

India: Snow Leopards & More!

With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures



February 25 – March 12, 2018

866.900.1146

800.426.7781

520.558.1146

naturalistjourneys@gmail.com

www.naturalistjourneys.com

or find us on Facebook at
Naturalist Journeys, LLC



Naturalist Journeys info@naturalistjourneys.com 866.900.1146 / Caligo Ventures info@caligo.com 800.426.7781
naturalistjourneys.com / caligo.com P.O. Box 16545 Portal AZ 85632 FAX: 650.471.7667

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Head high into the Himalayas in the north of India on a journey that can't be beat. Local guides join you as you search for Snow Leopards in Hemis National Park; experience homestays at different villages nestled in the mountains; search for the rare Tibetan Wild Dog, Himalayan Ibex, Ladakh Urial, Tibetan Wolf, and Red Fox; as well as Black-billed Magpie, Chukar, soaring Golden Eagle, White-winged or Guldensstadt's Redstart, and more. Spot Ibisbill at the Indus River and continue your Snow Leopard search at Hemisukpachan. **This is a journey at high altitude and involves long walks on most days in search of Snow Leopards.**

Tour Highlights

- Search for Sind Sparrow, Rufous-fronted Prinia, Spotted Crake, Ballion's Crake, Black-necked Stork, Sarus Crane, Eurasian Wryneck, and Isabelline Shrike near New Delhi
- Spend time acclimatizing at the beautiful Grand Dragon hotel in Lek
- Camp on the Husing riverfront looking for Snow Leopard and other high-altitude wildlife and birds
- Look for Tibetan Partridge and the rare and elusive Eurasian Lynx as you enjoy tea at the Yurutse monastery
- Spot herds of Himalayan Ibex near Wuleh

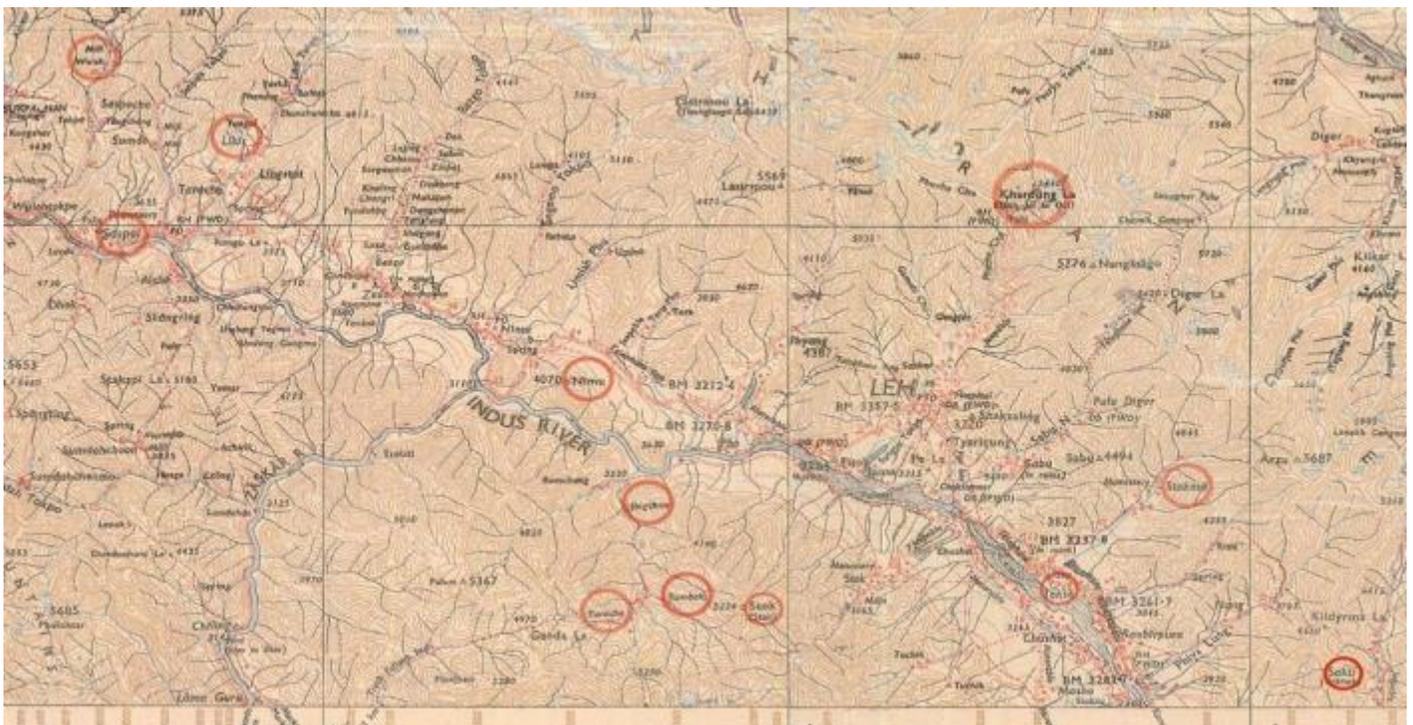
Tour Summary

16-Day / 15-Night Indian Wildlife Tour with Avijit Sarkhel

\$4750, from New Delhi

Airport is Indira Gandhi International (DEL)

Areas of Exploration around Leh



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Key Species

Mammals

Snow Leopard, Eurasian Lynx, Tibetan Wolf, Red Fox, Mountain Weasel, Stone Marten, Ladakh Urial, Tibetan Argali, Blue Sheep, Himalayan Ibex, Woolly Hare, Royle's Pika, Large-eared Pika, Kashmir Field Mouse

Birds

Himalayan Snowcock, Tibetan Snowcock, Tibetan Partridge, Garganey, Common Merganser, Eurasian Eagle Owl, Hill Pigeon, Snow Pigeon, Solitary Snipe, Lammergeier, Himalayan Griffon, Eurasian Sparrowhawk, Long-legged Buzzard, Golden Eagle, Eurasian Hobby, Yellow Billed Chough, Red Billed Chough, White-throated Dipper, Brown Dipper, Winter Wren, White-browed Tit-Warbler, Mountain Chiffchaff, White-rumped Snowfinch, Plain-backed Snowfinch, Water Pipit, Altai Accentor, Brown Accentor, Robin Accentor, Rufous-breasted Accentor, Red-fronted Serin, European Goldfinch, Mongolian Finch, Common Rosefinch, Streaked Rosefinch, Great Rosefinch, Red-fronted Rosefinch

Conditions

Place	Avg. Altitude	Day Temp.	Night Temp.
Leh	10,682 ft.	32 to 50° F	32 to 23° F
Hemis National Park	10,301 ft.	32 to 46° F	32 to 0° F
Rumbak Village	13,123 ft.	32 to 46° F	32 to 0° F
Wuleh	13,451 ft.	32 to 39° F	32 to -8° F
Khardung la Pass	17,716 ft.	25 to 39° F	
Yuruche Village	13,779 ft.	32 to 46° F	32 to 0° F
Husing in Hemis	12,467 ft.	32 to 46° F	32 to 5° F



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Itinerary

Sun., Feb. 25 Arrivals in New Delhi

Welcome to India! On arrival at the New Delhi airport (for those who arrive earlier in the day) you are met by your driver and then head out to start birding right away in the outskirts of Delhi — make sure your binoculars are in your carry-on. We look for Spanish Sparrow in Basai and Sultanpur forest and fringe villages. As we look for Spanish Sparrow, we also hope to see several other species like Sind Sparrow, Rufous-fronted Prinia, Spotted Crake, Ballion's Crake, Black-necked Stork, Sarus Crane, Eurasian Wryneck, Isabelline Shrike, and more. After our birding stop, we drive to our simple, but functional hotel to rest up after the long day of travel.

Accommodations at the Colonel's Retreat at Dwarka (D)

Mon., Feb. 26 New Delhi / Travel to Leh

We have an early start today to meet our flight out to Leh. With luck, we enjoy views of the spectacular western Himalayas from the plane. Once we arrive in Leh, collect our bags, and meet our Ladakh representative, we drive to our hotel. The rest of the day is at your leisure to relax and acclimatize. You have just arrived at nearly 11,500 feet above sea level, so please ensure that you have 2.5 liters of water per person and a good amount of sleep; this helps you acclimatize more quickly.

Accommodations at the Grand Dragon, Leh (B,L,D)



Tues., Feb. 27 Leh

We start the morning off easy, again to help you acclimatize. We arranged the schedule so that you can rest until about noon, before heading out around 2:00 PM. We make stops at good birding locations around the hotel and enjoy gentle birding from the car and some moderate walking in the local habitats.

Accommodations at the Grand Dragon, Leh (B,L,D)

Wed., Feb. 28 Leh

You should be well acclimatized by today. After breakfast we drive to Stakna, Stok, or some other area for your first look out for birds and mammals. We return to our hotel for lunch and a bit of rest before we then again head out in the afternoon.

Accommodations at the Grand Dragon, Leh (B,L,D)

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Thurs., Mar. 1

Leh / Hemis National Park

After breakfast we head out on an hour-long drive to Jingchan. Once we arrive, we gently walk to our first base: Husing River Front. Your guide and crew are ready to receive you as you settle in to your first day inside Hemis National Park. On arrival, enjoy some hot snacks and a drink and then we get our camp set up. Once done, you can go out walking in the near and surrounds looking for Snow Leopard and other wildlife and birds.

Accommodations in Tents at Husing Riverfront (B,L,D)



Fri., Mar. 2 Hemis National Park

Your guide and local team are out early looking for birds and Snow Leopard and they wake you if there is any news about locations or sightings of birds that you may wish to find. Breakfast follows, and then we start our walk towards Rumbak. If there are Snow Leopard sighted somewhere else, we first check that area (you can make this decision after checking with the team about how long a walk it is and if you can do it). Once you have reached the half-way point you park here for the day, scanning for birds and waiting for Snow Leopard movements and news. If that happens then you need to walk to the location or skip the sighting if it is not worth the effort. Around 1700 hours or slightly later we head to Rumbak Village.



Inside the homestay we meet the family and get acquainted with our surroundings. You may consider carrying your own top sheet if you are picky about cleanliness. The homestays are well-run by the local families who look after you well in an otherwise dry and arid country. They do provide hot water in case you need to have a shower.

Accommodations in Homestay at Rumbak (B,L,D)

Sat., Mar. 3 & Sun., Mar. 4 Hemis National Park

After breakfast we wait for news on leopards and other mammals. You can come out and bird in the surrounds. Then you start your walk for the Snow Leopard. This area



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can be very windy, causing the temperature to drop quickly. We are out all day with a hot picnic lunch that our crew brings to us.

After our lunch and more explorations, we return to our accommodations. In the evenings, we keep an eye out and are attentive for Tibetan Wolf and even Snow Leopard that regularly come inside the village.

Accommodations in Homestay at Rumbak (B,L,D)

Mon., Mar. 5 Hemis National Park

After an early breakfast we walk towards Yuruche; we walk downhill first and cross the frozen river. After that we walk gently uphill towards the Yurutse monastery. Upon arriving at the monastery, we take a break and enjoy a cup of local tea. This area is good for Tibetan Partridge and the rare and elusive Eurasian Lynx. Occasionally, one finds the Tibetan Argali here.

Accommodations in Homestay at Yurutse (B,L,D)

Tues., Mar. 6 Hemis National Park

After early breakfast we walk up the ridge and look for the Tibetan Argali that inhabits this area. Later in the day we explore this area looking for the Eurasian Lynx and other mammals. You may walk back to Yurutse or continue even further towards Ganda La to look for Snow Leopard.

Accommodations in Homestay at Yurutse (B,L,D)

Wed., Mar. 7 Hemis National Park / Leh

After breakfast we head out to the nearby fields looking for Tibetan Partridge and Himalayan Snowcock. During the early mornings there are usually Blue Sheep and sometimes Tibetan Argali comes into the village. After our morning wildlife



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watching, we walk back to Zingchan. Upon arrival we transfer to our car and drive to Leh. Once we settle in, we spend the afternoon exploring the Indus River looking for Ibisbill and other birds.

Accommodations at the Grand Dragon (B,L,D)

Thurs., Mar. 8 Leh / Hemissukpachan

After breakfast we drive to Hemissukpachan at a gentle pace — stopping, scanning, and driving. On arrival, we enjoy a walk in the area looking for the Ladakh Urial, Tibetan Wolf, Red Fox, and the Snow Leopard. There are common birds like the Black-billed Magpie, Chukar, soaring Golden Eagle, White-winged or Guldenstadt's Redstart, and other species. We may also get a glimpse at Woolly Hare today.

Accommodations in Homestay at Hemissukpachan (B,L,D)



Fri., Mar. 9 Hemissukpachan or Wuleh

After breakfast we drive up to Wuleh where we look for the Himalayan Ibex, a number of good birds, Tibetan Wolf, Red Fox, and more. We spend the day here and driving to other local areas looking for birds. If there are Snow Leopard that have been sighted in the area and we cannot find them today, you may overnight here.

Accommodations in Homestay at Hemissukpachan or Wuleh (B,L,D)



Sat., Mar. 10 Hemissukpachan / Leh

After breakfast we head out to look for the rare Tibetan Wild Dog. If we have sighted Snow Leopard already, we dedicate much of the day to searching for the Wild Dog. The Tibetan Wild Dog has not been sighted for a long time and a sighting and an image will be a prize catch for anyone. We may explore Likir and its surroundings today, where there were reports of sightings many years back. This evening we are driven to Leh to overnight.

Accommodations at the Grand Dragon (B,L,D)



Sun., Mar. 11 Leh / Delhi

After breakfast we drive to the airport to fly back to Delhi. On arrival at New Delhi we drive to the Colonel's Retreat.

Accommodations at the Colonel's Retreat (B,L,D)

Mon., Mar. 12 Departures

After a relaxed breakfast you are driven to the international airport to connect to your flight home.

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Cost of the Journey

Plan Ahead!

Protect yourself with Allianz Travel Insurance. Offset your carbon footprint on one of the many online programs. Show us the receipt and we'll take 50% — up to \$50.00 — of your carbon offset fee off your final payment!

Cost of the Journey

The cost per person is \$4750 DBL / \$5175 SGL, from New Delhi. Tour price includes 15 nights' accommodations, all meals as noted in the itinerary, drinking water, airport transfers, transportation in heated vehicle during the journey, professional guide services, support crew, park and other entrance fees, Ladakhi Snow Leopard spotter and an additional Indian leader, sleeping bag outers for camping, oxygen cylinder, basic first-aid, heater for dining tent, generator for charging, internal flights in economy class, taxes, and miscellaneous program expenses. Tour cost does not include airfare to and from New Delhi, personal expenses such as laundry, telephone, drinks from the bar, and gratuities for luggage handling or other services, medical expenses, evacuation costs if necessary, and additional expenses due to weather or medical conditions.

Travel Information

Airport is Indira Gandhi International (DEL) in New Delhi, India. Please plan to arrive by early evening on February 25; **please check with us on flight times BEFORE you finalize your booking.** You may plan your departure flight on March 12 at your convenience. We can recommend a travel agent if you need help planning flights.

Photo Credits

Himalayan Ibex, Avijit Sarkhel (AS); Snow Leopards, AS; Horned Lark, AS; Searching for Snow Leopards, AS; Golden Eagle, AS; Chukar Partridge, AS; Grand Dragon Hotel, courtesy hotel website; Large-eared Pika, AS; Guides in Ladakh, AS; Blue Sheep, AS; Snow Leopard Tracks, AS; Tibetan Wolf, Saurabh Sawant (SS); Winter Wren, AS; Lammergeier, AS; Ladakh Scenic, SS; Ladakh Urial, AS.