Journey to Ladakh

Pre-Departure Information
Welcome!

We’re delighted to welcome you on this adventure! This booklet is designed to guide you in the practical details for preparing for your trip. As you read, if any questions come to mind, feel free to give us a call or send us an email—we’re here to help.

PLEASE SEND US
- **Trip Application**: Complete, sign, and return your Trip Application form as soon as possible if you have not already done so.
- **Medical Form**: Complete, sign, and return your Medical Form as soon as possible if you have not already done so.
- **Air Schedule**: Please forward a copy of your email confirmation, which shows your exact flight arrival and departure times. Refer to the Arrival & Departure section of the Detailed Trip Itinerary for instructions. Please review your proposed schedule with Wilderness Travel before purchasing your tickets.
- **Passport Photocopy**: Scan* a COLOR copy of your passport photo page and email it to us as a JPG or PDF attachment, or send us a high quality photocopy by mail (immediately upon reserving your trip).
- **Visa Photocopy**: Once you have obtained the required visa in your passport, please scan* a copy of your visa and email it to us as a JPG or PDF attachment, or send us a high quality photocopy by mail.

*If you are scanning documents to email, we suggest a maximum resolution of 300 dpi.

PLEASE CAREFULLY REVIEW
- **Travel Documents & Medical Information**: Carefully review the Travel Documents and Medical Information sections of this booklet to familiarize yourself with Passport and Visa entry requirements for your destination, as well as any recommended inoculations.
- **Optional Travel Insurance**: Review the Trip Cancellation & Transfer Fee Schedule included in the Detailed Itinerary. We recommend that all trip members purchase Travel Insurance.
- **Extra Services**: Request any Extra Services (hotel nights, transfers, extensions) with your WT office contact using the Extra Services Request Form sent with your confirmation packet.
- **Final Documents**: Approximately three weeks before your trip, we will send you final departure documents, including hotel and local contact information and rendezvous instructions.

QUESTIONS?
Call: 1-800-368-2794, go to our website: www.wildernesstravel.com, or e-mail us at: info@wildernesstravel.com
Travel Information

PASSPORT
A valid passport is required for your trip. Be sure to check the expiration date. Your passport must be valid for six months after your date of exit from India. In addition, we recommend your passport have at least two completely blank visa pages for every country you will be visiting. It is very important that the blank pages say “Visas” at the top. The last few pages of your passport, which say “Amendments and Endorsements,” and the final page of your passport, which may not have a page number, are not considered to be legitimate visa pages. The service of adding pages for visas was discontinued as of January 1, 2016. You can request a new passport through US Passport Services Office (travel.state.gov/passport) or use a visa service agency, which can take care of your passport renewal and expedite the process, if needed. We recommend Passport Visas Express (www.passportvisaexpress.com). Be sure to allow sufficient time to acquire this before your trip.

It is a good idea to carry photocopies of your passport’s photo page and any acquired visa pages for your trip (if applicable) in case your passport is lost or as an additional piece of identification, as well as two extra passport photos.

VISAS
US citizens need a visa for India. **Indian visas cannot be obtained at the airport upon arrival; you must obtain an Indian visa in advance of your departure from the US.** We suggest applying for your Indian visa 2-3 months prior to trip departure, as visa processing can take time.

1. The **e-Visa** (electronic visa) for India is now applicable for 163 countries including the US. The validity of e-Visa will be 60 days from the date of arrival in India. The e-Visa can be applied for a maximum of two times in one calendar year.

The e-Visa is now valid for entry through 24 designated airports but visitors have the flexibility to depart/exit from any of the authorized Immigration Check Posts (ICPs) in India. For more details on the process, other highlights and key points on both the e-visa and revised fees for the regular visa process, please visit the official website of the Ministry of Home Affairs at https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/evisa/tvoa.html

2. You can also apply to get a **longer-stay visa stamped into your passport** through Cox & Kings Global Services (CKGS), the official visa processing agent for the Indian Embassy. Complete instructions are outlined on the CKGS website.

Visa applications are by walk-in (if you live near a CKGS Application Center) or by postal courier. For application by postal courier, we strongly recommended using Fed-Ex so that you can track your passport and application.

You should apply for an India Tourist Visa. If you expect to return to India in the near future, you may want to consider obtaining a 5- or 10-year, multiple-entry option, if available to your jurisdiction. Please visit CKGS for more details.
On the visa application form, you will need to list the "name and address of two references." Please use the following:

**In India**
Exotic Journeys  
Office No. 7, 2nd Floor  
Local Shopping Centre  
B-7 Vasant Arcade, Vasant Kunj  
New Delhi, 110 070  
India  
Phone: (+91) 112-612-4069

**In applicant's country**
Wilderness Travel  
1102 Ninth St  
Berkeley, CA 94710  
USA  
Phone: (+1) 510-558-2488

3. You may also choose to obtain your visa through our designated visa processing service Passport Visas Express (PVE). PVE will be your contact with Cox & Kings Global Services. Please check with PVE directly regarding their service fees, processing time and Indian visa information. Although there is an additional fee for the service provided by PVE, they are extremely helpful in obtaining your visa, and past Wilderness Travel clients have greatly enjoyed their service.

All visa regulations are subject to change.

**If you are a citizen of any country other than the US, please check with a local consulate for entry requirements.**
MONEY
India’s currency is the rupee. We suggest you bring your funds in US cash. You can exchange money at the international airport on arrival and at our hotel in Delhi. You will be issued a currency exchange form each time you change money; keep these forms as you will need them to change rupees back into dollars at the airport upon departure. Please note it will be difficult to exchange any money in Ladakh.

Credit cards are accepted in most shops, hotels, and restaurants in Delhi. It is a good idea to have some small US cash ($1s) on hand for minor expenses. There are ATMs at the international airports, and you can use these upon arrival in India. Please note that there are ATM machines elsewhere in India, but they may not be conveniently located near the hotels on our trips.

To use an ATM internationally, you must have a four-digit PIN. If you plan to use your credit cards, inform your credit card company before your departure that you will be using the card abroad.

You will need to budget spending money for gratuities, for any meals not included in the trip itinerary, and for personal items such as snacks, phone calls, etc. A great variety of craftworks are available in India. Depending on your taste, you could spend anything from $100 to $300 or much more.

TIPPING
Tipping is completely discretionary, but over the years, clients have asked us for tipping guidelines to reward guides for outstanding service. A range of reference would be $120 to $170 per trip member for the Trip Leader and $100 to $150 per trip member for the local guide/drivers/staff. During the trip, the Trip Leader takes care of tips for waiters at restaurants and for porters for luggage handling.

SPECIAL DIETS
We will do our best to accommodate special dietary needs, however, please keep in mind that certain cultural differences or limitations due to logistics can make it extremely difficult and at times impossible to accommodate dietary restrictions. Please inform us at least eight weeks before your trip if you have a restricted diet. It is important to bring a flexible attitude and supplemental snacks.

COMMUNICATIONS
Telephone
The international dialing code for India is 91. Please contact your cell phone company for specific instructions for international use.

Email & Internet Access
Internet access is available at our hotels in Delhi and Leh.

ELECTRICITY
India has 230-volt current and either C or D plug types. Bring a converter and plug adapter kit for appliance use.
Medical Information

The following recommendations should be used as a guideline only; consult your physician for medical advice. It is vital that you let Wilderness Travel know of any medical problems, allergies, or physical limitations you may have. Please fill out and return the personal medical questionnaire, and feel free to consult us if you have any questions about your ability to undertake this particular trip.

Wilderness Travel is not a medical facility and has no expertise or responsibility regarding what medications or inoculations you and your physician decide are necessary for your safe participation in the trip.

Traveler's health information is available from the Centers for Disease Control. Medical travel products are available from Travel Health Medicine and from Magellan's Travel Supplies.

INOCULATIONS

Entry requirements are subject to change; check with the Centers for Disease Control for updates. All shots should be entered on your International Health Card (yellow card), which is provided by the facility giving the shots. Keep it with your passport while traveling (however, the card is not required to enter India). This provides an important personal record for you to refer to when making future travel plans. We recommend you discuss the following with your physician:

**Polio**

People who have received the primary series of at least three doses of polio vaccine are considered fully immunized. People who are unsure of their status should receive the vaccine (three doses spaced at intervals).

**Hepatitis A**

The vaccines HAVRIX and VAQTA (two injections, six to 18 months apart) give long-term protection against Hepatitis A and are worthwhile if you travel regularly to developing countries.

**Tetanus Booster**

A booster is strongly recommended (effective for 10 years).

**Typhoid**

The CDC recommends the shot or the oral vaccine, Vivotif Berna. You may not be able to take the oral vaccine simultaneously with mefloquine (for malaria prevention).
MALARIA PREVENTION
(Only if you plan to visit lowland areas of India)

Malaria is a serious but preventable disease spread by the bite of an infected mosquito and is not an issue in Ladakh. If you are traveling elsewhere in India, please discuss antimalarial medication with your doctor, who will explain various antimalarials and their side effects and recommend a regimen for you. In addition to medication, a further precaution against malaria is to wear long sleeves and long pants at dusk. Thin clothing should be sprayed with insect repellent, especially around the elbows and ankles. Use repellent containing DEET.

If, after returning from your trip, you have a persistent fever with chills, muscle aches, and headache, report to your doctor the possibility of exposure to malaria.

For further malaria information, consult your doctor or the CDC Malaria Hotline: 888-232-3228.

STAYING HEALTHY
In hotels, don’t brush your teeth with tap water; use bottled water. Don’t use ice in your drinks unless you are sure it was made with treated water. When in doubt, ask your Trip Leader for guidelines.

ALTITUDE CONSIDERATIONS
Our Ladakh journey takes place at altitudes between 10,000 and 18,300 feet. Wilderness Travel designs trips with proper acclimatization time and proper rest time built in. However, at higher altitudes, each individual reacts differently. You should be aware of the symptoms and effects of AMS. It is not uncommon to experience unusual symptoms when you first arrive at high altitude. The best remedies are to walk more slowly, rest frequently, and drink plenty of fluids. A good night’s sleep will often bring you back to normal. However, it is important to pay attention to the signals your body gives you. If symptoms persist, consult with the Trip Leader or trip doctor at once.

While acclimatizing, avoid pushing yourself too hard, however physically fit you may be or feel. Physical fitness does not prevent AMS. You may walk more slowly than than you are used to, but this is perfectly normal.

AMS results primarily from insufficient oxygen in the blood (hypoxia). Mild symptoms are a signal that you must stay at that altitude until the symptoms have gone away. Never ascend with any symptoms of AMS. If you ignore alarm signals from your body, you risk serious or fatal illness. Be alert for symptoms in yourself and in your companions, and keep your trip leader informed of any changes in your health. Proper hydration is essential. The thin, dry air of high altitude wicks away moisture as you breathe. Avoid caffeine, which is a diuretic. Sleeping pills and other sedatives should not be used at altitude as they tend to decrease breathing and may lead to AMS. Do not drink alcohol or smoke at high altitudes. Maintain good nutrition. Your appetite will probably decrease but it is important to eat well (especially foods high in carbohydrates), even if you’re not feeling well.

Early Symptoms of AMS
Headache, dizziness, extreme fatigue, malaise, persistent yawning, hyperventilation, loss of appetite, swelling in ankles or eyelids, breathlessness at rest, poor sleep, and Cheyne-Stokes breathing while sleeping (an irregular breathing pattern in which breathing accelerates, then slows down and seems to stop). If you experience any of these symptoms, rest and drink more fluids. Your body is capable of adapting to altitude if given time. Most likely, the symptoms will be gone in the morning. Should they persist, notify your Trip Leader and watch for more advanced symptoms.
**Advanced Symptoms of AMS**

Increasing tiredness, severe headache, vomiting, staggering walk, irrational behavior and loss of coordination (ataxia), and inability to perform simple motor functions. These worsening symptoms indicate High Altitude Cerebral Edema (HACE). Increasing shortness of breath, severe cough with watery or bloody sputum, noisy bubbling breath and tiredness are signs of High Altitude Pulmonary Edema (HAPE).

HACE and HAPE are both progressive, life-threatening conditions. Ignoring progressive symptoms may lead to unconsciousness and death within a matter of hours. The only treatment is to descend. A person suffering from AMS may not think clearly and may have to be forced to descend. Even if the diagnosis is unclear, you should descend whenever there is any possibility of AMS. You can always re-ascend when you feel better.

**Diamox (Acetazolamide)**

The prescription drug Diamox is now accepted as an effective prophylactic against the early symptoms of altitude sickness. Most people start taking it a day before going to altitude and continue until they feel they are comfortably acclimatized, although some decide to continue its use throughout their time at altitude. Consult with your physician for directions concerning proper usage and dosage. You can also read more about it at the Himalayan Rescue Association’s website www.himalayanrescue.org/hra/altitude_sickness.php. Please note: Diamox is not effective in dealing with more serious symptoms of altitude sickness and it is important you keep your Trip Leader informed of any symptoms you are feeling.

**MEDICAL SERVICES AND EVACUATION**

You should be aware that medical services are not readily available in Ladakh. The availability of medical supplies or the adequacy of medical attention, once provided, cannot be guaranteed and cannot be expected to measure up to western standards. You should bring an ample supply of any prescription medicines you need and the items listed on the personal first aid list, in consultation with your physician. There are risks involved in the event of illness requiring evacuation. Depending upon where you are in the itinerary, an evacuation may take several days. However, should any medical situations arise, your guide and crew will help organize the swiftest possible assistance available.

Any evacuation/emergency payments must be made directly to our agents in India. Please note that personal checks are not readily acceptable. In choosing to use your credit card (if available), please be aware that a service charge of approximately 10% might be assessed in addition to the actual cost of the evacuation.
Helpful Information

PHOTOGRAPHY
For most people, a compact digital camera or even a cell phone with a fixed zoom lens works well, and newer point-and-shoots and phones can produce excellent quality pictures. For higher quality images, especially for printing, and the ability to use longer telephoto lenses for closer wildlife pictures, a digital SLR is well worthwhile, though heavier. Lenses of 200mm or 300mm, with image stabilization, allow you to hand-hold the camera with minimal camera shake. A polarizing filter is useful, especially to reduce reflection on water surfaces and to deepen the blue of the sky. Pack your equipment well and use plastic bags to protect it from dust or moisture. Bring wipes and a dust blower to keep your lenses clean. Most digital cameras and phones now have video options, and you may even want to consider bringing a GoPro. Always practice ahead of time with new equipment and bring your manual with you. You may want to consider insuring your equipment. Camera equipment is available for rent from Borrow Lenses with a 10% discount offered to Wilderness Travel clients.

We recommend bringing at least two large capacity memory cards. If you take a lot of pictures and save them at a high resolution, it can be helpful to bring a digital storage unit or laptop so you can download your pictures and free up your memory cards for reuse on a regular basis. Bring a backup battery or set of batteries so one is always charged and ready to use, and bring your battery charger (and appropriate plug adapter). If your camera uses replaceable batteries, bring spares with you. Note: for trips where you may be away from power sources for multiple days, consider looking into a solar-powered battery charger.

When taking pictures of local people, be aware of cultural considerations. Heed your Trip Leader’s guidelines for what is appropriate, and always use gestures or simple phrases to ask permission. If people do not wish to be photographed, please honor their requests. We urge travelers to avoid giving money in exchange for photo opportunities, which only makes it harder for other travelers to take pictures and to have a meaningful personal interaction with local people.

We find that our clients create wonderful images that really define the unique aspects of our adventures. We would love to make use of your images in our marketing materials and our photoblog, and request that you send us a small sample of your best images and a simple email giving us permission to use the photos. Please email your photos to wtphotoblog@gmail.com. We look forward to receiving them!

CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS
In India, folk beliefs and religion merge until they become almost indistinguishable. It is difficult for travelers in India to comprehend the traditions and rituals involved in everyday life. As in all travel situations, it is important to observe the local people carefully and use common sense. For example, ask permission before taking a photo, entering a temple, washing at a tap, or touching a baby. You’ll almost always find the Indians friendly and helpful. A few guidelines are offered below.

Body Language
When seated, it is not polite to show the bottoms of the feet, and it is especially rude to point them in someone else’s direction. Therefore you should not stretch your legs out or cross them with the sole turned up or out. Also, never step over or on any part of a person as this exposes them to the bottom of your feet. The purity of the body is viewed as being the highest at the head, becoming progressively dirtier down to
the feet. This also makes patting children or other people on the head ill-mannered. Touching a person of the opposite sex, even on the shoulder or hand, can easily misinterpreted and it's best to refrain from doing so.

**Clothing**
Be modest in the way you dress while visiting India. (See Notes on Clothing in this booklet.) Women should wear skirts falling at least to the knee, or pants. Bathing suits, halter tops, and tank tops are considered an unseemly display in India and will embarrass local people. Especially in and around temples, wear long pants or a skirt, and a top that covers the shoulders and upper arms. Men may wear shorts up to mid-thigh, but no shorter. It is permitted for men to rest and sunbathe without a shirt, but it is considered extremely rude for men to walk about bare-chested.

**Water**
Spring water is considered sacred and is protected by ritual. River and stream water is not subject to these taboos. Many villages have only small springs from which to draw their water. Do not casually take water from these springs. It is best to receive permission from a local person. If there is no one nearby, then follow these guidelines: Use only a very clean utensil to draw water. Do not drink directly from this utensil or from the spring. Do not brush your teeth or wash anything near the spring. Carry water 20 feet or more away from the spring before washing. If the water source becomes polluted by careless practice, the consequences for the village are disastrous.

**Shrines**
Along almost every street and trail you will find temples and shrines of all sorts. Regardless of their size, they are revered with great devotion. When entering a temple, ask about or observe local practice. In some temples, shoes must be removed. In some it is forbidden to wear leather of any kind (such as a leather belt) or to eat.

**Begging**
Begging is a tradition in India, and can be difficult for westerners to confront. There are no easy answers as to whether to give small amounts of money to beggars. It is ultimately up to each of you to decide. Children along popular travel routes often ask for candy, pens, or money. Rewarding this behavior sets up a barrage of requests for more, a dependency on products not locally available, and in the case of sweets, an increasing dental problem. We therefore ask that you do not give anything to children: no candy, pens, balloons, or money. If you like, you can bring pens, crayons, large felt-tip pens, paper, maps, or postcards to donate to schools we pass along the way.

**Homes**
Indians are very hospitable and it is common for them to invite travelers into their homes. If your hosts take off their shoes before entering a household or room, do likewise. Inside, cooking and eating areas should be treated with special respect. Avoid going into the hearth unless specifically invited there; it is sacred, and home to a guardian spirit. Do not touch the fire area or dry your shoes by it, and do not point your feet at or burn trash in the fire. Do not touch food or eating utensils used by local people. Also, many Hindus cannot eat food that has been touched by a foreigner, so don't offer anything from your plate.
BEING A CONSIDERATE TRAVELER
Please show respect for the cultures we are visiting by observing local customs concerning appropriate dress, particularly in sacred places. Your Trip Leader is always available to answer any questions that you may have regarding this. If it is necessary to use a cell phone during the trip, please do so privately. Smoking is rarely an issue these days, but if you do smoke, please do so only away from the group.
Packing List

THE ESSENTIALS
- Air tickets (or E-tickets)
- Passport
- One other picture ID, such as a driver's license
- Expense money

WT GEAR STORE
To help you prepare for your next WT adventure, we've put together a great collection of top brands including Patagonia, Outdoor Research, Eagle Creek, and more at our WT Gear Store.

LUGGAGE
- Soft-sided suitcase, with a small padlock (must be unlocked for air travel). Rolling suitcases have been the preferred choice of past travelers.
- Daypack, large enough for a fleece jacket, rain gear, water bottle, camera, and other items you want with you during the day.
- Small roll-up duffel to carry home purchases if you are an avid shopper, keeping in mind that you may have to pay excess baggage charges if you are over the weight limit.

IMPORTANT! Valuable or essential items such as camera equipment, prescription medications, or hiking boots should always be hand-carried on any flight to avoid loss or damage. Once you arrive in India, it may be impossible to replace these items if your luggage is delayed.

WEIGHT LIMITS
On the internal flights for this departure, each passenger can bring one piece of checked luggage with a weight limit of 33 lbs., as well as one carry-on of 15 lbs.

If your baggage exceeds this weight limit, you may be required to pay excess baggage fees on the spot.
CLOTHING
We recommend that you bring comfortable, lightweight clothing and supportive shoes made for walking.

Please note that the weather in Ladakh can be quite warm from May through September. Temperatures can reach 70Fs - 80Fs during the day, especially in the Nubra Valley. At high elevation, the sun is very strong and can feel even hotter than it is outside. However, cooler weather is also possible, especially on overcast days (with temperatures more in the 50Fs-60Fs).

September is likely to be cooler than earlier summer months, but it can still be in the 60Fs-70Fs during the day. For this reason, we advise that you bring some cooler summer clothing during these months and even an umbrella or hat for the strong sun. Sun protection can be critical, so lots of sunscreen and breathable shirts are also important. Having both a light jacket/fleece, as well as a heavier overcoat and light rain jacket are important for cooler days.

Weather in Delhi during this time of year will be very hot and humid (90Fs-100Fs), so do pack cool, lightweight city clothes for touring.

Please keep in mind that India is still a traditional culture. Visitors should take care to dress modestly. For women, long pants, skirts, or knee-length hiking shorts are fine. Skimpy or revealing tops are generally frowned upon. Men should wear shirts with sleeves and long pants or knee-length hiking shorts. In some temples and monasteries, shoes must be removed. Sleeveless shirts are not appropriate for either women or men.

The clothing list below is provided as a guideline only; we encourage you to pack as lightly as possible.
- Light and medium-weight fleece jacket or sweater (for cooler days and nights in Ladakh)
- Rain jacket and folding umbrella (umbrellas can also be used for sun)
- Lightweight long-sleeved shirts
- Short-sleeved shirts or T-shirts
- Light cotton or quick-drying synthetic hiking pants
- Knee-length hiking shorts
- Lightweight skirts
- Sturdy walking shoes or running shoes with good traction
- Tevas or other sandals
- Underwear/socks. Synthetics dry faster.
- Shade hat with wide brim
- Sleepwear
- Bathing suit (for hotel pools)
- Casual city/hotel attire

EQUIPMENT
- Personal toiletries, biodegradable soap
- Good quality sunglasses
- Assorted plastic bags to organize items in your luggage
- Flashlight or lightweight headlamp, spare batteries
PERSONAL FIRST AID SUPPLIES
Every trip member must bring a small kit for personal use. Your own experience will influence your choices.
- Sunscreen SPF #30 or higher, lip balm with sunscreen. We recommend mineral-based sunscreens with zinc oxide or titanium dioxide because they do not contain harsh chemicals that are harmful to the environment. Brands such as Honest Company, Badger, and Alba Botanica are found in most sporting goods stores and drugstores.
- Aspirin, ibuprofen, or Tylenol for muscle pain or headache.
- Topical antibiotic (Neosporin) for cuts, bites, or sores.
- Insect repellent. Repellents with DEET are recommended. DEET content of about 30-35% is ideal (higher DEET content is not recommended). Wipe DEET off your hands before touching plastic surfaces (such as binoculars) because it can damage plastic. Aerosol repellents are useful for spraying on clothes.
- Blister kit. Look for the long-lasting gel-type bandages that you can apply directly on blisters, such as Band-Aid Advanced Healing Bandages or Curad Gel Multi-Day Bandages. “Liquid band-aids,” such as New-Skin, are useful because they dry rapidly to form a tough protective cover over a blister.
- Anti-bacterial gel for hand washing
- Antihistamine such as Benadryl
- Pepto-Bismol tablets for indigestion and diarrhea
- Imodium for diarrhea. If you wish to bring an antibiotic for diarrhea prophylaxis, please consult your physician.
- Prescription medications properly labeled
- Spare contact lenses or spare prescription glasses
- Diamox for altitude acclimatization. See the Medical Information section of this booklet.

OPTIONAL ITEMS
- Water bottle (note: bottled water is widely available on the trip)
- Camera, spare batteries, memory cards, etc.
- Reading/writing material
- Converter/plug adapter kit for appliance use in hotels. India has 220/230-volt current and a variety of plug types.
- Travel alarm clock, small mirror
- Earplugs
- Money belt or neck pouch. Always carry your passport, credit cards, and cash with you in a money belt or neck pouch tucked down inside your shirt or blouse.

PROHIBITED ITEMS
Satellite phones are no longer allowed to be brought into India. If you bring a satellite phone to India, it will be confiscated and you could be subject to serious penalties, including arrest. Please double-check entry requirements on your own before traveling.

Revised: November 28, 2018