



CHEESEMANS' ECOLOGY SAFARIS

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Snow Leopards

Remote Mountainscapes of Ladakh, India

February 10 to 24, 2022



Snow Leopard
© Behzad Larry

SAFARI OVERVIEW

Search for the elusive snow leopard in the incredible Trans-Himalayan mountains of Ladakh, India. Ladakh, a former Buddhist kingdom, is a beautiful mix of amazing landscapes, isolated Tibetan Buddhist monasteries, and huge mountain passes. It is also an ideal landscape for the snow leopard. You'll search for this ultimate mountain predator that is built to blend into treacherous terrain while hunting for ibex and blue sheep. You'll also look for Tibetan wolf, Eurasian lynx, ibex, blue sheep, Tibetan argali, and dozens of rare bird species. Visit an incredible, medieval Tibetan Buddhist monastery to get a perspective on life in the high Himalayas, and experience luxury camping in a remote valley with very high snow leopard traffic. Join the region's best trackers to search for these ghosts of the mountains.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Search for the elusive snow leopard with the world’s best tracking teams.
- 6 nights in Hemis National Park, with the world’s highest concentration of snow leopards.
- Experience Himalayan culture and visit incredible Tibetan monasteries.

LEADER: Aditya Panda.

DAYS: 15, including estimated travel time.

GROUP SIZE: 8.

COST: \$6,900 per person, double occupancy, not including airfare (except for round-trip flights between Delhi and Leh), singles extra. See the *Costs* section on page 5.

ACCOMMODATIONS: The luxury camp has private, heated tents with shared baths, common areas, and showers.

Date	Description	Accommodation	Meals
Feb 10–11	Travel to Delhi, India.		
Feb 12	Arrive in Delhi.	Roseate House Hotel, Delhi	—
Feb 13	Fly to Leh early in the morning and begin acclimatization.	Grand Dragon Hotel, Leh	B, L, D
Feb 14	Early morning visit to Tibetan Buddhist monastery of Thiksey. Spend afternoon acclimatizing.		
Feb 15	Transfer to your remote camp.	LungMār Camp, Hemis National Park	B, L, D
Feb 16–20	Five full days of snow leopard spotting in and around camp.		
Feb 21	Return to Leh.	Grand Dragon Hotel, Leh	B, L, D
Feb 22	Fly to Delhi.	Roseate House Hotel, Delhi	B
Feb 23	Fly homeward.		B
Feb 24	Arrive home.		

LEADER

Aditya Panda

Aditya is an award-winning naturalist, wildlife conservationist, and photographer from Odisha, India. For over 15 years he has focused on identifying and preserving larger tiger and elephant landscapes, empowering human-elephant conflict mitigation squads, and working with frontline forest personnel in tiger habitat. He will readily engage in conversations on a wide range of topics and is always eager to go the extra mile to make you comfortable. You’ll find that his infectious interpretation style will give you a deep understanding of and appreciation for India and its wildlife.



Supporting Leaders

While you're in camp, famed local snow leopard experts will always be at hand to add to your trip. Behzad Larry and Abdul Rashid have hundreds of days of snow leopard tracking under their belt and will oversee the tracking teams and assist the expedition leader. The chief tracker, Dorjay Stanzin, is considered the world's finest snow leopard tracker.

DETAILED ITINERARY

Feb 10–11 ~ Travel to Delhi, India

Feb 12 ~ Arrive in Delhi

Arrive in Delhi where our local agent will transfer you from the airport to the hotel. If you would like to arrive earlier, we can arrange divergent airport transfers and extra nights.

Feb 13 ~ Fly to Leh

Early in the morning, you will fly to the mountain town of Leh, the capital of Ladakh. The one-hour flight will take you across the Himalayas and into the Trans-Himalayas. The high altitude of Leh (11,483ft / 3,524m) requires you to spend your first day completely resting, for your body to acclimatize to the altitude.

Leh is an ancient city that lies on the old Silk Road, which connected Asia with Europe and is teeming with history. The Grand Dragon Hotel is a modern hotel with traditional Ladakhi designs, delicious food, and expansive views of the mountains.

Feb 14 ~ Visit monastery and acclimate

Depart early to visit the medieval Tibetan Buddhist monastery of Thiksey, controlled by His Holiness The Dalai Lama, for prayers. Take in great views of the Indus Valley as you are introduced to the ancient ways of life in this region.

After the morning prayer visit, return to the hotel for breakfast. Spend the afternoon acclimating and resting, then take an early evening walk around the town of Leh and watch for a beautiful sunset.



Monastery
© Behzad Larry

Feb 15 ~ Transfer to LungMār Camp

Before you begin the drive to LungMār Camp, your spotters and trackers have already been to work, so you'll know, before leaving the hotel, whether you're heading straight to camp or to an active snow leopard site. The drive to the camp, alongside the beautiful Indus River, will take about an hour.

Nestled in a remote valley in Ladakh's Trans-Himalayas, the camp creates an exclusive and authentic experience in a stunningly beautiful setting. As permanent construction is not allowed in this ecologically sensitive landscape, camp infrastructure is thoughtfully designed to keep your footprint to a minimum while providing you with top notch facilities. This is combined with a focus on empowering community-based conservation, so for each guest that stays at camp, \$350 is contributed towards predator-proof corrals in the

region which aid in snow leopard conservation by protecting valuable livestock. Tracking the most elusive big cat requires years of expertise and a focus on location – LungMär has both.

Feb 16–20 ~ Snow leopard tracking

February is the peak season for snow leopard viewing, although snow leopards can be seen November through April. Winter snow at higher elevations force animal prey, like blue sheep and ibex, to lower elevations for grazing. Snow leopards follow these ungulates, so they are at much lower elevations and thus chances for sightings are much higher. The season also overlaps with the mating period for snow leopards. Guests have witnessed mating snow leopards, mothers and cubs, and seen and heard them call for each other - an incredibly rare occurrence for non-locals to experience.

Each morning, and throughout the day, the spotters will split up to track for snow leopards in abutting valleys. Your daily movements will be based on reports from the spotters. If they spot a snow leopard, you will use a combination of driving and hiking to get to a vantage point. While waiting for word of a spotting, you'll have ample time for birdwatching, nature walks, and visits to local communities to learn more about conservation, local ways of life, and the storied region you are immersed in.



Snow Leopard
© Behzad Larry

The spotters will also actively track Tibetan wolves, Eurasian lynx, blue sheep, ibex, and Ladakhi ural. The region hosts incredible endemic birds, including lammergeiers, golden eagles, Himalayan griffon vultures, a variety of partridges, finches, robins, redstarts, choughs, thrushes, owls, and more.

Snow leopards are solitary animals and looking for them in these vast mountains requires immense skill and experience. It also takes time.

Feb 21 ~ Return to Leh

Return to the Grand Dragon Hotel in Leh. If interested, you can shop for souvenirs, fine Pashmina shawls, or hand-knotted carpets in the town bazaar.

Feb 22 ~ Fly to Delhi

Fly back to Delhi for an overnight or late-night flight homeward.

Feb 23 ~ Fly homeward

Transfer to the airport for your flights homeward.

Feb 24 ~ Arrive home

COSTS (ALL COSTS ARE IN US DOLLARS)

Cost

Type	Cost per Person
Trip Cost, double occupancy	\$6,900
Single Supplement	\$2,492

Costs are per person, double occupancy, not including airfare (except for round-trip flights between Delhi and Leh), singles extra. See *Included* and *Not Included* sections for more details.

If you are a single traveler, we will find a roommate for you, but if we cannot find you a roommate, we may charge you a single supplement. Single rooms cost extra and are subject to availability.

Payment Schedule

Payment	Due Date	Amount per Person
Deposit	Due now to reserve your space	\$500
Final	September 30, 2021	Remaining Balance

Payments are due based on the schedule above. All reservations require a deposit to confirm reservation of your space.

Cancellations

Until the Final Payment due date, deposits are refundable except for a cancellation fee of \$150 per person, which can be applied toward another trip if reserved within six months of the cancelled trip's departure date. Cancellations are non-transferrable. No refunds are given after the Final Payment due date.

Included

- All leaders, tracking, expedition services, transport, park entry fees, and permits for all activities unless described as optional.
- Round-trip flights between Delhi and Leh.
- Accommodations for the nights of February 12 through February 22.
- Meals from breakfast on February 13 through breakfast on February 23, except meals listed in *Not Included* section.
- Transfers on February 12, 13, 22, and 23 between the Delhi Airport and Roseate House Hotel; on February 13 and February 22 between the Leh Airport and Grand Dragon Hotel.
- \$350 per person toward predator-proof corrals to aid in snow leopard conservation.
- All beverages while at LungMär Camp.
- Group medical kit and oxygen cylinders for emergencies.
- Access to a Gamow Bag for high-altitude emergencies.
- Trip Materials – information about flights, packing, entry and departure requirements, airport transfers, gratuities, etc.

Not Included

- All airfare (except flights listed as included), airport and departure taxes, and excess baggage fees. Round-trip airfare is approximately \$600 to \$800 between the US and Delhi, depending on origin.

- Passport and visa fees.
- Lunch and dinner on February 22.
- Personal porter – recommended if you are carrying any photography equipment (\$395 per person).
- Gratuities – tipping is always discretionary. However, we suggest budgeting about \$420 to \$660 per participant for our leader, trackers, and camp staff.
- Mandatory emergency medical and evacuation insurance. For more information see www.cheesemans.com/travel-insurance.
- Optional trip cancellation insurance. For more information see www.cheesemans.com/travel-insurance.
- Items of a personal nature such as laundry, telephone calls, medical costs or hospitalization, room service, alcoholic beverages at your hotels, items not on the regular menu, etc. If you have special dietary needs, please indicate them on your Reservation Form.

SIGN UP

Please contact us first to check availability, reserve your space, and obtain a Reservation Form. To confirm your reservation, we require a deposit and signed form from each participant.

Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris

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OTHER DETAILS

Climate

The average temperatures in February in Hemis National Park and Leh range from lows of about 10°F (-12°C) to highs of about 33°F (1°C). In Delhi it will be much warmer ranging from lows of about 53°F (12 °C) to highs of about 76°F (24 °C).

Fitness Level and Elevation

This trip is at high elevations (~11,000ft). If you have heart or lung disease, or other reasons to suspect high altitude may pose a problem for you, please talk to your doctor before booking this trip. While you can access some valleys by road, you may have to hike to access a site where the team has spotted snow leopards, especially if it is away from a road. You should be comfortable with a mix of driving and walking at high altitudes. Please contact us if you have any health concerns that may make this trip challenging.

Accommodations

LungMār Camp is a remote camp, accessible by road, with nine luxury tents that have been custom designed after years of research and development to perform in the harsh winters that accompany the peak snow leopard season. A stunning stone building, sheltered within the mountain, is the elegant heart of camp. It serves as a central dining and lounge space where meals are served, and guests can socialize with a Hot Toddy or a glass of wine after a day of searching for snow leopards. With sweeping, south-facing mountain

views, this warm space is ideal for relaxing in. The Bath House, a beautiful stone structure, is a heated space with showers and a sauna.

The tents are luxuriously appointed, with king or twin beds, and decor appropriate for LungMär's place on the ancient Silk Road, which includes hand-knotted Afghan rugs, Tibetan inspired furniture, and comforts unseen before in remote winter camping in High Asia. Tents are designed for wintry conditions with insulation, electricity, and heating maintained at a comfortable 64°F (18°C), and they share a cluster of heated, environmentally friendly, composting toilets. Access to the internet is also possible via a short drive.

Flights

Unless listed as included, airfare is not included in trip costs. Detailed logistical information and the contact information for our recommended flight-ticketing agent are included in the Trip Materials we will send you. Please let us know if you are arriving earlier or staying later as we are happy to assist you with any extra overnights that you might want to arrange.

Flights you (or a travel agent) book: Arrive in Delhi, India (DEL) on February 12. Depart from Delhi, India (DEL) anytime on February 22.

Flights we book for you: The round-trip flights between Delhi and Leh are included in the trip cost.

Terms and Conditions

Read our current Terms and Conditions at <https://cheesemans.com/terms-and-conditions>.

Conservation

Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris is passionate about conserving the precious regions that we travel to and supports many conservation efforts. By visiting these areas, we contribute to sustainable conservation of these valuable wildlife habitats. We urge you to support conservation organizations that protect and restore natural habitats and write letters to tourism and government agencies to promote work in preserving wildlife.

We aim to make all our trips carbon neutral by splitting the cost of carbon offsetting with our participants. For your convenience, the optional donation amount for your half of the carbon offset will be indicated on your invoice. We source high quality offsets through CarbonTree Conservation Fund, a non-profit we helped found, supporting pioneering forest conservation in the Rio Bravo Reserve in Belize, a Nature Conservancy project (www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/where-we-work/latin-america/belize/rio-bravo-conservation-area/).