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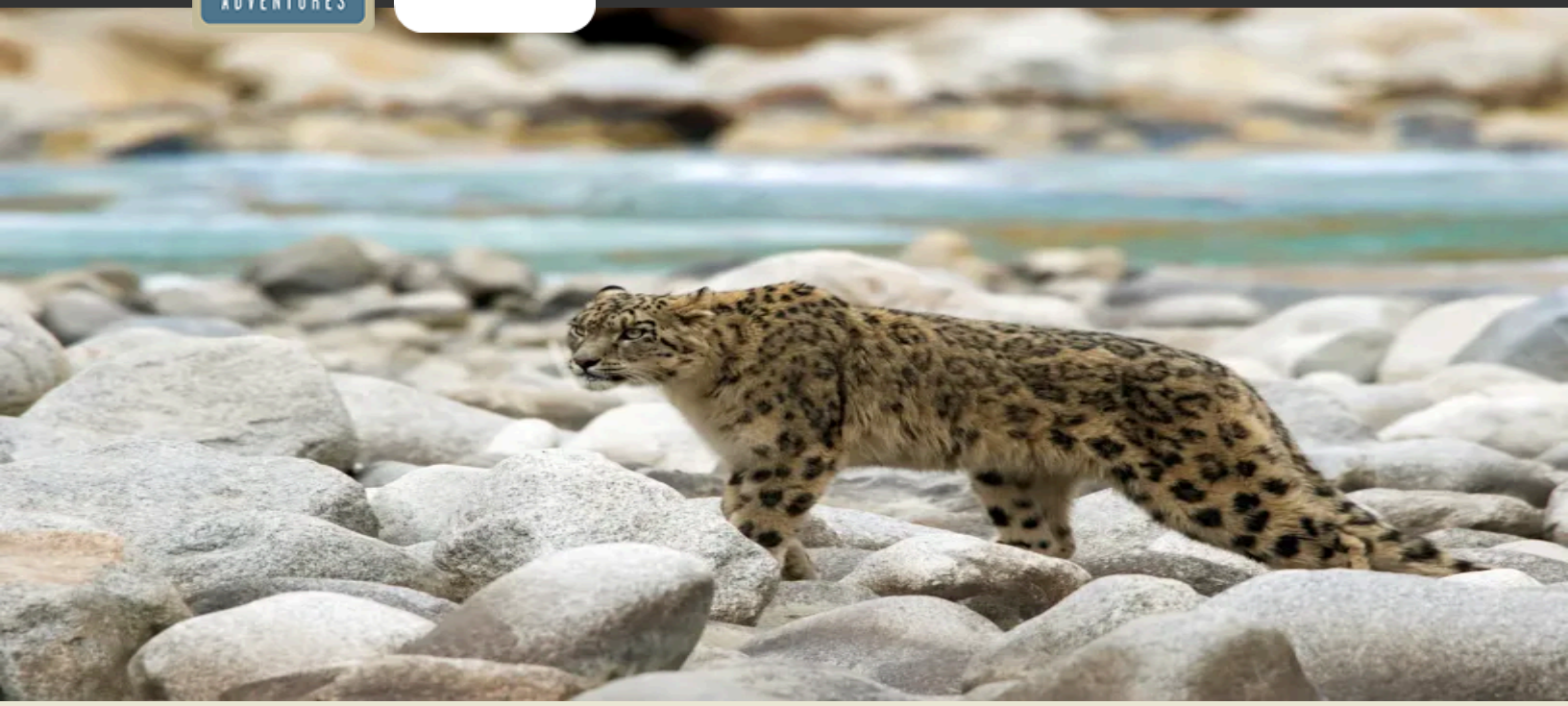

Snow Leopard Quest Photo Expedition

A Himalayan Adventure in Pursuit of One of Earth's Rarest and Most Beautiful Cats

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Trip Details:

Days
11 Days / Feb–Apr

Price
From $12895 (+Air)

Snow Leopard Quest Photo Expedition

A Himalayan Adventure in Pursuit of One of Earth's Rarest and Most Beautiful Cats

The snow leopard is a creature of legend in the alpine heights of the Indian Himalaya. Known locally as the "gray ghost," they are rarely seen, since they are masters of camouflage and live on steep, rocky slopes. For wildlife photographers, this gorgeous cat is a coveted prize—and we travel with some of the best snow leopard trackers in the world in pursuit of images that few will ever have a chance to attain. Based out of a deluxe, family-owned ecolodge with thick walls, insulated windows, radiant floor heating and abundant hot running water in a remote valley in Ladakh, we spend a full week in the snow leopard's terrain, heading out each day in search of them. Other wildlife thrives in this austere landscape, too: keep your camera poised for shots of bharal, urial, argali and ibex—the wild mountain sheep and antelope that are the snow leopard's prey—as well as Himalayan wolf, fox, and raptors soaring overhead, including the Himalayan golden eagle and lammergeyer, with its 10-foot wingspan.

Trip Highlights

With top trackers and guides, pursue photos of snow leopards and other Himalayan wildlife such as bharal, urial, ibex and Himalayan wolves

On this in-depth photography immersion, spend seven nights at a private mountain lodge in snow leopard territory adjacent to Hemis National Park, with the region's most experienced naturalist guides

Our deluxe, newly built mountain lodge features en suite heated showers, radiant floor heating and floor-to-ceiling windows throughout—and it's for our exclusive use

Ready to Book? Call an Adventure Specialist at 800-543-8917

Itinerary At A Glance

Day 1
New Delhi, India

Day 2
New Delhi / Leh, Ladakh

Day 3
Leh—Photographing the Indian Himalaya & Gya Village

Days 4 - 9
Snow Leopard Photography from Rumbak—Private Expedition Lodge

Day 10
Rumbak / Leh

Day 11
Leh / Delhi / Depart

Snow Leopard Quest Photo Expedition Itinerary

A Himalayan Adventure in Pursuit of One of Earth's Rarest and Most Beautiful Cats

Day 1: New Delhi, India

Arrive at the international airport in India's capital of New Delhi and transfer to our upscale 5-star hotel conveniently located in Aerocity, the airport area's sprawling hospitality district. This evening, join our Expedition Leader for a welcome dinner and preview of our journey into the Indian Himalaya and the realm of *Panthera uncia*, the snow leopard.

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Day 2: New Delhi / Leh, Ladakh

Early this morning, we head to the airport to board our flight north to the former Himalayan kingdom of Ladakh. This is one of India's least-populated regions, known for its austere landscape dominated by dramatic peaks, monasteries filled with golden Buddhas, and the elusive snow leopards that prowl the heights of these rocky, arid mountain environs. Once we touch down at 11,500 feet in the Ladakhi capital of Leh, our high-altitude acclimatization begins. For centuries, Leh was a crossroads for Indus Valley trade between Tibet, Kashmir, India and China—routes that carried salt, cashmere wool, indigo and silk. The local people are ethnic Tibetans who speak Ladakhi, and Buddhism and Islam have co-existed peacefully here since the 8th century. Our lodging in the heart of this ancient city sits in the shadow of an unoccupied 17th-century palace designed to evoke the Dalai Lama's former residence in Lhasa—the famous Potala Palace. The rest of the day is at leisure as we settle in and adjust to the high elevation.

Day 3: Leh—Photographing the Indian Himalaya & Gya Village

Today we travel into the rugged rural area surrouding Leh in the Indus River Valley. It's easy to see why this enclave at the northern tip of India is often called "Little Tibet," as we cross passes marked with colorful prayer flags below towering Himalayan peaks. As we travel, be on the lookout for blue sheep, golden eagles and bearded vultures. A highlight is our visit to Gya, the oldest village in Ladakh, perched on a gorge overlooking the river. A group of villagers greets us with a special welcome before taking us on a guided tour of their town during which we learn about animal husbandry, handicrafts and textiles, and traditional barley roasting and cooking. Archery is an important element of Ladakhi culture, and we visit a range where we can photograph archers in their element—with a chance to try your own hand with a bow and arrow. After lunch in a local home, set out on foot with our guide to photograph the regional landscape, with good odds to spot blue sheep and birdlife. Return to Leh by late afternoon, with some time to rest as we continue to acclimatize.

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Days 4 - 9: Snow Leopard Photography from Rumbak—Private Expedition Lodge

Following the Indus River westward, we stop to visit the Stakna Buddhist Monastery, built in the 16th century, where we join the monks for breakfast. Continue to the village of Rumbak, the gateway to a wild and austere landscape ruled by the "gray ghost of the mountains"—a name given to the snow leopard by local people for its elusive and enigmatic nature. From our private ecolodge base here in the heart of snow leopard terrain, we'll spend a week tracking and photographing these mystical cats. Our lodge, the finest in the region, provides a comfortable respite from the elements. It was recently constructed using traditional Ladakhi techniques and materials, including stone, mud and timber, chosen for their natural insulating properties. Set on a plateau with panoramic views of the snow-crowned mountains and Rumbak River below, the lodge features radiant floor heating, hot running water, and double-glazed windows for warmth. The nearby village of Rumbak, population 250, is a short walk away.

Over the next six days, we search the alpine heights in and around Hemis National Park, which holds the highest density of snow leopards in any protected area in the world—about 200 individiuals. These trans-Himalayan cats have evolved to thrive in some of Earth's harshest alpine terrain, mostly above tree line and up to 18,000 feet in elevation. In addition to snow leopards, this habitat supports three large ungulates—bharal (blue sheep), urial (mountain sheep) and rarely seen ibex, along with fox, hare, pika and packs of Tibetan wolves.

To find elusive snow leopards, we rely on the expertise and keen eyes of a team of top local spotters, plus our naturalist Expedition Leader. These seasoned trackers scour the landscape early each morning to help plan our route for the day, increasing our luck of seeing these cats whose camouflage enables them to blend in seamlessly with their environs. We also maintain radio contact with trackers throughout the day, so we know when snow leopards wander into our area. Private vehicles maximize our flexibility to move to where the snow leopards are. Typically, we spot them on high ridges around our lodge or within a short walk from the vehicles, but longer hikes are available for those who wish. In all cases, have your long lens ready, as they are often seen at a distance. In between excursions, the lodge offers a cozy retreat where we can warm up with hot chai. Nearby are Ladakhi cultural sites including Buddhist temples and monasteries, which we visit if time allows.

At every turn, photo opportunities abound, whether wildlife, landscapes or cultural settings. In the evenings, our Expedition Leader hosts workshops and editing sessions to help you take your photography to the next level.

Day 10: Rumbak / Leh

After breakfast, enjoy a last morning of photography opportunities in Rumbak, soaking in the peace and solitude of this alpine domain. Soon, it's time to say farewell to our gracious Ladakhi hosts whose lodge enterprise is helping to enhance protection for snow leopards in the area. These regal cats face threats from habitat loss due to climate change, reduced prey, poaching and human conflict. Yet we leave knowing that our presence here makes a difference for their future, with the value of our economic contribution and our advocacy on their behalf. Back in Leh, have lunch at our hotel. There may be time to do some last-minute shopping afterward if markets are open. Later this evening, share highlights and reflections over a farewell dinner.

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Day 11: Leh / Delhi / Depart

Fly from Leh to Delhi this morning and continue to our hotel where an overnight room is reserved. A lavish lunch awaits at the hotel, followed by time to relax among landscaped gardens and pools. A transfer to the international airport is included to meet departing flights this evening.

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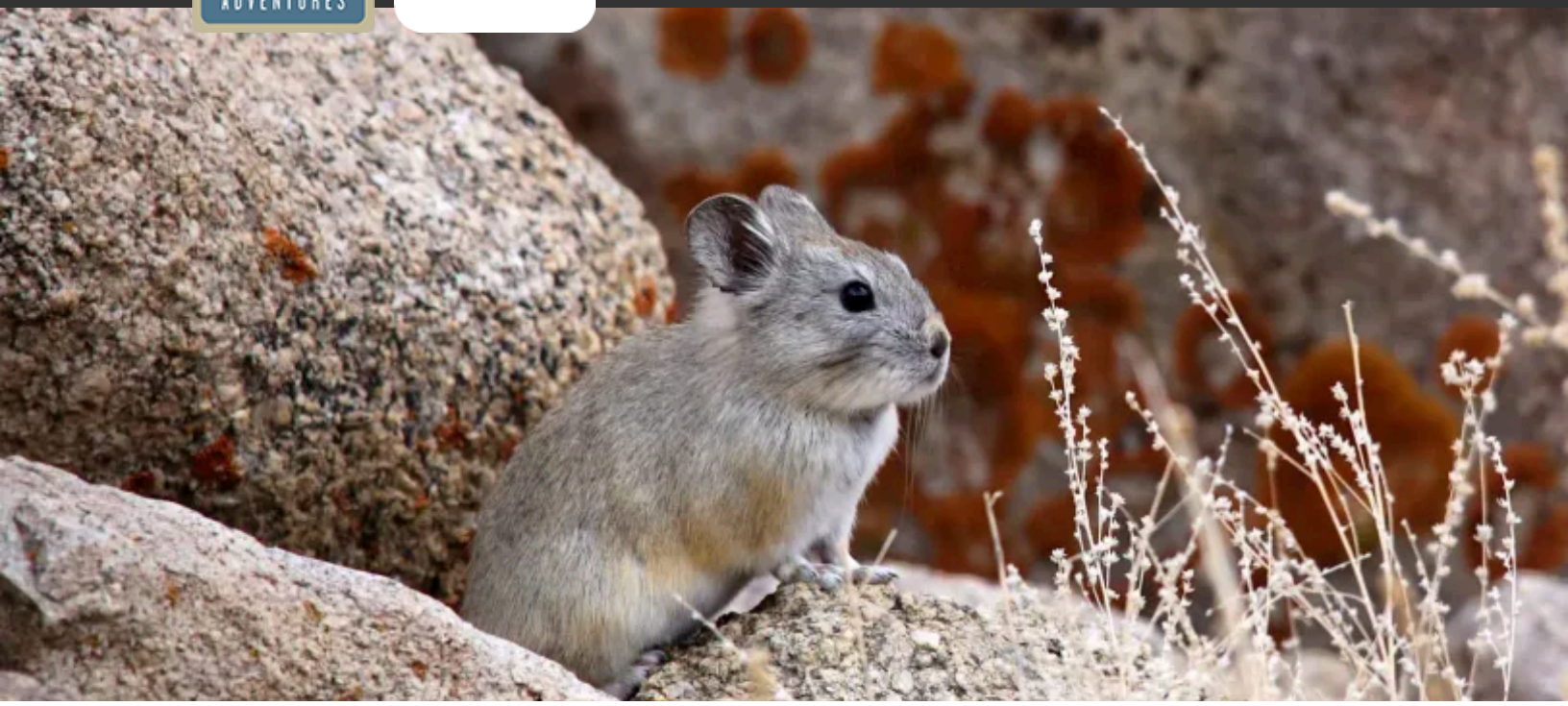

Accommodation Details:

House of Rumbak Wildlife Lodge

The Grand Dragon Ladakh

Roseate House New Delhi

For detailed descriptions, visit nathab.com/asia-adventure-travel/himalayan-snow-leopard-photo-tour/accommodations

Snow Leopard Quest Photo Expedition Accommodations

A Himalayan Adventure in Pursuit of One of Earth's Rarest and Most Beautiful Cats

House of Rumbak Wildlife Lodge

Located at 12,800 feet above sea level and offering excellent proximity for snow leopard tracking, this new ecolodge provides a warm and cozy base exclusively for Nat Hab guests.

The Grand Dragon Ladakh

In the heart of ancient Leh, enjoy the luxuries of Ladakh's premier 5-star hotel, combining elements of traditional Ladakhi art and culture with state-of-the-art amenities and expansive views of snowcapped peaks.

Roseate House New Delhi

A modern sanctuary in New Delhi's vibrant Aerocity, Roseate House is a luxurious urban retreat, offering contemporary rooms, world-class dining, and personalized service—all just minutes from the airport and metro station.

Ready to Book? Call an Adventure Specialist at 800-543-8917

The World's Best Opportunity for Snow Leopard Photography

Photographing snow leopards in the wild is one of the most exclusive travel quests on the planet—and no one can help you attain that goal like we can! Visiting high-altitude Ladakh in winter or spring is a daunting prospect on your own—so let us handle all the details. This is the photo expedition of a lifetime you need our expertise for!

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1 No Better Place to Seek Snow Leopard Photos

Called the "gray ghost" by locals, a moniker that attests to its elusiveness, the snow leopard is a rare creature that has been virtually "unseeable" to many who go in search of it. But that is changing, as conservation becomes a priority in northern India. As the Snow Leopard Conservancy–India Trust continues to work with local villagers to protect these cats, sightings—and photo opportunities—are up.

2 Top Spotters, Trackers and Guides Enhance Your Odds

If you want the best chances to photograph elusive snow leopards and other Himalayan wildlife, you must have access to a superlative local team. Based at our private lodge in snow leopard territory, we spend seven days with the finest trackers and naturalists, including our professional photographer Expedition Leader who coordinates the entire effort. Adept spotters, who are the region's top local trackers, attempt to locate the cats each morning and stay in constant radio contact regarding their movement. We plan our days with utmost flexibility so we can follow the snow leopards' paths accordingly.

3 Our Private Expedition Lodge is an Optimal Base

Our stunning and environmentally conscious ecolodge—for our exclusive use—provides unparalleled comfort with en suite bathrooms, running hot water, radiant floor heating and gourmet meals. Built in the region's traditional architectural style, the lodge's fine details plus proximity to snow leopards and other Himalayan wildlife are the ultimate in luxury.

4 A Small Group is Essential to Maximize Photography Opportunities

With just eight photographers, our small group has a quiet, non-obtrusive presence, upping our chances of encountering snow leopards and other wildlife.

5 Private Vehicles Ensure Maximum Flexibility

We use private vehicles for maximum flexibility, allowing us to seek out snow leopards and other wildlife such as Tibetan wolves, urial, blue sheep, ibex and lammergeyers, wherever they are found.

Ready to Book? Call an Adventure Specialist at 800-543-8917

6 Local Porters Help Carry Your Gear

We'll be covering some challenging mountain terrain as we hike in search of snow leopards, and it's easier to walk without being encumbered by heavy, bulky photography equipment. We've hired porters from the community to take the load off, hauling whatever you need them to carry until we are in range for photography.

7 Our Presence Directly Helps to Protect Snow Leopards

Snow leopards are a vulnerable species under threat from habitat loss, climate, retaliatory killings, and poaching. Their range continues to decline from human settlement, while a warming climate could diminish up to 30% of their terrain in the Himalayas. Responsible tourism is part of the solution. As conservation travelers, the investment we make to photograph Ladakh's snow leopards benefits local communities. Our being there creates an incentive to protect wild creatures they share the land with. In addition, we will make a donation to the Snow Leopard Conservancy–India Trust for each photographer on this expedition.

8 Travel with India's Finest Wildlife Photography Guides

Our India naturalist Expedition Leaders average more than 15 years' experience—with top-level training including resources from WWF scientists. And of course, your guide is also an accomplished professional photographer adept in capturing coveted images of snow leopards and other Himalayan wildlife—and by your side to share tips. You won't find more knowledgeable, personable or enthusiastic guides than those who are proud to work for us. Our philosophy is simple: a nature adventure is only as good as the guide who leads it, so we provide the very best! **See Expedition Leader bios** with traveler comments regarding the quality of our leaders.

9 An Immersion in Ladakh's Rich Tibetan Buddhist Culture

While Ladakh is part of India, it stands apart. Ladakh gained status as a separate union territory in 2019, and this Himalayan state is often referred to as "Little Tibet." As ethnic Tibetans whose cultural and spiritual traditions have been left alone to thrive in a remote mountain environment, their long and vibrant Buddhist history continues to influence everything from roadside prayer flag installations to well-maintained ancient monasteries where monks reside and practice. Absorb Ladakh's cultural sites in a quiet, non-touristy way, including our stay among yak-herding locals in the small Himalayan village of Mangyu.

10 Our Quality-Value Guarantee Ensures Your Snow Leopard Photo Expedition

With Natural Habitat Adventures, you receive our exclusive quality value guarantee that promises we will meet the high expectations we set forth in our promotional materials. To our knowledge, this is the most ambitious guarantee made by any adventure travel company. .

11 Feel Good About Your Carbon-Neutral Journey

We care deeply about our planet, as we know you do. When you travel with us, the carbon emissions from your trip are 100% offset—including your round-trip flights from home. Natural Habitat Adventures has been the world's first carbon-neutral travel company since 2007.

Ready to Book? Call an Adventure Specialist at 800-543-8917

Dates & Pricing Summary:

Prices:
From $12895 (+Air)

Group Size:
Limited to 8 Travelers

Snow Leopard Quest Photo Expedition Dates, Pricing & Info

A Himalayan Adventure in Pursuit of One of Earth's Rarest and Most Beautiful Cats

2026 Departures

Departure	Return	Notes
Mar 15, 2026	Mar 25, 2026	$13295 USD (+internal air)
Mar 22, 2026	Apr 1, 2026	$13295 USD (+internal air)
Mar 29, 2026	Apr 8, 2026	$13295 USD (+internal air)

2027 Departures

Departure	Return	Notes
Feb 19, 2027	Mar 1, 2027	$13395 USD (+internal air)

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Dates & Pricing Summary:

Prices:
From $12895 (+Air)

Group Size:
Limited to 8 Travelers

Departure	Return	Notes
Mar 19, 2027	Mar 29, 2027	$13395 USD (+internal air)
Mar 30, 2027	Apr 9, 2027	$12895 USD (+internal air)
Apr 10, 2027	Apr 20, 2027	$13395 USD (+internal air)

2028 Departures

Departure	Return	Notes
! Prices and dates not confirmed for 2028		
Feb 20, 2028	Mar 1, 2028	$12895 USD (+internal air)
Mar 20, 2028	Mar 30, 2028	$12895 USD (+internal air)
Mar 31, 2028	Apr 10, 2028	$12895 USD (+internal air)
Apr 11, 2028	Apr 21, 2028	$12895 USD (+internal air)

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Pricing

See https://nathab.com/asia-adventure-travel/himalayan-snow-leopard-photo-tour/dates-fees for the latest pricing details.

Included

- **Trip price includes:** Accommodations, services of Nat Hab's professional photo Expedition Leader(s), local guides, spotters and lodge staff, local porter to assist with carrying gear, all meals from dinner on Day 1 through lunch on final day, local wine and beer at dinner while at the Snow Leopard Lodge, some gratuities, airport transfers on Day 1 and final day, donation fees to the Snow Leopard Conservancy, all activities and entrance fees, all taxes, permits and service fees.

- **Internal air cost includes:** All flights within the itinerary, additional luggage allowance (this will be listed separately on our invoicing).

Not Included

Travel to and from the start and end point of your trip, alcoholic beverages (other than those listed above), some gratuities, passport and visa fees, optional activities, items of a personal nature (phone calls, laundry and internet, etc.), airline excess baggage fees, required medical evacuation insurance, optional travel protection insurance.

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Important Information About This Trip

Our snow leopard photo expedition is a conservation-focused adventure designed to provide accomplished photographers with the best chances to go home with coveted wildlife images. It's meant for intrepid travelers with a desire for deeper discovery, and an awareness that staying in the very heart of wild snow leopard habitat is the ultimate luxury. We spend seven nights in the best area for potential sightings, but there are no guarantees we will see this elusive animal. Many sightings occur in the distance, on mountain ridges and through scopes—but they are thrilling nonetheless! We visit during the Himalayan winter and early spring, and weather and high-altitude conditions are sometime hostile. Essential requirements for travel in Ladakh include flexibility, a sense of humor, a true spirit of adventure, and an openness to the unexpected.

Accommodations

Because of its location and the staff's commitment to our guests, our Private Snow Leopard Lodge offers the most comfortable and authentic way to view snow leopards in the wild. Accommodations there are simple and comfortable, with twin or queen-sized beds and warm bedding, 24-hour electricity, electric and wood-burning stove heat and private en suite Western toilets and sink basins. While there is no running water, hot water is supplied on demand for washing, including bucket-style showers. Because it is a small, Ladakhi-style lodge, you will reside in relatively close quarters with fellow travelers. Thus, a flexible and tolerant attitude toward other participants is paramount for the enjoyment of all. While considered rustic by our usual standards, all in all a stay at the Snow Leopard Lodge is one of the most inspiring and memorable hotel experiences in the world of adventure travel!

Wildlife Viewing in Ladkh

When viewing wildlife in Ladakh, guests will be stationary for long periods of time. After reaching the point of a snow leopard sighting and setting up, we may be seated and simply waiting for any wildlife movement for the majority of the morning or afternoon. Hot refreshments and seating will be provided by our lodge for all outings.

Additionally, the distance from which we typically view wildlife on this trip is extremely far—often miles across a valley on the opposite mountainside or on the top of a mountain ridge line. While it's possible sightings can be closer – and unforgettable when they are – typically, we will be viewing wildlife from far away. This is when proper camera equipment and spotter's scopes will help to bring that wildlife into focus, and we will make use of this equipment for all sightings.

Landscape serving as the backdrop can also present challenges when viewing wildlife in Ladakh. These animals are adapted to this mountainous environment and remarkably can blend into the intricate jagged rocks of a mountainside. While the expert eyes of our spotters are well accustomed to spotting wildlife in this setting, it can take patience to spot creatures against the mountains for most visitors.

Safety & Health

Your safety is of paramount importance to us. Toward that end, we provide highly competent guides and local staff with extensive experience in high-altitude terrain. Our Expedition Leaders are thoroughly trained in emergency wilderness first-aid techniques. Ultimately, our guides and local staff make decisions with everyone's comfort and safety in mind, while trying to maximize the adventure experience for each individual. Listening carefully to your Expedition Leader's instructions and directions is ultimately your responsibility, and your astute attention is always in your best interest and that of the group.

Oxygen is available at all times at our expedition lodge. A military hospital is 1 hour away in Leh. Anyone who experiences acute mountain sickness will immediately be taken down to a lower altitude for treatment at the hospital in Leh.

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Meals

Meals are hearty and delicious, are they are specially planned and prepared for well in advance. Dietary requirements due to serious medical conditions or strict personal restrictions can be met with ample notice, but must be adhered to while on the adventure.

Communication

There is no Wi-Fi or cell reception at our expedition lodge. There are nearby areas where our guides can drive for cell service.

Mandatory Insurance

Since the areas we travel to are remote and wild (that's why we go there!), we require that all guests have, at minimum, medical evacuation insurance for this program. This is for the safety of all guests. We require that your chosen independent insurance plan includes at least $250,000 in medical evacuation coverage.

To protect your investment and to provide peace of mind while you travel, we also strongly recommend purchasing comprehensive travel insurance. Plans may cover everything from medical treatment to trip cancellations and delays and lost luggage. Please contact our office if you would like more information about the medical evacuation and comprehensive travel insurance policies we offer by calling 800-543-8917.

Getting There & Getting Home

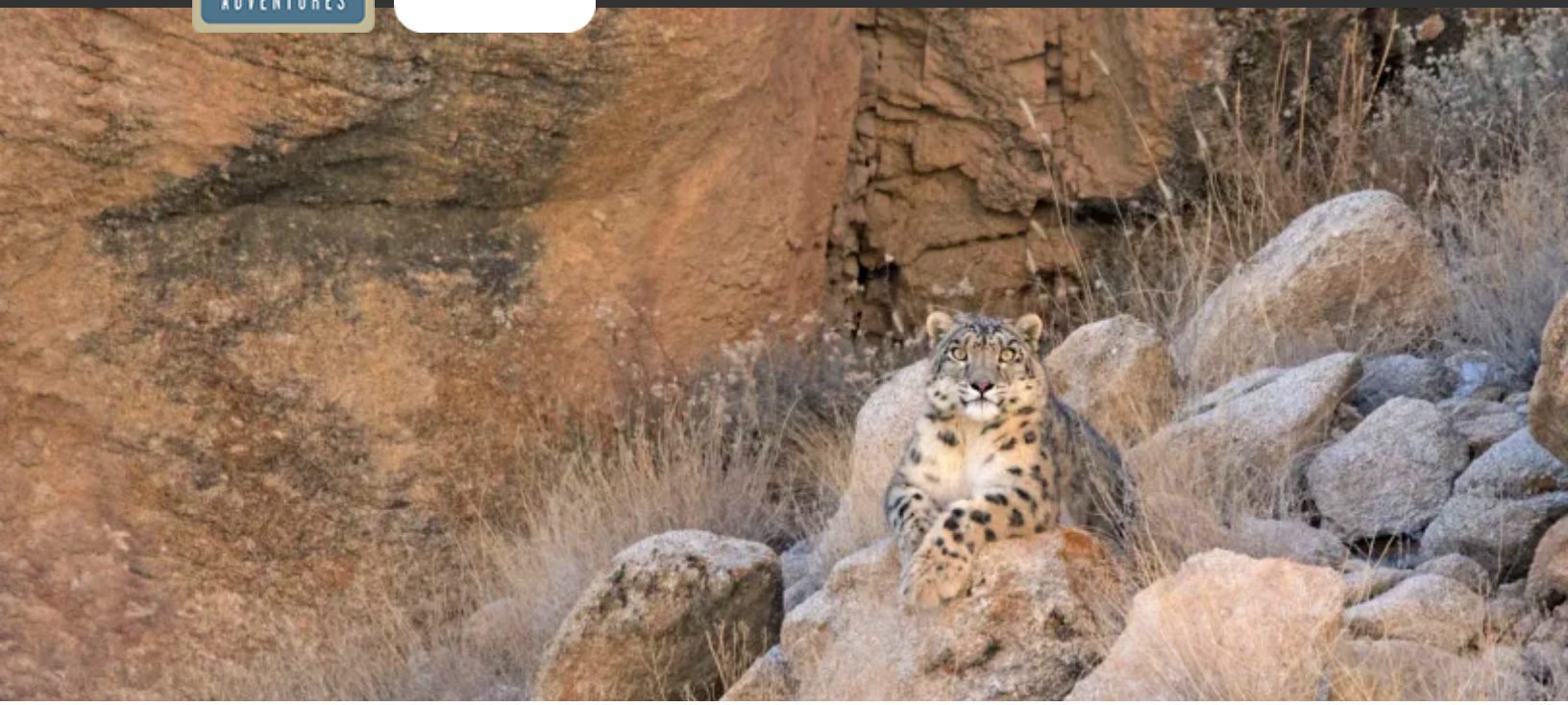
This trip begins and ends in Delhi. Because this is a long international journey with significant travel time and time-zone adjustment, **we recommend that you arrive the night before Day 1** to rest from your travels and begin the trip refreshed. For guests who come in early, our recommended hotel will be included in your pre-departure materials.

If you plan to arrive on Day 1, you should arrive in Delhi by 2 pm in order to participate in an orientation and group welcome dinner beginning at approximately 5:30 pm.

You may depart Delhi any time after 8 pm on the final day.

Our Natural Habitat Adventures Travel Desk can best assist with your travel reservations, as our staff is familiar with the specific requirements of this program and can help arrange the most efficient itinerary. Please call us at 800-543-8917. While we offer the best available rates to us on airfare and additional nights' accommodations, you may occasionally find special web rates or lower fares online.

Ready to Book? Call an Adventure Specialist at 800-543-8917



Extension Details:

The Grand India Wildlife Adventure
$12795

Wild & Ancient Himalaya: Nepal & Bhutan
$14795

Snow Leopard Quest Photo Expedition Extensions

A Himalayan Adventure in Pursuit of One of Earth's Rarest and Most Beautiful Cats

The Grand India Wildlife Adventure

Look for rare Bengal tigers, one-horned rhinos and other endangered animals as we discover India's wild side on an exploration of three premier national parks. You won't find a richer Indian nature safari!

$12795 (+air)

Wild & Ancient Himalaya: Nepal & Bhutan

Explore mountain heights and jungle lowlands on this soulful journey through the cultural and wildlife treasures of two neighboring Himalayan nations—including rhino tracking in Chitwan National Park.

$14795 (+air)

Ready to Book? Call an Adventure Specialist at 800-543-8917

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