

Earthbound Expeditions

Markha Valley Trek

16 days, from US$1,085 per person

Duration	Group size	Country
16 days	**14 people**	**India**

Markha Valley Trek Overview

The Markha Valley Trek is one of the most popular treks in the Ladakh region of northern India. The Markha Valley combines trans-Himalayan landscapes with Ladakhi villages. Ladakh is known as the lost Tibetan kingdom, and also as Little Tibet.

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There is a good chance of seeing high-altitude wildlife and of meeting nomadic families herding their yaks in the wide, open valleys. After a couple of days acclimatising to the altitude in Leh, you set out to explore the heart of central Ladakh. The route crosses high passes, the Stok La (4,848 m), the Kongmaru La (5,274 m) and the Ganda La (4,878 m), and follows the banks of the Markha River. Kang Yatse peak (6,400 m) can be approached from this route, as its base camp is on the plains of Nimaling.

Itinerary

Day 1

Arrive in Delhi and fly to Srinagar

Arrive in Delhi and fly to Srinagar (1,585 m). Transfer to your hotel in Srinagar, the Heevan Resort or Regal Palace. In the afternoon, visit old Srinagar and take a shikara boat ride.

Altitude: 1,585 m On foot: None, arrival day Night: Hotel, Srinagar Meals: Dinner

Day 2

Day excursion to Gulmarg

Day excursion to Gulmarg, a popular skiing destination in India. During British rule it was a favoured place for golf and skiing. Gulmarg has the highest golf course in the world, at 2,650 m. Overnight in Srinagar.

Altitude: 1,585 m On foot: Easy walking, 2–3 hrs Night: Hotel, Srinagar Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 3

Mughal gardens and drive to Sonmarg

Sightseeing in the Mughal gardens. After lunch, drive to Sonmarg.

Altitude: 2,740 m On foot: None, 2–3 hr drive Night: Hotel, Sonmarg Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 4

Drive to Kargil

Drive to Kargil (2,260 m), the second largest town in Ladakh after Leh. The area was affected by the 1999 war between India and Pakistan.

Altitude: 2,680 m On foot: None, 4–5 hr drive Night: Hotel, Kargil Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 5

Drive from Kargil to Alchi and Leh

After breakfast, drive about 160 km from Kargil to Alchi (3,200 m), then a further 60 km to Leh. Total driving time is about 7 hours.

Altitude: 3,500 m On foot: None, 7 hr drive Night: Hotel, Leh Meals: Breakfast

Day 6

Acclimatisation walk around Leh

Acclimatisation walk around Leh and visits to monasteries.

Altitude: 3,500 m On foot: Easy walking, 2–3 hrs Night: Hotel, Leh Meals: Breakfast

Day 7

Khardung La motorbike day trip

After breakfast, ride a motorbike to the Khardung La (5,359 m), the highest motorable pass in the world. The pass is 60 km away and takes about 2 hours each way. Two people share each motorbike. If you are not able to ride, you can travel by car instead. Return to the hotel afterwards.

Altitude: 3,500 m On foot: None, 4 hr round-trip ride Night: Hotel, Leh Meals: Breakfast

Day 8

Drive from Leh to Chilling and trek to Skiu

The trail crosses a flat, barren plain along the Indus River and then turns into the mountains through the willow-lined Zingchan gorge. Overnight in camp.

Altitude: 3,400 m On foot: 3–4 hrs Night: Tented camp, Skiu Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 9

Trek from Skiu to Markha

The trail to Markha is not very strenuous. It climbs about 300 m over 22 km and crosses the Markha River a few times. Markha is a large village with a ruined fort on the hillside and a small monastery. Overnight in camp.

Altitude: 3,800 m On foot: 22 km, 6–7 hrs Night: Tented camp, Markha Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 10

Trek from Markha to Thachungtse

Kang Yatse (6,400 m), a large snow-covered mountain, dominates the view for the next two days. This is a good place to see herds of blue sheep moving quickly up and down the steep cliffs. Overnight in camp.

Altitude: 4,100 m On foot: 5–6 hrs Night: Tented camp, Thachungtse Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 11

Trek from Thachungtse to Nimaling

You pass several mani walls (stones carved with prayers) and then reach a small lake. From here there are views of Kang Yatse, reflected in the still water of the lake, and of the Markha Valley, which is now well below you. Overnight in camp.

Altitude: 4,700 m On foot: 3–4 hrs Night: Tented camp, Nimaling Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 12

Trek from Nimaling over the Kongmaru La to Shang Sumdo

The last section to the top of the pass is short but steep, with good views over the Zanskar Range and of the vertical ice walls on the north face of Kang Yatse. The trail then becomes easier and descends to the river bed at Shang Sumdo. Overnight in camp.

Altitude: 3,700 m On foot: 7–8 hrs Night: Tented camp, Shang Sumdo Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 13

Drive from Shang Sumdo to Leh

We have set aside two days for the climb, to allow for delays caused by bad weather. The summit is covered in prayer flags and has wide views of the Karakoram and Ladakh ranges to the north, the Zanskar Range to the west, and the Indus Valley and the city of Leh below. You then descend to base camp. Overnight in camp.

Altitude: 3,500 m On foot: None, 2 hr drive Night: Hotel, Leh Meals: Breakfast

Day 14

Drive to Pangong Lake

Drive to Pangong, 140 km and about 5 hours each way. Overnight in a tent at Pangong.

Altitude: 4,250 m On foot: None, 5 hr drive Night: Tented camp, Pangong Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 15

Drive back to Leh

Drive back to Leh. Overnight in a hotel.

Altitude: 3,500 m On foot: None, 5 hr drive Night: Hotel, Leh Meals: Breakfast

Day 16

Fly to Delhi for your onward flight to Heathrow

Fly to Delhi to connect with your onward flight to Heathrow.

Altitude: 3,500 m On foot: None, departure day Night: No overnight Meals: Breakfast

What's included

- Heevan Resort, Regal hotel or similar in Srinagar with breakfast, lunch and dinner
- Hotel Snowland in Sonmarg with dinner, breakfast and a hot lunch
- Zojila Residency in Kargil with dinner and breakfast
- Transport by Tempo Traveller (minibus) for the Khardung La trip, from arrival in Srinagar to Leh, and to and from the trek start and end points
- Sightseeing in Leh on the acclimatisation day
- Ponies to carry luggage and full trek services
- Tents shared by two people, with mattresses
- Meals, the services of 2 cooks and helpers, experienced climbing Sherpas to guide the climb, and an emergency oxygen cylinder
- Hire of a 350 Enfield motorbike or a jeep for the day
- Transport for the Pangong day trip (Innova or Xylo)
- Environment fee
- Inner Line Permit fee for foreigners, which the district authorities have recently introduced
- Sleeping bag, down jacket and duffel bag (to be returned)

Not included

- International and domestic flights
- Personal expenses such as drinks and tips
- Extra costs caused by roadblocks or landslides

- Flight cancellations, rescue and evacuation, and insurance
- Personal porter: GBP per porter per day

Photos, videos and reviews of this trip: earthbound.rajansimkhada.com/markha-valley-trek