

Ghosts of the Himalaya

Snow Leopards & High-Altitude Wilds of Ladakh, India

February 14 to 28, 2028



Snow Leopard

SAFARI OVERVIEW

Fewer than a handful of travelers each year witness a wild snow leopard in its own territory during mating season — this is that trip. Set off on an extraordinary snow leopard expedition into the remote Trans-Himalayan mountains of Ladakh, India, one of the world's best locations to observe the elusive "ghost of the mountains." A former Buddhist kingdom, Ladakh is a land of dramatic landscapes, ancient monasteries, and soaring mountain passes. Led by expert trackers, you'll venture into Hemis National Park, home to one of the highest densities of snow leopards on earth, searching not only for these magnificent cats, but also Tibetan wolves, Himalayan ibex, blue sheep, Eurasian lynx, golden eagles, Tibetan argali, and dozens of high-altitude bird species. Immerse yourself in the rich Tibetan Buddhist culture with monastery visits, and experience a welcoming, family-run lodge in close proximity to the search area, allowing you more time in the field.

WHY CHOOSE THIS TRIP?

- **Exceptional Snow Leopard Viewing:** Spend six full days searching for snow leopards alongside experienced local spotters to maximize your chances of remarkable encounters.
- **More Time in the Field:** Stay in prime snow leopard habitat, allowing extended time to observe snow leopards and other Himalayan wildlife without long daily commutes.
- **High-Altitude Wildlife:** Search for Tibetan wolves, Himalayan ibex, blue sheep, red foxes, and a variety of high-altitude birds in one of the world's most dramatic mountain ecosystems.
- **High-Altitude Luxury Camping:** Stay in a comfortable high-altitude lodge designed for comfort in extreme conditions.

- **Discover Ladakh's Living Culture:** Visit ancient monasteries, experience Tibetan Buddhist traditions, and gain insight into the people who call this remarkable landscape home.
- **Expert-Led Adventure:** Travel with an experienced Cheesemans' leader and professional photographer alongside an expert local naturalist and spotters whose knowledge of snow leopard behavior is unmatched.

LEADERS: Scott Davis and Surya Ramachandran.

DAYS: 15, including estimated travel time.

GROUP SIZE: 8.

COST: \$11,200 per person, double occupancy, not including airfare (except for round-trip flights between Delhi and Leh), singles extra. See the *Costs* section on page 6.

ACCOMMODATIONS: The lodge has private rooms, ensuite bathrooms and windowed views of the surrounding mountains.

Date	Description	Accommodation	Meals
Feb 14–15	The Journey Begins. Travel to Delhi, India from our India trip or from home.		
Feb 16	Arrive in Delhi. Transfer to a luxury hotel and rest before your journey into one of the world's most remote mountain regions.	Andaz Hotel, Delhi	
Feb 17	Fly to Leh & Begin Acclimatization. Enjoy breathtaking Himalayan views before settling into Leh, one of the highest and most isolated inhabited towns on earth and begin your adjustment to high altitude.	Grand Dragon Hotel, Leh	B, L, D
Feb 18	Visit Leh Highlights. Wander centuries-old monasteries and markets, and take in cultural highlights like Sankar Gompa, Shanti Stupa, and Leh Palace.		B, L, D
Feb 19–24	The Snow Leopard Expedition. Travel through dramatic landscapes to a valley known for frequent snow leopard activity. Spend five full days (mornings and afternoons) tracking snow leopards and other Himalayan wildlife. This time of year coincides with snow leopard mating season and may provide opportunities to witness rarely observed behaviors.	Snow Leopard Lodge, Mangyu	B, L, D
Feb 25	Return to Leh. Retrace the route out of snow leopard country for a final night in Ladakh's remote capital.	Grand Dragon Hotel, Leh	B, L, D
Feb 26	Fly to Delhi. Leave the high Himalaya behind and toast the adventure with a farewell dinner in Delhi.	Andaz Hotel, Delhi	B, L, D

Feb 27	Depart for home. Morning transfer to the airport reflecting on your journey to one of the planet's wildest, most remote corners.		B
Feb 28	Arrive Home with unforgettable memories of the Himalaya's wild heart.		

ENHANCE YOUR TRIP

- Begin your journey on our [India](#) trip from January 31 to February 16, 2028. Visit famous national parks, see magnificent tigers, and explore cultural highlights of India.

LEADERS

Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris carefully selects leaders who are experts in their field to ensure that your experience is the best it can be. One leader with local supporting guides will provide a range of expertise for your trip.

Scott Davis

Scott, co-owner and co-CEO of Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris is an expert wildlife, nature, and travel photographer. Trained as a wildlife and marine biologist, he's explored all seven continents for research and photography. National Geographic, BBC, Animal Planet, NY Times, and other prestigious publications have featured his inspiring work. Scott's passion for teaching and talent for capturing the essence of his subjects make him a highly sought-after tour leader.



Surya Ramachandran

Surya is an award-winning naturalist and wildlife guide with extensive experience across India's most biodiverse regions. He has spent the past six years in Ladakh developing community-based snow leopard and Himalayan brown bear tracking programs. Author of the Photographic Guide to Central Indian Wildlife and recipient of the 2016 TOFT Award, Surya is widely respected for his deep ecological knowledge, conservation work, and expertise in India's wildlife and landscapes.



DETAILED ITINERARY

Feb 14–15 ~ Travel to Delhi, India

Feb 16 ~ Arrive in Delhi from our [India](#) trip or from home

Your journey to one of the most remote and least-visited corners of the Himalayas begins here. Arrive in Delhi from our [India](#) trip or from home – the first step toward the high-altitude wilderness of Ladakh. Our local agent will greet you and transfer you to your hotel. For those wishing to arrive earlier, we can arrange custom airport transfers and extra nights, allowing you to explore Delhi's vibrant mix of ancient heritage and modern city life before the mountains take over.

Feb 17 ~ Fly to Leh

Catch an early morning flight to one of the most isolated inhabited regions on earth: Leh, capital of Ladakh, perched at 11,483 ft (3,524 m) in the Trans-Himalayas. The hour-long flight is a spectacle in itself, tracing a path over jagged, snow-capped peaks and plunging valleys before dropping into the stark high-desert landscape of Ladakh. Upon arrival, it is essential to spend the entire day resting and acclimatizing to the high altitude. Your stay at The Grand Dragon Hotel, with its Ladakhi-style décor, delicious cuisine, and panoramic mountain views, offers the perfect setting for relaxation.



Monks
© Chris Brookhart

Feb 18 ~ Acclimatization and Exploration

Start the day at a leisurely pace, with the option to visit one of the ancient monasteries perched in the hills around Leh. Many, centuries old and still home to active monastic communities, welcome visitors for morning prayers — a rare glimpse into Tibetan Buddhist tradition, set against sweeping views over the Indus Valley.

After breakfast back at the hotel, spend the afternoon acclimating and resting — essential at this altitude before the days ahead. For those who'd like to stretch their legs, keep it light: Sankar Gompa, Shanti Stupa, and Leh Palace are all easy options nearby. We'll time our visit to Leh Palace just before sunset, the perfect vantage point to photograph Shanti Stupa glowing in the distance.



Leh Palace
© Heart Photography

Feb 19–24 ~ Snow Leopard Expedition

Your expedition begins the moment you leave Leh. Before you've even set out, our trackers and spotters are already scanning the ridgelines — and if a snow leopard is confirmed, you may head straight to the sighting. The drive follows the Indus River, past towering cliffs and snow-dusted peaks, deep into the Trans-Himalayan wilderness of Ladakh. Your base for the coming days is Snow Leopard Lodge in Mangyu: remote, eco-conscious, and built to leave the smallest possible footprint on this fragile landscape. Your stay contributes \$200 directly to conservation efforts that reduce human-wildlife conflict and protect the region's snow leopard population — so your presence here helps the very animal you've come to see.



Snow Leopard
© Surya Ramachandran

Snow leopard tracking

This is peak season. Winter snowfall pushes blue sheep and ibex — the snow leopard's primary prey — down to lower elevations, drawing the cats closer to where you'll be. February is also mating season, raising the rare chance of witnessing snow leopards interacting, calling, or mating — a sight almost no outsider ever sees.

Each morning begins early, with tea in hand as you watch sunlit ridgelines while expert trackers scan the slopes. Guided by naturalists and local spotters, you'll head out across the valleys of Ulley, Saspoche, and Hemis Shukpachan, following fresh pugmarks and reading the landscape the way Ladakhi herders have for generations. Your itinerary each day is written in real time: the moment a leopard is spotted, you'll move — by vehicle and on foot — to reach the best vantage point for observation and photography.

Every outing has its own reward, whether it's a herd of ibex silhouetted on a ridge or, if you're fortunate, the ghost-like form of a snow leopard itself, perfectly camouflaged among the rocks.

This corner of the Trans-Himalayas teems with life: Tibetan wolves and elusive Eurasian lynx move through the high country, while blue sheep, ibex, and Ladakhi urial graze the slopes below. Overhead, Lammergeiers and Golden Eagles ride the thermals alongside Himalayan Griffon Vultures. In the quieter hours between treks, there's time for gentler pursuits — birdwatching, unhurried nature walks, and time spent with local Ladakhi communities, whose deep knowledge of this land and its conservation shapes everything the lodge does.

Tracking a snow leopard demands patience, skill, and no small amount of luck. But few wildlife experiences on earth compare to the moment one comes into view.



Snow Leopard
© Surya Ramachandran



Leh
© Rajeev Sammy

Feb 25 ~ Return to Leh

After a final breakfast at the lodge, bid farewell to the wilderness and retrace the route back along the Indus — the same road that carried you into snow leopard country, now carrying you out with memories (and hopefully photos) of days spent in one of the last truly wild places on earth. Return to Leh for one final night.

Feb 26 ~ Fly to Delhi

Fly back from the mountains to Delhi, where the pace of the city meets you again after days spent in silence and altitude. Settle into your hotel and take a moment to reflect on an expedition few travelers ever attempt.

Feb 27 ~ Depart for home

Transfer to the airport for your return flight home, carrying with you a rare, firsthand account of one of the wildest and most remote corners of the planet.

Feb 28 ~ Arrive home

Conclude your once-in-a-lifetime Himalayan adventure, returning home with unforgettable memories, breathtaking wildlife encounters, and a deep appreciation for Ladakh's remote wilderness.

COSTS (ALL COSTS ARE IN US DOLLARS)

Cost

Type	Cost per Person
Trip Cost, double occupancy	\$11,200
Single Supplement	\$4,950

Costs are per person, double occupancy unless noted otherwise, 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 try to find a roommate for you, but if we cannot pair you with 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 7, 2027	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-transferable. No refunds are given after the Final Payment due date.

Included

- Carbon offsets for the duration of this trip.
- All leaders, tracking, expedition services, transport, park entry fees, landing fees, and permits for all activities unless described as optional.
- Round-trip flights between Delhi and Leh.
- Accommodations for the nights of February 16 through February 26.
- Meals from breakfast on February 17 through breakfast on February 27, except meals listed in **Error! Reference source not found.** section.

- Transfers on February 16, 17, 26, and 27 between the Delhi Airport and Andaz Hotel; on February 17 from the Leh Airport to the Grand Dragon Hotel; and February 26 from Grand Dragon Hotel to the Leh Airport.
- \$200 per person toward the Snow Leopard Conservancy, who help work with communities in the Himalayas to secure Snow Leopard Habitat.
- Group medical kit and oxygen cylinders for emergencies.
- Access to shared use of high-powered Swarovski BTX 95 and ATX 95 spotting scopes.
- Gratuities (except local Tour Leader)
- Trip Planning Materials – information about entry requirements, flights, packing, gratuities, etc.

Not Included

- Carbon offsets for your flights to/from this trip.
- All airfare (except flights listed as included), airport and departure taxes, and excess baggage fees.
- Passport and visa fees.
- Dinner on February 16 and lunch and dinner on February 27.
- Personal porter – recommended if you are carrying any photography equipment.
- Divergent airport transfers and extra hotel nights.
- Gratuities for local Tour Leader.
- Mandatory [emergency evacuation insurance](#).
- Optional [Trip cancellation insurance](#).
- Items of a personal nature such as laundry, telephone calls, medical costs or hospitalization, room service, alcoholic beverages at hotels, items not on the regular menu, etc. If you have special dietary needs, please indicate them on your Traveler Form.

SIGN UP

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

[Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris](#)

Email: info@cheesemans.com

WhatsApp: (408) 741-5330

Phone: (800) 527-5330 or (408) 741-5330

OTHER DETAILS

Climate

The average February temperatures 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, with lows around 53°F (12°C) and highs around 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.

When you fill in your Traveler Form, please answer the following:

1. Describe how you handled traveling in high-elevation areas in the past.
2. Do you have any conditions that could make travel at high elevation a challenge? If so, have you discussed them with your doctor?

Accommodations

Snow Leopard Lodge at Mangyu is designed and conceptualized for wildlife exploration in the trans-Himalayan landscape. The camp hosts only 6 passive-solar, centrally heated en-suite rooms.

Flights

Detailed logistical information is included in the Trip Planning Materials we will send you.

Please wait to book your flights until you receive confirmation from your Coordinator that the minimum number of participants has been met to operate the trip. If you choose to book flights before receiving this confirmation, we strongly recommend purchasing flight cancellation insurance to protect your investment.

Flights you book

- Arrive in Delhi, India (DEL) by 11:59pm on February 16. **If you are arriving from our India trip**, see the *Flights* section in its itinerary for arrival information.
- Depart from Delhi, India (DEL) after 10:00pm on February 26.

Flights we book

- The round-trip flights between Delhi and Leh are included in the trip cost. **Important:** We will book this domestic flight to allow 20kg of free checked luggage per person and anything beyond is charged an excess baggage and can be paid for at check-in.

Terms and Conditions

Read our current [Terms and Conditions](#).

Conservation

Our company ethos has always regarded conservation as inseparable from responsible tourism. We struggle with the dilemma that traveling worldwide expends climate-changing carbon. However, we wholeheartedly believe that traveling with us will cultivate your passion for conserving our beautiful world while stimulating each destination's local economy. We encourage you to explore the various ways in which Cheesemans' operates within this context:

- **Ecotourism and Conservation for Snow Leopards.**
- **Cheesemans' Trips are Carbon Neutral.**
- **Offsetting your Travel to/from our Trip:** We ask you to pledge to offset the carbon emissions for your travel to and from our trips. You can purchase offsets with most airlines (Delta includes them automatically), use our handy [carbon calculator](#) and donate to Sustainable Travel International, or contribute to your favorite offsetting organization

FAQS

How likely are we to see a snow leopard?

Snow leopards are among the world's most elusive big cats, so sightings can never be guaranteed. However, our expert local team, experienced trackers, and flexible itinerary maximize our chances, and recent Cheesemans' trips have enjoyed excellent success. Even when snow leopards remain hidden, you'll experience spectacular Himalayan scenery and other remarkable wildlife, including ibex, blue sheep, Himalayan wolves, and a variety of high-altitude birds.

What is the hiking like? Do I need to be an experienced trekker?

This trip is designed for wildlife observation rather than long-distance trekking. Most days involve driving between viewing areas and taking short to moderate walks over uneven, rocky terrain while scanning for wildlife. The high altitude (10,000–14,000+ feet / 3,000–4,300 m) makes even gentle walks more strenuous, so a reasonable level of fitness and the ability to walk on uneven ground are important.