

**CLIMB/
TREK/
SKI**



Private Stok Kangri Expedition - CCAT

Introduction

Stok Kangri is clearly visible from Leh, the capital of Ladakh in Northern India. We have been organising expeditions to this fine trekking peak since 1988. In 2010, we refined our itinerary so that the trip could be completed in a little over two weeks. This new itinerary worked exceptionally well, with all twelve team members reaching the summit.

We fly from Delhi to Leh and spend two days here acclimatising and visiting hill top monasteries, before following our new itinerary, which visits the quiet Shang Valley. Here, we cross many spurs and minor passes, with occasional views northwards towards the Indus Valley, until we reach a high point at the 4,960m Shang La, prior to arriving at Stok Kangri base camp.

On summit day we cross a glacier and scree to reach the sharp south ridge, which leads, in a superbly exposed position, to the narrow summit. On a clear day you can see as far as the mighty Karakoram and K2, 220Km to the north west. Additional highlights of the trip include visiting Leh, the ancient capital of Ladakh. The regal air of the city, with its 'potala-like' palace and the charm of the friendly and traditionally dressed Ladakhi people, all contribute to the experience of this expedition.

To join this superb trip, you need to be familiar with the use of ice axe and crampons on low-angled terrain and be confident on British Grade I scrambles, such as Snowdon's Crib Goch. An Introductory Long Weekend mountaineering course in Scotland would serve as ideal preparation.

Expedition Itinerary

Day 1-2: Fly London to Delhi.

Our flight departs London on Friday evening and arrives at Delhi International Airport at 0900 the following morning. Local time in Delhi is 4.5 hours ahead, but hopefully we will have been able to sleep on the flight. We are met at the airport and taken to our hotel, which is very conveniently placed for sightseeing in the city. In July and August, the air-conditioning and swimming pool are always most welcome. The central location of our hotel enables you to visit the local bazaars and shops around Connaught Place. We particularly recommend the famous ice-cream bar, Nirula's, and its excellent restaurant upstairs. The extensive lawns surrounding India Gate are also nearby, with the Government Buildings at the far end.

Day 3: Fly to Leh, the capital of Ladakh.

We make an early start to take the flight to Leh, the capital city of Ladakh. The flight takes us over the Greater Himalaya and makes an exciting landing at one of the highest airports in the world. We can hope to get excellent views of Stok Kangri as we fly-in and, on a clear day, the great peaks of the Karakoram are visible to the north. We are met at the airport and taken to the Kang Lha Chen. The rest of the day is at leisure. Leh is at an altitude of nearly 3,350m/11,000ft, and you can expect to feel the effects of the rarefied atmosphere. For the first few hours, you may be a little breathless and perhaps have a slight headache. These symptoms of altitude sickness are mild and usually disappear quite quickly, however, everyone is advised to take it easy for the first day or two. Press-ups and hill sprints are definitely taboo!

Day 4-5: Exploring the city of Leh (3,350m).

We have two days to relax and stroll around Leh, to allow the effects of the altitude to wear off. This is an important period, which allows the body to acclimatise in preparation for the initial trek. There are plenty of distractions in Leh, varying from scenic and cultural to gastronomic. There are options of visiting the 11th century monastery at Alchi and the famous Khardung La pass (the highest motorable road in the world).

Day 6: Trek to Sumdo (3,800m).

In the morning we will visit the Thiksey Monastery, which is 18Km outside of Leh and continue our drive to the beginning of the trek to Shang. The bird life on our acclimatisation trek is spectacular, with previous teams have spotted Lammergeyer, Peregrine Falcon, Choughs, Indian Griffon Vulture and White-winged Redstart. Our walk begins up a stony valley via a well-defined path. There are several river crossings en route to our camp, which we establish just before the gorge at Sumdo (3,800m). Overall, it should take about 3 hrs to get to camp.

Day 7: Trek to Shang Phu (4,365m).

From Sumdo, we head directly up the valley to Shang Phu at an altitude of 4,365m to complete a total of 5 to 6 hrs walking. This is one of the most beautiful camp

sites on the trek, but do look out for Wolves, as they are quite common in this remote place.

Day 8: Cross the Shang La (4,960m).

Our third day on trek is probably the toughest non summit day of the trip, as we climb 900m to a high point on the Shang La. This part of our acclimatisation trek traverses an area which is very rarely visited and involves the crossing of many spurs and minor passes, with occasional views northwards towards the Indus Valley and the peaks beyond. Following our ascent to the Shang La (4,960m), we then descend to the Tokpo River for lunch. After lunch we trek downhill, contouring around spurs and over a 4,550m pass to our camping place at Gangpoche (4,435m). Today we can expect to walk for 6 to 7 hours.

Day 9: Trek to Smankarmo (4,380m).

It's another steady climb in the morning, this time up to the Matho La (4,965m). From just before the pass we have our views of Stok Kangri. When it is clear, it is also possible to see the 8,000m Gasherbrum peaks 210 km away in Pakistan. Kashmir is in the narrow gap in the foreground. At the Matho La pass, we can walk 100m southwest on the top of the ridge, just past the first small hill for views of Saltoro Kangri. We then descend into the valley to the north of Stok Village. This lovely valley is a high and wild area, which is visited only by climbing groups and by the local people who spend some of the summer months in picturesque villages of stone huts, from where they tend their flocks of sheep and goats. We camp near Shepherds huts at Smankarmo (4,380m) after 4 to 5 hours of walking.

Day 10: Trek to Stok Kangri base camp (4,980m).

A two hour trek takes us up to the base camp area for Stok Kangri (Yarlas at 4,980m). This pleasant campsite is on a grassy area beside a meltwater stream. In the afternoon we can walk above our camp for views of the Rimo peaks (adjacent to the Siachen Glacier in the East Karakoram), where the meltwater torrent flows out of the very middle of the Gulap Glacier's terminal moraine at 5,160m.

Day 11: Acclimatisation walk to 5,400m.

It used to be possible to use an advance base camp at 5,400m below the south face. This is now not allowed, so we spend today walking up towards this site as part of our acclimatisation and to scope out our route. From base camp, we climb straight up the moraine, which stands immediately above our camp. This is tiring work but it soon eases to give a gentle descent and access to the glacier beyond. Depending on snow conditions, we may put on crampons to walk onto the glacier. The surface of the glacier will probably be uneven and furrowed by melt water streams. There are a few, very small crevasses, which are crossed easily. At the top of the glacier the slope steepens as we climb up onto the south face to where the site of the old camp is located, on a promontory of rough ground.

Day 12: A rest day and time for final preparations.

We have a day of relaxing and preparing for the big summit day tomorrow, before spending another night at base camp to complete our acclimatisation.

Day 13: Summit day.

Our summit day begins before dawn, to give us ample time for the climb. Psychologically it will be helpful to have previously covered the ground to the old advance base camp, as we will be doing this section of the ascent in the dark. From the advance base camp, the nature of the route depends on the snow cover. It is most likely that we do not need our crampons for the most part as we scramble over scree and boulders, which lead up to the south ridge. The 1,500 ft ridge that stretches up to the summit is exciting and superbly exposed, although never particularly steep and very straightforward. Most of the ridge is like a steep path, so ropes are not usually necessary, although some scrambling is required. At an altitude approaching 20,000 ft it is extremely tiring and anybody who needs a rope will be able to use one.

The summit is a superb reward for your effort, giving magnificent views in every direction. The city of Leh is so small that you can barely see it. After taking photographs and perhaps a bite to eat, we set off back down the hill. The route taken depends on the leader, but it is usually a reversal of the way we went up. Occasionally our groups have descended the South Face, in which case a small abseil is necessary near the top. On reaching the glacier, we return all the way back to base camp.

Day 14: Trek to Stok from base camp.

From base camp we trek directly down the valley towards the village of Stok. This is a delightful walk through a dramatic canyon with amazing red sandstone formations. It is an excellent example of vertical strata showing how plate tectonics can shape mountains so quickly. Also, look out for Blue Sheep as they scamper across steep rock faces, which most of us wouldn't venture onto without climbing equipment! We pass several homesteads and numerous ruins of old fortresses, reaching Stok after about six hours walking. Our transport meets us here to take us back to the Kang Lha Chen Hotel in Leh.

Day 15: Fly from Leh to Delhi.

After another spectacular flight, we return to our hotel and some welcome relaxation.

Day 16: At leisure in Delhi.

Time for last minute shopping and sightseeing. For those with plenty of energy we can organise a day trip to Agra and the Taj Mahal (this is not included in the price).

Day 17: Fly from Delhi to London.

Our flight departs Delhi International Airport in the early afternoon, arriving back in London in the early evening.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Every effort will be made to keep to the above itinerary, but as this is Adventure Travel in a remote mountain region, we cannot guarantee it. Weather conditions, road conditions, vehicle breakdowns, landslides, river crossings, the availability of horses and the health of climbers can all contribute to

changes. Our local agent will try to ensure that the trip runs according to plan, but an easy going nature will be an asset!

What the price includes:

- Economy class return airfares from the UK (unless Land Only).
- UK airport taxes.
- All internal flights and hotel/airport transfers.
- Hotel accommodation in Delhi on a bed and breakfast basis.
- The best available hotel accommodation in Leh.
- All road transport by private vehicles.
- All camping facilities and meals during the expedition.
- All portering costs.
- Medical Oxygen and Portable Altitude Chamber.
- Climbing sherpas and local helpers detailed under 'Team Composition'.
- Jagged Globe kitbag or fleece.