



CHEESEMANS' ECOLOGY SAFARIS

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Snow Leopards

Remote Mountainscapes of Ladakh, India

February 25 to March 11, 2023



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.
- 7 nights in Hemis National Park, with the world's highest concentration of snow leopards.
- Experience Himalayan culture and visit incredible Tibetan monasteries.

LEADER: Harsha Jayaramaiah.

DAYS: 15, including estimated travel time.

GROUP SIZE: 8.

COST: \$6,990 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 25–26 | Travel to Delhi, India. | | |
| Feb 27 | Arrive in Delhi. | Roseate House Hotel, Delhi | — |
| Feb 28 | Fly to Leh early in the morning and begin acclimatization. | Grand Dragon Hotel, Leh | B, L, D |
| Mar 1 | Early morning visit to Tibetan Buddhist monastery of Thiksey. Spend afternoon acclimatizing. | | |
| Mar 2 | Transfer to your remote camp. | LungMār Camp, Hemis National Park | B, L, D |
| Mar 3–8 | Six full days of snow leopard spotting in and around camp. | | |
| Mar 9 | Transfer to Leh and fly to Delhi. | Roseate House Hotel, Delhi | B |
| Mar 10 | Fly homeward. | | B |
| Mar 11 | Arrive home. | | |

LEADER

Harsha Jayaramaiah

Harsha was fascinated by wildlife from a young age. He rescued and rehabilitated urban wildlife with People for Animals and worked for Sanctuary Asia's Kids for Tigers project until he was chosen to be a naturalist at a wildlife lodge, eventually becoming Head Naturalist. He's led wildlife trips in India, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Borneo, Brazil, and Tanzania. He and his wife, Payal, created content to run India's first Online Nature Guide Programs in collaboration with Nature Conservation Foundation where members of the local communities can attend for free.



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 25–26 ~ Travel to Delhi, India

Feb 27 ~ 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 28 ~ 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.



Leh
© Behzad Larry

Mar 1 ~ 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.

Mar 2 ~ 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 – LungMār has both.

Mar 3–8 ~ Snow leopard tracking

February and March are 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.



Snow Leopard
© Behzad Larry

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.

The spotters will also actively track Tibetan wolves, Eurasian lynx, blue sheep, ibex, and Ladakhi urial. 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.

Mar 9 ~ Fly to Delhi

Return to Leh and fly back to Delhi for an overnight or late-night flight homeward.

Mar 10 ~ Fly homeward

COSTS (ALL COSTS ARE IN US DOLLARS)

Cost

| Type | Cost per Person |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| Trip Cost, double occupancy | \$6,990 |
| 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 18, 2022 | 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 27 through March 9.
- Meals from breakfast on February 28 through breakfast on March 10, except meals listed in *Not Included* section.
- Transfers on February 27, February 28, March 9, and March 10 between the Delhi Airport and Roseate House Hotel; on February 28 from the Leh Airport to the Grand Dragon Hotel; and March 9 from LungMär Camp to the Leh Airport.
- \$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 March 9.
- Personal porter – recommended if you are carrying any photography equipment (\$395 per person).
- Gratuities – tipping is always discretionary. However, we will add a gratuity of \$700 per participant for Harsha, his local guides, drivers, and camp staff to your final payment.
- 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 and March 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

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 LungMār'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.

If you are concerned about the standard of accommodations being below your expectations, please ask us before booking.

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 27. Depart from Delhi, India (DEL) anytime on March 10.

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

By traveling with Cheesemans' to India to see snow leopards, you directly support the local community, as well as the people who work in ecotourism. Behzad Larry, president of the High Asia Habitat Fund and owner of our local operator, has long-lasting personal relationships with the owners of the camp you will stay at on our snow leopard itineraries. The camp, built by the local community is incredibly environmentally friendly and a model for sustainable conservation tourism. The camp employs locals as its staff and they are leaders in training others to become adept at snow leopard tracking which in turn contributes to their conservation.

The Snow leopard ecotourism industry on this trip gives local people sustainable job alternatives and helps local communities keep their livelihoods safe, all of which help further conservation. For example, the High Asia Habitat Fund works directly with the locals in the areas around camp to build economically feasible, humane, and long-lasting pens to both keep the local livestock safe from snow leopard attacks, as well as prevent the cats from being subject to shepherd retaliation for killing livestock. The construction of these pens offers work opportunities for local people and helps to maintain a healthy relationship between the people and the cats. A portion of the trip cost is used toward building these predator-proof corrals in the community.