

# ahf snow leopard exploratory simon balderstone



## trip highlights

- Small group limited to seven guests, ideal for wildlife viewing
- Carefully researched itinerary to include exploration in Rumbak and the remote Hemis Shukpachan valley
- Top guides from the Snow Leopard Conservancy (Ladakh)
- High quality gear including tents - with heated mess tent - along with sleeping bags, inner bags & down jackets
- Trip escorted by AHF Chair Simon Balderstone



<b>Trip Duration</b>	15 days	<b>Trip Code:</b> SL2
<b>Grade</b>	Introductory to Moderate	
<b>Activities</b>	day walks	
<b>Summary</b>	15 day trip, 6 nights hotel, 3 nights comfortable lodge, 5 nights camping	

## welcome to World Expeditions

Thank you for your interest in our AHF Snow Leopard trek. At World Expeditions we are passionate about our off the beaten track experiences as they provide our travellers with the thrill of coming face to face with untouched cultures as well as wilderness regions of great natural beauty. We are committed to ensuring that our unique itineraries are well researched, affordable and tailored for the enjoyment of small groups or individuals - philosophies that have been at our core since 1975 when we began operating adventure holidays. Our itineraries will give you the very best travel experience, designed by people with incredible local knowledge who share our vision of authentic exchange and real exploration with a responsible tourism approach. Whether you like your adventures to include trekking, touring, cycling, mountaineering, kayaking or cruising World Expeditions can make it happen for you. We hope you will join us for a life changing experience!!

## why travel with World Expeditions?

When planning travel to a remote and challenging destination, many factors need to be considered. World Expeditions have been pioneering treks in the Indian Himalaya since 1975. Our extra attention to detail and seamless operations on the ground ensure that you will have a memorable trekking experience in the Himalaya. Every trek is accompanied by an experienced local leader who is highly trained in remote first aid, as well as knowledgeable crew that share a passion for the region in which they work, and a desire to share it with you. We take every precaution to ensure smooth logistics. We use comfortable 3 star accommodation in hand picked hotels, and well maintained, good quality camping equipment on trek. The highest standards of hygiene are strictly maintained, and our cooks will surprise you with a varied menu that's sure to please at the conclusion of each trekking day. World Expeditions are also the only company to provide food for our porters on trek. Most importantly, our adventures have always sought to benefit the local peoples we interact with, safeguard the ecosystems we explore and contribute to the sustainability of travel in the regions we experience.

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For competitive airfares to Delhi and stopover ideas, contact our expert staff today to receive a detailed quote.

Minimum fundraising or donation \$1000 to \$2000 is payable to AHF.

## the trip

Accompanied by Simon Balderstone, plus our expert local Ladakh World Expeditions guide, along with wildlife guides from the Snow Leopard Conservancy (Ladakh) and a dedicated crew this affords an unrivalled opportunity to hike in search of the elusive snow leopard. It also offers a rare glimpse into Ladakh's rich cultural history while experiencing the raw, winter landscape of Ladakh. This carefully devised itinerary includes five days exploring the ridges and valleys above the Rumbak Valley as well as three days exploration of the remote Hemis Shukpachan Valley – both recognised for optimum snow leopard sightings

## our partners

### AUSTRALIAN HIMALAYAN FOUNDATION

The AHF is one of the leading aid organisations operating in the Himalaya. The AHF is dedicated to helping the people of the Himalaya achieve their goals through helping to facilitate improvements in education, health and medical services and in environment and wildlife conservation. The AHF projects include its flagship Teacher Training and Quality Education program that improves the education of 50,000 children in the Solu Khumbu region of Nepal; a primary health care program in Ladakh in the Indian Himalaya, a community based scholarship program for underprivileged girls and boys in Nepal; support for the Snow Leopard Foundation in Ladakh and Nepal; an innovative Himalayan Arts Award, joint projects with the Australian Tibet Society and an Educational assistance program in Bhutan. It also jointly supports a leading Cancer Clinic with the Australian Embassy in Kathmandu and is currently conducting an appraisal for a comprehensive Women's Literacy program in the Solu Khumbu region. In implementing these programs the AHF is committed to observing the best possible development practice that includes empowering local communities to ensure long-term sustainable outcomes.

Full details of AHF are found on the website [www.australianhimalayanfoundation.org.au](http://www.australianhimalayanfoundation.org.au)

### SNOW LEOPARD CONSERVANCY

The AHF maintains a close working relationship with the Snow Leopard Conservancy, an international aid organization that is dedicated to promoting innovative grassroots measures that lead villagers to become better stewards of endangered snow leopards, their prey and habitat. The activities of humans threaten the survival of snow leopards, making people key to their protection and conservation. There is a growing market for the bones, skin and organs of snow leopards for traditional Asian medicine. Villagers with growing domestic herds have moved into snow leopard habitat, crowding out the native prey. Villagers in the high mountainous regions depend on their flocks of sheep and goats to supply their family's meat, dairy products and wool. Snow leopards are turning to this domestic prey, which is corralled in roughly built stone pens that are easy for snow leopards to penetrate. Even in predominantly Buddhist communities shepherds have little choice but to resort to retaliatory killing if many of their animals are lost to predation. Sadly, these magnificent cats can be surprisingly easy to kill, cowering in a corner of the livestock corral while being stoned to death. The Snow Leopard Conservancy India Trust, based in the Ladakh District of Jammu and Kashmir State, has projects both inside and outside Hemis National Park. Established in 1981, the 3,350 square-kilometre park offers excellent habitat for snow leopards and harbours four species of wild sheep and goats, giving it international biodiversity importance. About 1,600 people live in the park in more than a dozen settlements.

## about your leader/escort

The trip is accompanied by AHF Founding Chairman, Simon Balderstone, a long-time Himalayan trek leader who first trekked in remote Ladakh in 1981. Since the formation of the Australian Himalayan Foundation in 2002, Simon has taken several of the many AHF fundraising treks and tours, giving supporters unique insight into the Himalaya and its people



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## trip dates

**2020** 14 Mar - 28 Mar

## fast facts

**Countries Visited:**  
India

**Visas:**  
Please check visa requirements with your reservations consultant\*

**Vaccinations:**  
Please consult a travel vaccination specialist for up to date information

**Singles:**  
A single supplement is not available for this trip

**Leader:**  
Expert Local Leader & Escort

**Advice for people with limited mobility**  
This trip is not suitable for people with limited mobility.

\*Ask our staff for more information.

and first-hand experience of the education, health and conservation projects of AHF, including its snow leopard protection partnership with the Snow Leopard Conservancy and their local office in Ladakh.

## at a glance

DAY 1	ARRIVE DELHI
DAY 2	FLY TO LEH
DAY 3	LEH
DAY 4	VISIT OUTLYING ANCIENT MONASTERIES AND FORTS
DAY 5	DRIVE TO ZINCHEN, WALK TO RUMBAK CAMP
DAYS 6-9	FORAYS IN SEARCH OF THE SNOW LEOPARD
DAY 10	RETURN TO LEH
DAY 11	DRIVE TO HEMIS SHUKPACHAN
DAYS 12-13	HEMIS SHUKPACHAN
DAY 14	DRIVE TO LEH
DAY 15	IN DELHI, TRIP CONCLUDES

## what's included

- 14 breakfasts, 12 lunches and 12 dinners
- Good quality hotel accommodation in Delhi and Leh
- Accommodation on a twin share basis camping and lodge
- Expert wildlife guides from the Snow Leopard Conservancy (Ladakh) – the best in the business
- Local sightseeing in Ladakh
- Monastery fees
- Flights Delhi/Leh/Delhi allocated AUD\$200 per person - if airfare is higher clients will need to pay the difference
- Private transportation
- All group airport transfers
- Expert bilingual local group leader
- The use of a World Expeditions trek pack which includes good quality sleeping bag, down or fibre fill jacket and insulated mat (valued at over US\$500)
- 3 hearty meals per day prepared by our cooks while camping and staying in lodge
- Sirdar, guides and kitchen staff
- All group camping gear - including generator and heating equipment
- All park entrance fees and trekking permits
- Mules to carry all personal and group equipment
- Emergency medical kit
- Pre-departure Information Guide, with all you need to know for your trek
- Souvenir World Expeditions kit bag

No local payments policy: Local cash payments are becoming increasingly popular with many operators. The policy seems to benefit the tour operators, more than the local economies or travellers, as it avoids local taxes and transfers the cost and risk of cash handling to travellers. In accordance with our Responsible Travel practices we have chosen a policy not to ask for such payments.

## what's not included

- International flights
- Airport and departure taxes
- Lunch & dinner in Delhi

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## thoughtful travel

The environments we travel through are fragile. It is our responsibility as visitors to minimise the impact of our presence. World Expeditions were the proud recipients of the inaugural Australian National Travel Industry's Environmental Achievement award for our Responsible Travel Guidebook. This detailed guide to responsible & sustainable travel is provided to all World Expeditions clients before they travel. Please ask your consultant if you have not received your copy of our award winning book. Alternatively, you may like to download a copy from our website [www.worldexpeditions.com](http://www.worldexpeditions.com)

## trip grading Introductory to Moderate

The Snow Leopard trip is graded introductory to moderate. This is primarily due to the altitude as we often walk during the day at elevations around 4000 metres. While the stages out of base camp are not unduly demanding (although we will not be following established trails) the combination of winter walking (sometimes in inclement conditions) and altitude will test your resolve. In order to complete a moderate trek we advise that you undertake regular exercise – swimming, cycling, jogging, three or four times a week for at least three months prior to your departure.

## adventure travel

By its very nature adventure travel involves an element of the unexpected. In remote and developing countries do not expect standards you are used to at home. Remote areas are sometimes unpredictable and itineraries may be altered. To get the most out of your adventure it is important that you are flexible, positive and eager to take on all the challenges that arise. If you are uncertain about your suitability for this trip we recommend that you speak with your consultant or travel agent.

- Sightseeing in Delhi
- Bottled water, aerated & alcoholic drinks
- Items of a personal nature such as phone calls, postage, laundry, etc
- Tips and gratuities
- Visa costs
- Travel Insurance (compulsory)

## fund raising target

A minimum of \$1000 to \$2000 is payable to AHF

Note: This trek is registered through GoFundraise, and online payments can be made on the GoFundraise website [www.gofundraise.com.au](http://www.gofundraise.com.au)

## detailed itinerary

### DAY 1 Arrive Delhi

On arrival in Delhi you will be met by a World Expeditions representative and transferred to your hotel. The remainder of the day is free to explore the sights and sounds of the fascinating city. Due to the differing times of arrival of group members and the early morning departure to Leh the following morning the initial briefing will be on 'a need to know basis' such as what to pack, ordering a packed breakfast, what time for departure from the hotel, arrangements for leaving gear in Delhi etc. Note: the main briefing will be on arrival in Leh.

Note: If you are arriving in Delhi on a late night flight, you may like to arrive the day before the trip commences. Please talk to your World Expeditions reservations consultant or travel agent for pretour accommodation options.

meals: NIL

### DAY 2 Fly to Leh

We board the early flight from Delhi to Leh in the Indus Valley. If the conditions are clear you will be rewarded with grand views across the Great Himalaya and Zaskar ranges before landing at the capital of Ladakh. On our first day in Ladakh we spend time wandering the bazaar and imposing Leh Palace. After transferring to your hotel (with heated bedrooms and dining hall) we have the opportunity to wander down to the main market and explore the labyrinth of alleyways that comprise the old town of Leh. Note that Leh is situated at an altitude of 3500 metres it is imperative to rest and drink plenty of water in order to help acclimatisation.

meals: B,L,D

### DAY 3 Leh

We include a visit to Shey Palace, before visiting Tikse monastery. Shey Palace originally housed the Ladakh royal family before they transferred to Leh in the 17th century. A few km up the Indus valley is the spectacular setting of Tikse monastery perched on the summit of a sugarloaf mountain. After that we head south across the Indus Valley to the less frequented Mathu monastery where we gain grand views across the Indus Valley.

meals: B,L,D

### DAY 4 Visit outlying ancient monasteries and forts

In Leh, in the morning we visit the Snow leopard Conservancy where we meet our guides and are briefed on the days ahead. We then head to the market and ascend

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## important note

These trip notes represent the most current information for this itinerary, and may supersede any information in the current brochure, including but not limited to the itinerary and price.

to the Kings Palace that has been extensively renovated since the turn of the century to something of its former glory. Later in the day we may also ascend to the Shanti Peace Stupa for a birds eye view of the city of Leh.

meals: B,L,D

### DAY 5 Drive to Zinchen, walk to Rumbak Camp

From Leh we drive approx one hour to Zinchen (3380m), a small settlement to the south of the Indus Valley. After our mules are loaded we head up a spectacular gorge for three hours to our base camp just below Rumbak village. .

meals: B,L,D

### DAYS 6-9 Forays in search of the snow leopard

From our base camp at approx 3850m we undertake forays exploring adjacent gorges and ascending the nearby ridges in search of the elusive snow leopard. Days will be flexible depending on the weather, potential vantage points and advice from the local guides.

The expertise of our wildlife guides along with the dedication of our local World Expedition guide as well as Simon's intimate knowledge of the ridges and hidden valleys are crucial to optimising the chances of sighting the snow leopard and other rare wildlife in the region. This may extend to undertaking recce's well beyond the established vantage points to identify recent tracks and other indicators as to the location of the snow leopard.

Opportunities will also be afforded to appreciate the work of the local SLC and their endeavors to create livelihood possibilities for the villagers who in the past have suffered devastating losses to their flocks when attacked by the snow leopard.

To enrich our experiences are the opportunities for the snow leopard guides to relate their anecdotes and life time experiences in Ladakh. For instance, the SLC Ladakh guides were recently contracted to work on Planet Earth 2, a series that included a program dedicated to the worlds mountains that included incredible footage of snow leopards a short distance from Rumbak (we can take you to the spot!). Our World Expeditions guide will also relate recent work with a National Geographic crew in search of a snow leopard (yes they were successful) while Simon will offer insights into the achievement and challenges of the AHF and the SLC in Ladakh over the last decade.

meals: B,L,D

### DAY 10 Return to Leh

On the final day in the mountains we spend the morning in Rumbak before we trek back down the gorge to Zinchen where our vehicles will be ready to complete the short drive back to Leh. Rest of the day free

meals: B,L,D

### DAY 11 Drive to Hemis Shukpachan

From Leh we drive approx three hours to Hemis Shukpachan (3400m), a small settlement to the north of the Indus Valley. On route we have the opportunity to

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appreciate the sheer remoteness of some of the tiny settlements and high passes that afford fine views of the awesome landscape locked between the jagged high peaks south of the Indus valley and the snowy ridges of the Ladakh Range.

On arrival the crew will brief you on the days ahead (including review of any recent sightings) before we head off to the vantage points to appreciate the mountain landscape – the gorges and ridges that may harbour the elusive snow leopard

At Hemis Shukpachan we meet Dorje and his family who run one of the most hospitable lodges in Ladakh. Rooms are comfortably appointed some with private facilities – note that there is no running water – with buckets of hot and cold water brought to your room each morning. Meals are cooked in the main living room, typically Ladakhi style that will appeal to the huge appetites that build up during the day.

meals: B,L,D

## **DAYS 12-13 Hemis Shukpachan**

The daily routine will be similar to Rumbak – we head down to the living room for early morning tea before ascending to one of the respective vantage points. After a couple of hours we return to the lodge for brunch and a rest before a hot lunch and time to head back out to explore the ridges and side gorges for potential wild life sightings. Apart from our expert wildlife guides, or local World Expedition guide, Simon assures us that we will again have the support of the entire village who will relate any recent sightings and other possible vantage points. After dinner we review the day and consider our plan of action for the next day.

meals: B,L,D

## **DAY 14 Drive to Leh**

After climbing to the vantage points on the last morning we head back to Leh, stopping en route to visit the imposing monastery at Likir, one of the oldest monasteries in the lower Indus Valley.

meals: B,L,D

## **DAY 15 In Delhi, trip concludes**

We transfer to the airport for our mid morning departure to Delhi. On arrival trip concludes.

meals: B

This itinerary is subject to change with any change in Community regulations as well as Governmental changes and natural circumstances beyond our control.

## **country information**

India has fascinated travellers for thousands of years. It's exotic, romantic and geographically diverse – from the Himalayan mountains and wide deserts in the north to lush rainforests and sandy beaches in the south. Its people (now numbering over a billion) are predominantly Hindu, still living according to an ancient and complicated caste system which is believed to preserve a sense of order and calm among the chaos of modern Indian life; ancient influences and the modern world are constantly blending and evolving in a way that can only be described as natural. Muslims are also an integral part of the Indian community; they came to India in the 12th century and there are almost as many mosques as temples in India today. Some of the most magnificent temples have been built by the smaller Jain and Buddhist communities. Although more than a thousand languages are spoken, English is the second language and is widely taught in Indian schools.

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Ladakh – the “Land of High Passes”, is completely different to the better known, greener landscapes of other parts of the Himalaya. It is a land of extremes; freezing winds and at times intense heat.

## climate

Ladakh situated to the north of the Great Himalaya Range is beyond the influence of the Indian monsoon while in winter it does not attract the same heavy snowfall as the rest of region. In February day time temperatures may rise to a minimum of minus 5 while at night drop to 20 below. In March the temperatures rise slightly to just above freezing in the middle of the day falling to around minus 10 at night. In view of this we provide excellent tents and sleeping bags to combat any variations on these conditions.

## a typical day

This exploratory trip varies from our regular trek itinerary. You will be woken with a cup of tea brought to your tent at day break. Depending on the advice of the wildlife guides you will head straight to the spotters zone for a couple of hours – while our staff will bring you a thermos of tea or coffee with snacks. On returning to your camp you will have brunch followed by a hot lunch before you head on back to the spotters zone late afternoon for a further two hours. Dinner will be served around 7pm with time to review the day’s activities and establish a plan for the next day. We follow a similar routine while staying at your comfortable lodge at Hemis Shukpacha

## meals during the trek

We provide a full service while on trek. An important aspect of this service are the meals that are prepared for you and we are frequently complimented by returning travellers about the food provided. Ensuring that you stay healthy is one of our highest priorities. Therefore, each of our treks is accompanied by a trained cook as well as kitchen staff who provide you with three hearty meals each day. High levels of hygiene are engaged to ensure that our travellers stay healthy and fit. Our cooking staff has mastered the preparation of a varied and balanced menu and there is always plenty of food for those who may like seconds. Our cooks are trained to provide excellent food for vegetarians and anyone who has a limited diet including those who are lactose or gluten intolerant. Our meal inclusion on your trek is for your benefit and takes all the hassle, expense and worry out of your holiday. Typically, you can expect breakfast to consist of muesli or cereal, eggs, local breads and pancakes and hot drinks. Lunch will generally be vegetables, salads, bread, cheese pasta style dishes, tinned fish and meats and are normally eaten picnic style. Dinner is always three courses and includes soup, seasonal vegetables, meat, rice or pasta and bread with some local specialties also in the mix. Dessert is always served after the main meal each evening followed by hot beverages.

## dietary requirements

Provided we are advised in advance of your departure we are able to cater for vegetarian diets and can assist with medically recommended diets (allergies and intolerances). Please ensure you discuss your requirements with us well in advance (at least 1 month prior to your trip) to determine whether we can cater to such dietary requirements on your chosen adventure. Please note that options are likely to be limited in very remote locations or alternatives may be more expensive or unavailable. There may be times when those with special requirements may need to provide their own food. We are unable to guarantee a peanut-free or allergen-free trip, and therefore, we strongly encourage that travellers with life-threatening or severe allergies take all necessary medical precautions to prepare for the possibility of exposure. Passengers must travel with all necessary medications for food allergies and be capable of self-administering these medications.

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## what you carry

In your day pack you will need to carry extra warm clothing (depending on the altitude, location and weather), a rainjacket, water bottle, camera gear, valuables and personal items such as sunscreen, lip-eze etc. Mules carry all our group gear and your personal gear to our camp at Rumbak.

## equipment required

A comprehensive gear list is provided in the pre-departure information supplied on booking.

## acute mountain sickness

When we ascend above 2500 metres our bodies have to acclimatise to the decreasing amount of the oxygen available. To allow our bodies to adjust we have structured our treks so that you ascend slowly, allowing acclimatisation to occur. However, during the acclimatisation process, you may experience some of the following symptoms.

- Headache
- Tiredness
- Disturbed sleep
- Loss of appetite/nausea
- Shortness of breath
- Cough
- Palpitation
- Swelling of the hands and face

Individuals acclimatise at different rates. Your best strategy is to take your time and drink plenty of water. These symptoms may not indicate the onset of A.M.S. and if you experience them it does not necessarily mean that you should not continue. All our group leaders have extensive first aid training and we urge you to communicate with the group leader at all times should you believe you have any symptoms in order that we can effectively monitor your symptoms. The only cure for Acute Mountain Sickness is to descend.

Please note that your group leader has ultimate responsibility and may ask you to descend if symptoms persist.

## vehicles & safety

During the course of your trip, we will use a variety of vehicles, all of which are fit for purpose and the conditions encountered. It should be noted that laws governing transportation safety may differ from those in your home country and whilst wherever possible, vehicles with seatbelts are provided, on occasion some vehicles may not have seat belts fitted.

## visas

Visas are required to enter India and visitors from some countries (including Australia, New Zealand, United States, Canada and United Kingdom) can obtain an online visa, the Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) prior to arrival. For stays of less than 30 days, travellers can apply for an ETA online (US\$100 for US and UK passport holders, US\$80 for most other nationalities, rates subject to change) at the official website <https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/visa/tvoa.html> no less than four days and no more than 120 days before the date of travel.

At present, regardless of nationality, those visiting Sikkim and other restricted areas may be required to have an Indian visa stamp in their passport prior to arrival in India in order to apply for the special permits required for travel to these areas. Your reservations consultant will be able to tell you if this applies to you.

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Please bear in mind that visas may be required for countries you are visiting en route or transiting through on the way to your destination. It is important that you check the requirements of all countries you will visit. Visa costs and requirements do change regularly so we suggest you check with your travel agent or World Expeditions reservations consultant. It is your responsibility to obtain all necessary visas.

## social networking

Connect with us on social

FACEBOOK: @worldexpeditions

Like our page at [facebook.com/worldexpeditions](https://facebook.com/worldexpeditions)

INSTAGRAM: @worldexpeditions

Follow us at [instagram.com/worldexpeditions](https://instagram.com/worldexpeditions)

YOUTUBE: World Expeditions

Subscribe to our channel at [youtube.com/worldexpeditions](https://youtube.com/worldexpeditions)

Share the love

Use the hashtag #WorldExpeditions on your best travel photos and videos to be featured.

## trip availability

If this trip seems right for you then we encourage you to call us now to check availability as we operate strictly small group adventures. Many of our adventures require us to secure services on your behalf; such as permits, hotels and flights to name but a few. The demand for these services is increasing each year making it difficult to join a trip last minute. To ensure we can assist you onto your adventure of a lifetime we ask that you check your trip availability with our team at your earliest convenience.

## how to book

To register for this trip, please complete the booking form and return to World Expeditions with your \$400 non-refundable deposit. Forms can be faxed to 8270 8401 or posted to the attention of:

Groups Department

World Expeditions

Level 5, 71 York St

Sydney NSW 2000