



# EQUUS Journeys

HORSEBACK TRAVEL & EQUESTRIAN TRADITIONS SINCE 1972

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## Ladakh & Buddhist Festival Dhak Tok

### INDIA LADAKH

A **horseback pack trip** through the lush Markha valley to the nomadic grounds of the Rushpu plateau, crossing the grandiose landscape of the magnificent Himalayas: jagged crests and the snow-topped peaks of Kang Yatse (6400 m) await you. Meet local Tibetan people living freely by their own traditions.

<b>Pack Trip</b>	 <b>16 days/8 days riding -</b>	 <b>From £0</b>	
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### ITINERARY

#### Highlights

- A journey to the heart of the Himalayas on horseback
- Visit the Buddhist monasteries in the Indus Valley whilst acclimatising to the altitude
- The departure date is linked to a Buddhist festival at Dhak Tok.
- Pack horses carry your supplies and equipment as you climb ever higher into the Himalayas
- Meet a Tibetan population who live freely by their own traditions

#### Day 1 — 1: EUROPE - DELHI - No riding

International flight to Delhi (flights are not included but bookable upon request).

You should plan to arrive early in the morning. Please collect your luggage and proceed to catch your domestic flight to Leh. The flight time will depend on your international flights -- there are domestic flights between 06:00 am and 11:00 am.

#### Day 2 — 2: DELHI - LEH (3500m) - ALCHI (3150m) - No riding

You will fly to Leh early in the morning, a great time of day to fly over the Himalayas. You will be welcomed at Leh airport and transferred to your hotel in Alchi, where you will meet your fellow travellers and your guides. Unlike most Ladakhi villages that are located high up, the small village of Alchi lies at the bottom of the valley near a Buddhist complex.

The rest of the day is free for you to relax and acclimatise. This is your chance to get used to the altitude. It is recommended that you eat well and drink plenty of water.

Dinner and overnight at the hotel.

## Day 3 — 3: ALCHI - LAMAYARU - LEH (3500m) - No riding

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This morning you will be driven to Lamayuru, a village famous for its monastery, known for being the oldest in Ladakh (11th century).

The monastery overlooks the city and offers a beautiful panorama of the valley. It also features many murals and a tiny cave -- said to have been used as a meditation cave by a known master of Buddhism in India. Later in the day you will be driven to Leh, and you'll have the rest of the day to relax.

Dinner and overnight at a hotel in Leh.

## Day 4 — 4: LEH - DHAK TOK FESTIVAL - LEH (3500m) - No riding

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After breakfast, you will head to the Tak thok festival. The mask dance starts at noon.

Dinner and overnight at the hotel in Leh.

## Day 5 — 5: LEH - SHEY - THIKSEY - LEH (3500m) - No riding

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This morning, you will visit Shey Palace, which was the summer residence of the Ladakh kings in the 17th century. In the palace, you will find an imposing statue of Shakyamuni Buddha.

Later you'll visit the Thiksey Monastery, said to be one of the most beautiful in the region.

Dinner and overnight at the hotel in Leh.

## Day 6 — 6: LEH - SPITUK - ZINGCHEN (3750m) - 3 hours riding

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Today will be an early morning departure as you make your way to the Alchi Monastery Spituk, the starting point for your journey on horseback.

You will then head to the small village of Zingchen -- a green oasis surrounded by poplar trees and the gateway to the mountains. Tonight will be your first night of sleeping under the stars.

Overnight camping (3380m).

## Day 7 — 7: ZINGCHEN - YURUTSE (4090m) - LARTSA (4500m) - 4 hours riding

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Today you will head deeper into the mountains, riding at altitudes of 3870m and 4090m.

A narrow gorge means you have to cross several streams before reaching a vast plateau that will gradually lead to the base camp at Ganda La. You will spend the night camping at 4500m.

Overnight camping (4500m).

## Day 8 — 8: LARTSA - SKIU (3400m) - 5 hours riding

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Today you will gradually ascend until you reach the Ganda La Pass (4900m). From here views extend south to the Zaskar range and distant summits of the Himalayan range.

You'll then ride down to Shingo village (4150m). From Shingo, the trail heads into a narrow gorge, leading towards another village called Skiu (3400m). Here there is a confluence of the rivers coming from the Markha Valley and from Shingo.

Overnight camping (3400m).

## Day 9 — 9: SKIU - MARKHA (4280m) - 5-6 hours

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Today you will ride to the village of Markha (4280m), the largest in the valley. There are several river crossings today, sometimes wading through fords, other times over small bridges. The trail will include two high crossings at 3570m and 3710m.

The trail also passes Lhatos (religious shrines for local deities) and Mani walls (stones inscribed with ancient prayers). During peak season, several tented tea houses will be open, providing welcome refreshments.

After crossing the river for the last time, you will arrive in Markha, which consists of around 20 houses, an old monastery and a ruined fort.

Overnight camping (4280m).

## Day 10 — 10: MARKHA - LANGTHANG CHU (4500 m) - 5 hours riding

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You will follow the river today towards the plains of Nimaling, and ride over some technical sections, with stones and poorly marked trails.

You'll stop to visit the Humlung Monastery, and later set up camp near Langchang Chu, at the foot of the Kang Yatse glaciers. Yaks will likely be your neighbours for the night.

Overnight camping (4500m).

## Day 11 — 11: LANGTHANG CHU - ZALUNG KARPO (4600m) - 5 hours riding

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After breakfast, you will continue to ride south towards Zalung Karpo and Rupshu. The ice-covered Kang Yatse, at 6,400 meters, still dominates the valley.

You will cross several streams and continue through some meadows before crossing a river, with large peaks on their side of the valley. The ride becomes steeper, until you finally arrive at the Zalung Karpo La pass (5150m). Here you'll have superb views of the surrounding valleys and numerous peaks. You'll then head down to your campside at 4600m.

Overnight camping (4600m).

## Day 12 — 12: ZALUNG KARPO LA - TSORKA (4560m) - 5 - 6 hours riding

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This morning after breakfast, you'll descend into the final valley of Khar Nag and set up camp at Tsokar, a small village dominated by an old, ruined fort.

Overnight camping (4560m).

## Day 13 — 13: TSORKA - DAT (4350m) - 4 hours riding

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Today you'll descend following the path of the river; continuing through beautiful gorges, sometimes very narrow in places which then flare out, giving way to barley fields.

Then the valley widens, and you will finally arrive at the village of Dat, which is the only inhabited place in this valley and only occupied for only a few months of the year. Here you'll set up camp and enjoy a final dinner with the team.

Overnight camping (4150m).

## Day 14 — 14: DAT - LEH - No riding

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Today you'll be transferred to Leh via the impressive road from Manali, crossing a mountain pass over 5,300m high.

The rest of the day is free to explore and do some last-minute shopping in the Leh bazaar.

Overnight at a hotel in Leh,

## Day 15 — 15: LEH - DELHI - No riding

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You'll take an early morning transfer to the Leh airport (the highest in the world) to catch your flight to Delhi. Please note that this flight may be subject to significant delays if there are adverse weather conditions.

On arrival in Delhi, you'll check-in to your hotel near the city center. You'll have the rest of the day free to relax or sightsee.

Overnight at the hotel in Delhi.

## Day 16 — 16: DELHI - HOME

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After breakfast, you'll transfer to the airport for your flight home.

We are currently updating our dates and prices they will be online soon. If you want details of this holiday, please do not hesitate to contact us.

## Price details

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No departure for this destination. Please contact our travel advisers for more information.

- Flights to Delhi are not included, but can be booked on request - please contact us for rates. The domestic flight is included.

- Rates are per person, based on two riders sharing a twin room/tent

- The group is made up of 4 - 9 riders

- There is a small group supplement payable if the group is less than four riders:

If 3 riders booked: c. €280/£240/\$300 per person

If 2 riders booked: c. €700/£600/\$760 per person

- There is a single supplement of c. €395/£345/\$420 per person if you end up in a single room. This is refunded if we later find a sharer for you.

- A visa is required to enter India and is your responsibility

- Maximum rider weight limit: 95kg / 210 lbs / 15 st

Please Note

The itinerary may be modified at anytime for security reasons, meteorological or events beyond our control such as blocked roads, rivers in flood, drought, strikes and local holidays. Equus Journeys, our local partners and their local guides will always strive to find the best solution and will alter the itinerary as needed.

The names of the hotels and accommodation are given for information only and depending on availability, they may be modified without notice and replaced by another of a similar standard.

## Price includes

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### SUPPORT TEAM

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1 English-speaking horse guide from Leh to Leh

1 English speaking local guide in Delhi

### LOGISTICS

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1 horse per rider

Packhorses to carry your luggage

Horsemen in charge of the packhorses and his assistants for logistics

1 cook

### INLAND TRANSPORT

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Airport transfers

Internal flights to Leh

Private bus for land transfers

### ACCOMMODATION

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Double/Triple room in a local hotel in Delhi and Leh

2 person per tent (3 men tent). Foam mattress.

### MEALS

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Full board from the lunch day 2 to the breakfast day 15

## Price doesn't include

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### MEALS

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3 lunches on days 15, 16 and 17 and 3 dinners on day 1, 15 and 16 in Delhi or Agra are not included in the price : expect to pay from around £1 - 6 per meal)

### TRANSPORT

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Visa fees

International flights

INSURANCE

Cancellation and travel insurances are not included. Please note that insurance is mandatory. We recommend to take out an insurance policy as soon as your travel is booked in case of cancellation.

EXTRAS

- Tips to the local team
- Park, museum and touristic sites fees. Expect to pay around £30
- Services in Agra (Guides and transfers). Expect to pay around £20
- Small group supplement

Optional

ACCOMMODATION

- Single room and tent supplement

EXTRAS

- Extension to Agra. Double/Triple room in a high standard hotel in Agra

EQUESTRIAN INFO

Horses

Ride small, calm, sturdy and sure-footed Tibetan mountain horses that are adapted to the terrain and the high altitudes that you will be riding at. Suitable for all levels of riders as the pace is very slow due to terrain conditions.

Guide & local team

- An English speaking guide/interpreter joins the group in either Delhi or Leh.
- The expedition leader, assisted by mules, is responsible for the horses and route.
- There is a cook to prepare the meals.

Minimum riding ability

MINIMUM RIDING ABILITY

You must be comfortable riding in the open and over varied terrain. Less experienced riders can safely participate in this expedition as the terrain is mountainous and dictates that there is no fast riding. You must be prepared for steep ascents and descents and be able to adjust your seat accordingly.

Maximum rider weight limit: 95kg / 210 lbs / 15 st

PACE

- The terrain is mountainous and dictates that there is no fast riding. You must be prepared for steep ascents and descents.

TACKING ABILITY AND PARTICIPATION

- There is no support vehicle and so you and the riding team are responsible for all of the horses and camp tasks.

TRIP CONDITIONS AND REQUESTED EXPERIENCE

- Please remember this is a high altitude ride (camping up to 4900 m). Please take adequate precautions against altitude sickness.

You need to be physically fit for long hours in the saddle. Riding is all at altitudes between 3400 m and 5200 m so acclimatisation is progressive throughout the ride. The temperature can change suddenly and the wind can be very violent, be prepared for large variations in temperature between night and day. There may also be frosts overnight. Having previous experience of a riding a trail of several days would be an advantage but it is not compulsory. Guests who do not ride regularly are requested to get fit prior to the ride. It is of particular importance to ensure you are comfortable and balanced when riding across rough ground and in

open spaces. You may be asked to dismount on particularly tricky parts and lead your horse on foot - please wear sensible footwear.

Visiting a new country offers the opportunity to meet other cultures with different mentalities, therefore it is important to accept these differences and respect the local way of life.

## EQUESTRIAN EQUIPMENT

You should bring saddle bags of medium size.

Helmets are not provided and you should bring your own.

We recommend our riders to wear a helmet to the correct standard and you should bring your own to ensure a proper fit

## TRAVEL INFO

### COMFORT

Nice hotel in Agra. Standard hotel with double or triple rooms, ensuite, in Leg and Alchi.

Small 2 man tents, with mattresses. Communal toilet tent Meals will be very simple as you are carrying supplies with you for the duration of the trip.

### MEALS

You have a picnic lunch and then a hot evening meal in the communal tent. The food is varied and tasty Indian cuisine.

Contrary to popular belief, all Hindus are not vegetarians and strict vegetarianism is limited to the south. However, you are unlikely to be served beef steak as the cow is sacred. Some Muslim restaurants will serve buffalo.

Water:

Take care not to drink water from unknown sources. It is better to buy mineral water when staying in the towns. On the trail you will need water purification tablets such as Micropur.

### CLIMATE

In Ladakh the climate is mainly dry, with large variations in temperature between night and day, especially at altitude where it can freeze overnight. The days can be very hot, up to 30c, but at altitude the temperature can change very quickly and the winds can be very strong.

There are two main seasons in Ladakh - the harsh winters can see temperatures as low as -30c. The horse riding trails only run in the summer months when the climate is very dry and rough with an intense sun.

### TIPS

Tipping is popular in India and it is customary to tip not only your team (guide, cook etc) but also staff in hotels and restaurants. You may find it useful to create a communal tipping "pool" at the start of the trip so that the group tip as a whole. Budget for c. £40-50 per person in total. However, tipping is not an obligation and so this is left to your discretion.

Be careful not to tip too much - being overly generous can affect the general standard of living and destabilise the local economy. If children earn more money than their fathers by begging or asking for money for photos then this can create major distortions within the family.

### PACKING LIST

#### IMPORTANT NOTES

- You should take two medium sized bags with you rather than one large bag so that they can be carried by the pack horses.
- Please pack in accordance with local religious and traditional cultures - it is important to keep your shoulders and knees covered when meeting local populations. Please do not wear shorts or strappy tops in towns and villages.

#### Head

- Equus Journeys strongly recommend that you wear a riding helmet and that you take your own to ensure a correct fit. There are many lightweight options available nowadays
- Sunhat for when not riding
- Sunglasses - with a cord attached so they don't fly off when riding
- Buff or bandana
- Warm hat for cold nights when camping

#### Upper body

- Thermals (long or short sleeved)

- Long sleeved shirts provide protection from the sun and are an extra layer
- T-shirts
- Lightweight fleece or jumper
- Warm fleece or jumper (and a spare in case one gets wet)
- Warm and waterproof jacket - it can rain at any time of year and the evenings can be particularly cold

#### Legs

- Lightweight, comfortable riding trousers or jodhpurs - we recommend riding in them at home before taking them on holiday to ensure they don't rub
- Thermals
- Casual trousers for the evenings, such as jeans or tracksuit bottoms
- Waterproof over trousers
- Lightweight, comfortable trousers for non-riding days

#### Hands and Feet

- Comfortable riding boots. We recommend short boots with half chaps but you may wish to take long chaps as an extra layer against inclement weather. We don't recommend taking your favourite long leather boots in case they get damaged
- Waterproof shoes/boots can be useful for abundant dew in the mornings or when it rains
- Trainers or equivalent light shoes for moving around the camp in the evenings
- Several pairs of warm, thick socks
- Gloves - your hands are particularly exposed to the sun, cold or rain whilst riding. Waterproof gloves can be particularly useful

#### Nightwear

- Sleeping bag. You need at least a comfort factor down to minus 10 celsius.
- Sleeping bag liner - silk, cotton or fleece - adds an extra layer
- Pyjamas or tracksuits or thermals for sleeping in

#### Other useful items

- Swimsuit - for swimming/bathing in rivers
- Small backpack for accessing items required during the day (carried by support crew)
- Camera and high capacity memory card. Spare battery
- Bumbag for carrying your camera and small items whilst riding
- Headtorch or small torch for moving around camp at night - bring spare batteries and bulbs
- Water bottle (2 litres or 2 x 1 litre)
- Wet Wipes or equivalent (for when washing facilities aren't available)
- Toilet paper and a lighter to burn it with
- Small plastic bags for rubbish
- Ear plugs (for light sleepers)

#### In your hold luggage

- Any liquids, such as shampoo, moisturiser, deodorant unless they are less than 100ml and all bottles can fit in a small, clear, plastic ziplock bag. We recommend biodegradable washing products where possible.
- Swiss army knife (or equivalent)

#### In your hand luggage

- Any valuables, such as your camera, ipod, ipad etc.
- Travelling in your riding boots and carrying your hat and some riding clothes is highly recommended - then if your luggage goes astray you are still able to ride!

#### Medical kit

- Please remember this is a high altitude ride (camping up to 4900 m). Please take adequate precautions against altitude sickness.
- Sunscreen and lip balm - should be high factor
- Insect repellent, preferably containing DEET
- Any medication you regularly take
- Blister plasters in case of any rubs
- Antiseptic cream, plasters, aspirin, anti-histamine, insect-bite salve etc...
- Spare prescription glasses/contact lenses
- Eye drops
- Imodium or similar anti-diarrhoea medication
- Re-hydration sachets
- Water purification tablets
- Antiseptic wipes
- Handwash gel

You may wish to ask your doctor for some specific medication for travelling at High Altitudes. We recommend that you discuss this directly with your doctor who is best placed to advise on your personal medical history.

#### Our Recommendations

- Please don't take a hard sided suitcase. Your luggage should be soft sided with a capacity of 60-80 litres. We recommend taking a backpack or similar. The luggage limit on the ride is 15kg per person.
- Backpacks cannot be worn whilst riding. We recommend a small bum bag or a coat with pockets so that you can carry small items with you during the day (camera, sunscreen, lipbalm etc)
- Even if foam mattresses are provided, you may pack your inflatable mattress for comfort sake.
- We recommend travelling in your riding boots and carrying your hat and some riding clothes in your hand luggage - then if your luggage goes astray you are still able to ride!
- Tall riders may benefit from taking a pair of long stirrup leathers with them (the local stirrups are adjustable but are sometimes limited in length)
- We recommend taking a copy of your passport and insurance documents with you in case you lose your originals
- Please take your rubbish home with you. There are no recycling facilities in Tibet, so take your used batteries, aerosols etc back home and dispose of them appropriately. Try to leave excess packaging material at home before travelling
- If you prefer travelling in a "light way" please choose a biodegradable soap or washing powder/liquid.

### SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

1. **Travel light.** It's a little known fact, but the lighter you pack, the better for the environment as heavy bags will produce higher emissions (when flying a plane or driving a car!).
2. **Reduce plastic waste.** Take your favorite reusable bottle with you. Avoid single-use bags, cups, or straws.
3. **Preserve nature.** Always take your rubbish with you during the ride and recycle them. Leave all the flowers or plants as you found them, and never get too close when observing wildlife. Make sure to use eco-friendly products such as body wash or laundry detergent (if camping) to protect both your skin and the environment.
4. **Choose your experiences carefully.** Respect animal life by not participating in any activities that abuse wild animals (shows, elephant rides, etc.).
5. **Support local populations.** Buy local handicrafts, be respectful of customs, and learn about the culture of local communities.
6. **Share!** Raise awareness among your family and friends about sustainable tourism.

For more information please [see this page](#).