM yoga asanas

08:30 or 09:00 PM meditation

Apart from daily yoga, we'll be taking walks around the village and in the beautiful natural surroundings. We'll visit the small local gumpa (monastery) and learn about the monks' way of life. The village is like a big connected family that will welcome us wholeheartedly, eager to show their homes and traditional lifestyle. If the time is right we can see and partake in the sowing, plowing, or harvesting of the barley. In early spring we can help bringing the yaks to the high meadows where they graze during summer.



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Day 26: Shyok – Sumur (110 km, 4-5 hour)



After a week of yoga, relaxing and immersing in the quiet mountain village atmosphere of Shyok, we'll embark on a thrilling 110 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, 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. In the evening we'll check into a comfortable lodge in Sumur - a small village near Nubra's capitol, Deskit.

Day 27: At Nubra, exploring the valley

In the morning, we'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 and fruit trees thrive well in the long, warm summers.

We'll visit two of the most beautiful gompas of Nubra, Deski Gumpa high on a hill and the more hidden Samsthanling Gumpa. Also, you can ride through the dunes near Hundar on Bactrians, descendants of the two-humped camels that worked the caravan trails from Yarkand to Kashgar. Though right on the banks of the river, the landscape is a true desert here. Riding camelback you may easily forget that we're actually in between the Himalayas and the Karakoram! In the afternoon, we can follow a small mountain trail that climbs high above the Nubra River to a small remote gumpa where nobody goes.

There is an alternative programme as well. This is to ride the jeep all the way down to Turtuk (a small town not far from the Pakistani border). The jeep drive is a scenic one, as the Nubra Valley occasionally narrows to a gorge between steep walls over which a precarious 4WD road is cut. You'll notice changes in landscape and vegetation as well as changes in the cultural as we get lower. While in Deskit and Hundar the people are predominantly Buddhist, here the majority are Muslims. Due to the high fuel costs involved we have to charge an additional INR 5000 per car for this.

Day 28: Sumur – Khardong La – Leh (132 km, 5-6 hrs drive)

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

Day 29: Departure

Early morning you'll board the flight back to Delhi. This most likely leaves you with a full day to spend in Delhi, as most international flights depart late at night or very early next morning (KLM). Sight seeing in Delhi can be arranged (visiting Old Delhi Red Fort, Kutub Minar, Humayun's Tomb and Akshardam Temple, for instance). Also the use of a day room facility plus diner at a hotel close to the airport can be arranged.

Prices

Group tour, with English & Dutch speaking tour guide and yoga teacher who speaks English.

INR XXX / US\$ XXX



Price includes:

- ✓ Western tour leader cum yoga teacher;
- ✓ Transfers between Leh Airport and hotel;
- ✓ 1 night accommodation at comfortable guesthouse in Gurgaon (Delhi);
- ✓ 3 nights accommodation before trek and 1 night after trek in Leh, in a pleasant hotel or very good guesthouse;
- ✓ 7 nights at Shyok River Lodge, a comfortable '3 star' home stay in a green oasis of a remote, traditional village;
- ✓ 2 nights at a comfortable lodge in Nubra;
- ✓ Full board (3 freshly prepared meals per day) while on trek, during the yoga retreat at Shyok River Lodge and in Nubra, room with breakfast only in Gurgaon/Delhi and Leh;
- ✓ All necessary permits (Inner Line Permits for Changtang/Pangong Tso and Nubra)
- ✓ Transportation to and from trek;
- ✓ SUV trip Leh - Tsokar - Tsomoriri – Pangong Tso and Shyok – Nubra - Leh;
- ✓ Double tents with foam sleeping pads (advisable to bring your own sleeping mattress if you have a good one);
- ✓ Full-fledged trekking staff (cook, local mountain guide, and helpers);
- ✓ Dining tent (possibly 2) with small chairs and all necessary crockery and cutlery;
- ✓ Cooked or filtered water available at camp at all times;
- ✓ Team of horses with horsemen to carry all overhead and personal equipment (12.5 kg per person; so you only carry a day pack);
- ✓ Daily yoga & meditation practice (morning and evening) guided by Ivonne;

Price does not include:

- ✓ Travel Insurance
- ✓ Visa for India
- ✓ Lunch & dinner while in Leh
- ✓ Extra nights accommodation in Leh before July 5 or after July 27

- ✓ Sleeping bags, personal trekking clothing & gear
- ✓ Tips for local staff (approx. US\$125-175/€ 110-155)
- ✓ Alcoholic drinks; laundry service; telephone calls; other expenses of personal nature.

Please ask for quotation for additional services.

More information and booking

For more information on this tour and for booking please mail us at info@jantreksandtravels.com.

If you want to know more about Shyok River Lodge, please visit the lodge's website: www.shyokriverlodge.com.

To be sure of a place on this awesome tour you are requested to down-pay 10% of the tour price (i.e. INR XXX/ US\$ XXX) to our bank account:

Acc. no. 913020031243013

Acc. holder Jan Treks And Travels

(IFSC Code UTIB0001720)

SWIFT AXISINBB056

Bank address Axis Bank, Gurgaon DL Branch, Sco No. 120, Sector 46, Gurgaon, Haryana – 122001, India

In case you're interested in other yoga tours and retreats please check our website: <https://jantreksandtravels.com/yoga-tours/>.

Extension and prelude options

After reaching Leh at the end of the trip, in all likelihood you won'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 go here: <https://jantreksandtravels.com/tours-and-treks-in-ladakh/>. And click on 'Ladakh overland via Manali' or 'Ladakh overland via Spiti.'