Discovering Our Planet Together



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 $13395 (+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

Best Chance to Photograph Wild Snow Leopards

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

A Full Week in the Snow Leopard's Realm

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

Stay at the Region's Only Luxury Ecolodge

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



Snow Leopard Quest Photo Expedition Itinerary

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

Itinerary at a Glance

Day 1	New Delhi
Day 2	New Delhi / Leh
Day 3	Leh / Thiksey Monastery
Days 4–9	Rumbak
Day 10	Rumbak / Leh
Day 11	Leh / Delhi



Day 1

New Delhi

Gather in Delhi before your Himalayan photo expedition

- Join your Photo Expedition Leader for a welcome dinner and preview of the journey ahead

Arrive at the international airport in India's capital of New Delhi and transfer to our upscale 5-star hotel. 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.

Please note: Through 2027, guests stay at Roseate House New Delhi. Starting in 2028, guests stay at Taj Mahal Hotel New Delhi on Day 1.

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Day 2

New Delhi / Leh

Fly into Ladakh, the land of high passes

- Arrive amid the dramatic Himalayan landscapes of Ladakh at 11,500 feet
- Begin acclimatizing in Leh, a historic crossroads of Tibet, Kashmir and the Silk Road
- Take in Himalayan views from a regal hotel built in traditional Ladakhi style

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 / Thiksey Monastery

Photograph the landscapes and monasteries of Little Tibet

- Cross high mountain passes draped with colorful prayer flags
- Visit Thiksey Monastery for a traditional monk's blessing
- Capture images of blue sheep, golden eagles and bearded vultures in the Indus Valley

Today we head 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 a visit to Thiksey Monastery, where we participate in a monk blessing ceremony. After lunch, there's time to rest for a bit as we continue to acclimatize. Later this afternoon, those who wish may join a visit to a local market to observe and photograph daily commerce in this traditional setting.

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Days 4–9

Rumbak

Track and photograph the gray ghost of the Himalaya

- Search Hemis National Park with expert local spotters for elusive snow leopards
- Capture images of bharal, Tibetan wolves and other mountain wildlife between sightings
- Refine your techniques during evening image reviews and workshops with your Photo Expedition Leader

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 track and photograph these mystical cats. Our lodge is among the finest in the region, providing 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 week, 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 individuals. 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

Search the mountains once more before returning to Leh

- Spend a final morning at your traditional Ladakhi ecolodge that supports local livelihoods and snow leopard conservation
- Photograph wildlife and alpine landscapes around Rumbak before returning to Leh
- Gather with your Photo Expedition Leader and fellow travelers for a farewell dinner

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

Return to Delhi after your snow leopard photo expedition

- Fly from Ladakh to Delhi
- Relax at your hotel before evening homeward flights

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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Snow Leopard Quest Photo Expedition Accommodations

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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.



Taj Mahal Hotel, New Delhi

One of the most distinguished in India's leafy capital district, this 5-star hotel is a New Delhi landmark, with elegant interiors and finely appointed rooms reflecting traditional Mughal heritage in art, antiques and ambiance.



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.

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

The World's Best Opportunity for Snow Leopard Photography

Snow Leopard Quest Photo Expedition

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 early 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.

1 **No Better Place to Seek Snow Leopard Photos**

Called the "gray ghost of the mountains" by locals, a moniker that attests to its elusiveness, the snow leopard is a rare creature that has been virtually invisible 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—continue to rise.

2 **Top Spotters, Trackers and Guides Enhance Your Photo Odds**

For the best chances to photograph elusive snow leopards and other Himalayan wildlife, you need a superlative local team. Based at our private lodge in the heart of snow leopard territory, we spend seven days with top trackers and naturalist guides, including our Photo Expedition Leader who coordinates the entire effort. Expert 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 environmentally conscious ecolodge, for our exclusive use, is among the very best accommodations in the region, ensuring your comfort with en suite bathrooms, hot running water, radiant floor heating and excellent meals. Built in the region's traditional architectural style, the lodge's fine details plus proximity to snow leopards and other Himalayan wildlife constitute the ultimate in luxury in this remote realm.

4 **A Small Group is Essential to Maximize Photography Opportunities**

Limited to just nine 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.

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.

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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. **Read our important promise**.

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.

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Dates & Pricing Summary:

Price
From $13395 (+Air)

Group Size
Limited to 9 Travelers

Snow Leopard Quest Photo Expedition Dates, Pricing & Info

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2027 Departures

Departure – Return	Pricing	Notes
Feb 19 - Mar 1, 2027	**$13395** +internal air	
Mar 19 - Mar 29, 2027	**$13395** +internal air	
Mar 30 - Apr 9, 2027	**$13395** +internal air	
Apr 10 - Apr 20, 2027	**$13395** +internal air	

2028 Departures

Departure – Return	Pricing	Notes
Prices not confirmed for 2028		
Feb 19 - Feb 29, 2028	**From $12895** +internal air	
Mar 17 - Mar 27, 2028	**From $12895** +internal air	

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Departure – Return	Pricing	Notes
Prices not confirmed for 2028		
Mar 29 - Apr 8, 2028	**From $12895** +internal air	
Apr 9 - Apr 19, 2028	**From $12895** +internal air	
Apr 15 - Apr 25, 2028	**From $12895** +internal air	

2029 Departures

Departure – Return	Pricing	Notes
Prices and dates not confirmed for 2029		
Feb 20 - Mar 2, 2029	**From $12895** +internal air	
Mar 18 - Mar 28, 2029	**From $12895** +internal air	
Mar 30 - Apr 9, 2029	**From $12895** +internal air	
Apr 10 - Apr 20, 2029	**From $12895** +internal air	
Apr 16 - Apr 26, 2029	**From $12895** +internal air	

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

Included

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, VIP airport arrival and departure service, airport transfers on Day 1 and final day, all activities and entrance fees, all taxes, permits and service fees.

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, etc.), airline excess baggage fees, required medical evacuation insurance, optional travel protection insurance.

Internal air: All flights within the itinerary (this will be listed separately on our invoicing).

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

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an awareness that staying in the very heart of wild snow leopard habitat is the ultimate luxury. We spend six nights in the best area for potential sightings, but there are no guarantees we will see this elusive animal. Most 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 a comfortable and authentic way to view snow leopards in the wild. Accommodations there are among the highest quality in the region, with twin or queen-sized beds and warm bedding, 24-hour electricity, heated flooring, wood-burning stove heat, and private en suite bathrooms with hot running water. 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.

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.

Wildlife Viewing in Ladakh

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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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 5:00 pm.

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

Our Natural Habitat Adventures Nat Hab Air Team 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.



Snow Leopard Quest Photo Expedition Extensions

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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!

$13895 (+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.

$15095 (+air)

Natural Habitat & WWF: Discovering Our Planet Together

Natural Habitat Adventures · PO Box 3065 · Boulder, CO USA 80307

US & Canada: 800-543-8917 · International: 303-449-3711

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