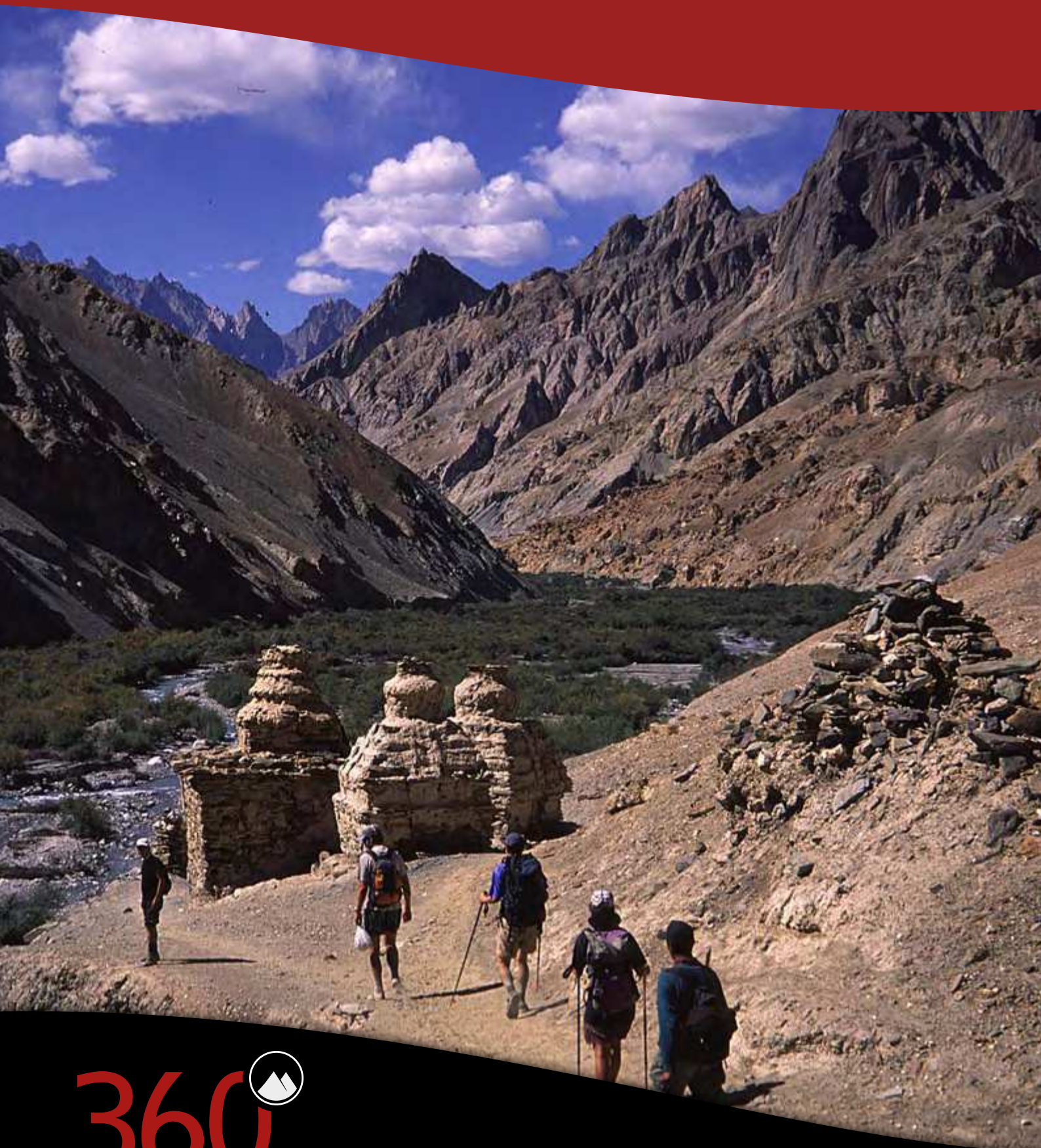


STOK KANGRI

India | 6,153m



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INTRODUCTION

Stok Kangri is the highest peak in the Stok range of the Himalayas. Located in Ladakh in northwest India, you reach it from the region's capital, Leh. Ladakh means "the land of high passes" as the region links the Karakorums to the north with the Himalayas to the south. It makes a fantastic entry level 6,000m peak as the ascent is generally considered to be non-technical, especially as the majority of the mountain is snow-free in July / August.

We spend some time exploring the environs of Leh and visit some of the local monasteries in order to acclimatise. The trek is a wonderful ascent through wild Indian countryside, through rural villages and up into spectacular mountain scenery of plunging rivers, steep gorges and high mountain passes all surrounded by majestic snow capped peaks. The summit affords us panoramic views across to the Karakorums and K2 220km away.

ITINERARY



DAY 1	<p>Depart UK Fly to Delhi and connect for our Leh flight. The spectacular connection flight over the Himalaya takes us to one of the highest airports in the world at 3,350m. If the weather is good we should see the Karakorums from the plane, and get a peek at Stok Kangri as we land.</p>
DAY 2	<p>Arrive Leh Land in Leh, the rest of the day is free to relax and acclimatise to the altitude (3,500m). In the afternoon we can have a wander around Leh and its bazaars and explore our home for the next couple of days. D</p>
DAY 3	<p>Leh We stay in Leh in order to begin acclimatising. You are welcome to join us on a very leisurely sightseeing tour to three of the major gompas (monasteries) in the area. We first drive to Shey, a former Royal Palace of the Ladakh kings. Inside is a small temple containing a 350 year old copper and gold statue of Buddha. Next stop is Tikse, perched prominently on top of a hill, its red and white buildings visible for miles. A recently built temple contains a magnificent image of the Future Buddha. Final stop is Stakna, a small, friendly monastery high above the Indus River. BD</p>
DAY 4	<p>Leh – Choksi (3,210m) We leave Leh and drive to the start point of our trek. We follow the Indus River for a short while before turning off onto an unpaved track that winds along the Zaskar River. The open valley begins to narrow and steepen until we find ourselves driving along the bottom of a magnificent gorge. At the first bridge we leave the vehicle, put on our packs and have a short climb to Choksi (3,210m) where we camp. This pretty village is inhabited by one large extended family who farm this small valley. In the afternoon we can have a short acclimatisation walk in preparation for tomorrow or just explore our environs. BLD</p>

DAY 5	<p>Choksi – Shepherds hut Today is our first day of proper trekking as we climb steeply out of Choksi, the valley narrowing spectacularly as we get closer to its head. Looking back over our shoulders, the colourful Ladakh mountains are spread before us. We reach camp around lunchtime, and have the afternoon to explore the area, potentially climbing up to the ridge opposite us for views of the surrounding peaks. BLD</p>
DAY 6	<p>Kang La (4,900m) We have a short morning's walk today up to the base of the Kang La (4,900m). After lunch we can climb up to the top of the small rocky peak behind our camp. At 5,056m the views are magnificent - we can see the Kang La and Palam Peak ahead and the Himalayas are spread in front of us. BLD</p>
DAY 7	<p>Kang La (5,260m) Although the altitude gain today is seemingly small, today remains a tough day as we head for our first pass. The climb is gentle and long at first, but the last section is steep, rocky and challenging as we try to identify the little-used path. Once we reach the pass the climb up Palam Peak (5,380m) is well worth doing for the views from its summit that are almost as good as from Stok Kangri itself. Looking behind us towards Leh, now several days past, we look ahead towards Stok Kangri, our objective. All around us are panoramic views of the Himalayas. We continue from the top, contouring the top of the valley in view of Stok Kangri. Just below the ridge is a high camp we can use, or we continue down towards the base of Ganda La, depending on the weather. BLD</p>
DAY 8	<p>Ganda La (4,970m) – Rumbak We continue round the valley following the contours once more and then climb up to Ganda La, our second pass, and the entrance to the Markha Valley. From here we can identify the path for the next couple of days, as well as enjoy the spectacular views of the north face of Stok Kangri in the east and the Karakoram Range in the north. The mountain slopes of Ganda La are home to several species of Himalayan wildlife such as blue sheep, marmots, golden eagle and the mystic snow leopard. After enjoying the views we descend down the valley and come across the one house village of Yurutse before entering the Rumbak Valley. Rumbak is inhabited by 20 families and a small gumpa. BLD</p>
DAY 9	<p>Rumbak – Mankarmo (4,300m) via Stok La (4,950m) Today is a big day of trekking, but also one of the most rewarding as we cross the Stok La with its amazing colourful rock formations. The path slopes gently, but soon starts to steepen as it zigzags towards the pass. The views of the Indus Valley, Zaskar and Karakoram Ranges once we reach the pass are second to none, while layer upon layer of multicoloured rock cathedrals are spread before us in every direction. We then drop steeply down the other side, leveling off to contour the valley once more to meet the river that drops from Stok Kangri, following it until we reach Mankarmo, a shepherd settlement. BLD</p>



DAY 10

Mankarmo – Base Camp (5,000m)

The trail from Mankarmo climbs gradually through a rocky river bed towards Base Camp. As we climb higher we can see the north east face of Stok Kangri ahead of the valley. The distance today is quite short so we take our time. After a warm lunch we can get a good rest and in the afternoon organise our climbing gear for the early morning push for the summit. There will be a full briefing about tomorrow's ascent and a run through of walking in rope teams and with crampons. After an early dinner we retire to bed to rest for a few hours. **BLD**

DAY 11

Summit (6,173m)

The summit push, like many others, is long and hard. We're up very early for coffee and porridge before setting off around 2am. The initial climb is gradual, but after about 3 hours we cross the glacier and things get steeper. At around 5,700m we traverse to the exposed left ridge of the mountain, scrambling up the rocky, icy final section to the summit. The route isn't technical, but the altitude and cold will make it hard work. But hard work will be rewarded with stunning views of the Himalayas and Karakorums, and on a very clear day the sunrise might even pick out K2 in the distance.

After lapping up the views and catching our breaths, we head carefully back down to basecamp for a warm brunch, and the chance to climb back into our sleeping bags and catch up with some sleep. **BLD**

DAY 12

Base camp – Stok

Our final trek day is a stunning one as we wander back down a spectacular valley with wonderful colourful rock formations culminating in our emergence into a fantastic gorge before the trail widens and we reach Stok. Here our transport will meet us and return us to Leh for hot showers and a welcome celebration that evening. **BLD**

DAY 13

Leh – Ladakh Festival

The inauguration ceremony of the festival takes place in Leh on a large scale with a procession of several cultural troupes from different part of the region which traverses through Leh Market. There is dancing, singing, traditional music, people wearing colorful traditional Ladakhi dresses. The festival takes place in Leh and surrounding villages with archery, polo, and masked dances from the monasteries and dances by cultural troupes from the villages. There are musical concerts too. **BD**

DAY 14

Leh – London

An early start for the day flight back to London. **B**

This itinerary is a guide that is normally adhered to but can be subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances and adverse weather conditions.



We recommend the following kit.

It is not an exhaustive list and there are some items which are more luxury than necessity. If you want to discuss any kit requirements please feel free to contact us. It is possible to leave bags with clean clothes at the hotel prior to leaving for the mountain. You can also hire kit from our partners Outdoorhire.co.uk. Crampons and ice axes can be provided locally if you don't have your own but may not be as high quality as UK-sourced gear.

You will be contacted closer to departure to confirm your exact weight limit on your flight.

DOCUMENTATION

Bureaucratic

Passport — *Don't forget this! It should be valid for the dates of your trip to at least 6 months before expiry. Worth having spare passport photos to hand, as well as copies of your actual passport*

Scan of passport picture page

4 Passport photographs — *we need these to obtain your climbing and trekking permits*

Entry visa — *A visa can either be obtained from the Indian Embassy in London or on arrival at Delhi airport. Non UK residents should check with the Indian Embassy*

Money — *We recommend you take around \$120 - \$150 onto the mountain in small denominations to tip the local team. Plus about \$250 for any extras along the way, satellite phone calls etc.*

Copy of own travel insurance details - *And relevant contact numbers. Please ensure you have appropriate insurance for your intended trip to include medical evacuation and coverage up to an altitude of 6,200m*

PERSONAL KIT

Packing

Most of your kit is likely to be bulky so make sure you can fit everything in before you go

Duffel Bag 90 -120L — *a duffel bag is strong, soft, weather resistant bag without wheels but with functional straps for carrying. Suitcases and wheeled bags are not suitable*

Daysack — *approx. 40L capacity. Your day to day pack that you carry with your daily essentials (see FAQ's later), fitted with shoulder straps and importantly a waist belt*

Dry stuffsacs — *nylon rolltop bags (or even just large plastic bags) that keep fresh clothing and other important items like passports and iPods dry in the event of a total downpour that seeps into your kitbag. Good for quarantining old socks*

Waterproof rucksack cover

Small kit bag or light bag — *this is for any kit you intend to leave at the hotel and could even simply be a heavy duty plastic bag*

2 Padlocks — *For use on your kit bag for travel and on the expedition plus your hotel bag*

Sleeping

Sleeping Bag 4 season — *you should get a sleeping bag rated to -10C and choose a sleeping bag that functions within the comfort rating of this temperature. A silk sleeping bag liner will enhance this rating on the coldest nights*

Sleeping bag liner — *Silk is best for keeping the bag clean and you a little warmer*

Sleeping mat — *full length self-inflating rather than ¾ length Thermarest*

CLOTHING

Head and Face

The weather can be extremely changeable at altitude so the ability to cover up is essential. Getting sunburn on the mountain is not a good look

2 Warm Headgear — *this can be a warm hat, beanie, balaclava, anything to reduce the heat loss from your head*

Wide Brimmed Hat — *keeps the sun off exposed areas like ears and the neck*

Buff or scarf – *Essential for protection from the sun and dust on the trail*

Sunglasses – *worth spending money on good UV filters. For glacier work category 4 with side and nose protectors*

Ski goggles – *Category 3 for days when it may be snowing and very windy. Very useful on summit day*

Sunblock – *buy the highest SPF you can find as UV intensifies with altitude*

Lipsalve – *Sun cream will not work on your lips and they are very susceptible to burn without proper protection*

Upper Body

There are many options for your upper body with some people preferring synthetic clothing whilst others prefer merino wool. The ability to layer your clothing in different combinations is key to being comfortable. Too hot: take a layer off, too cold: put a layer on

3 Base layers – *see panel on following pages, take several of different weights*

2 Mid Layer – *as above, take a couple of different weights*

Gilet - *a great low volume additional layer to keep your core warm, whether down, primaloft or fleece*

Light insulated jacket – *A lighter jacket such as a Primaloft or lightweight down which can be worn at lower to mid altitudes is a great addition to your kit offering greater flexibility with layering*

Outer layer x 1 – *see panel (optional)*

Hard Shell x 1 – *see panel*

Down jacket – *these provide the best insulation and are worth every penny. Ask advice in the shop (or from us) when buying the jacket and mention you want it rated to -20C and the assistant will recommend the correct fill for you*

Warm gloves – *consider liners or a light polartec pair for lower altitudes and evenings, and a thicker waterproof pair like ski gloves for higher altitudes*

Down mitts + waterproof mitts – *Essential for higher altitudes to be worn with a liner glove underneath, and waterproof (and windproof) layer over*

Lower Body

2 Trekking trousers – *these tend to be polyester so they dry quickly after a shower and weigh little in your pack. Consider perhaps a pair with detachable lower legs as an alternative to shorts*

Softshell trousers - *windproof or thermal lined trekking trousers for higher altitudes and the summit phase. Thermal leggings can still be worn underneath if necessary*

Long Johns – *thermal insulation for the lower body*

Waterproof overtrousers – *like the jacket (panel right), an essential piece of kit to stay dry and should also be Goretex*

Underwear – *merino or wicking material, not cotton. How many pairs you take is entirely up to you*

Feet

3 to 4 season walking boots – *Well broken in with mid - high ankle support*

High altitude plastic boots – *these boots are double or triple layered to offer the best insulation and the warmest feet up high. Either Scarpa Vega, La Sportiva Spantiks or 8,000m boots are suitable. Make sure you can fit 2 pairs of socks for added warmth with room to wiggle your toes*

2 High Altitude socks – *these are especially thick to provide maximum insulation. Bring three pairs, keep one pair clean for summit day, and wear with a thinner inner*

4 Trekking socks – *start with lighter socks lower down, working up to thicker pairs for higher up as it gets colder. Some people like a clean pair every day, others are happy to change every other day – that's a personal choice*

STOK KANGRI KIT LIST

HARDWARE

Spare laces

Trainers – for camp, saves stomping around in heavy boots for the entire day

Climbing Gear

Climbing harness – Try a variety on in a shop before you buy to ensure a good fit. Legs clips are a good option and avoids having to step into the harness to put it on

Figure of 8 or other descendeur - for abseiling

2 Locking HMS karabiners

2 Sling (60cm)

Ice Axe – A walking ice axe between 55cm and 65cm. Go to an outdoor shop and try different ones for weight and size so that you get one that feels good to you (available locally at no cost)

Crampons – 12 point mountaineering crampons with anti-balling plates that fit your specific plastic boots (not ice climbing crampons), (available locally at no cost)

PERSONAL EFFECTS

Water and Hygiene

Hydration – sterilised water will be provided but it is always worth being prepared just in case you drink more than expected out on the hill and need to refill.

Water purification – if you are using tablets, take neutraliser or use Silver Chloride which has little taste

Water bottles (3 Litre capacity) – Camelbaks are useful at lower altitudes but have a tendency to freeze up at higher altitudes without insulation tubes, Nalgene bottles are better at altitude and can be put in your down jacket

Pee bottle (or Shewee) – relief at night when it's too cold or stormy to go out

Wash kit – (Toothbrush, toothpaste, deoderant etc. Moisturiser usefull too)

Personal first aid kit – blister patches, plasters, antiseptic, painkillers, (See FAQ's in the following pages)

Personal medication – **keep this in your rucksack**

Travel Towel – travel towels from the likes of Lifesystems are perfect

Wet wipes – these are great for washing when modern shower facilities become a thing of the past

Alcohol rub – a must-have for good camp hygiene

Insect Repellent – for early stages and once back down

Toilet paper – provided on the mountain but a spare in your daysack may be useful if you need to hide behind a rock between camps

Nappy or dog poo bags – only needed to bag your toilet paper if you are caught short in between camps and for keeping your rubbish tidy in your tent

Miscellaneous equipment

Headtorch – bring spare batteries

Trekking Poles – these tend to be a personal preference but help with your stability and can dampen the pressure on the knees coming down hill

Camera – bring plenty of spare batteries and memory cards

Penknife

Sewing kit

Snacks – You will be fed very well and given snacks each day however we advise bringing a small selection as a little bit of comfort. Energy gels and protein bars are not suitable

Terminology explained

Base layer — this is the layer closest to the skin and its principal function is to draw (wick) moisture and sweat away from the skin. Wet or sweaty clothing makes you cold and saps your energy as your body compensates to dry it. You can also get thermal base layers for use at higher altitudes that provide an additional insulative layer while still drawing sweat during times of high exertion.

Mid layer — these are typically lightweight microfleece or similar technology that provide varying degrees of warmth and insulation without being overly bulky or heavy to pack.

Light insulated jacket — these are either down or primaloft and have much better thermal properties than fleece above, they are very light and highly compressible. Worn in combination with a hardshell for wind resistance, or even with your down jacket for maximum warmth.

Outer layer — frequently referred to as a Softshell, this will probably be your outermost layer for much of an expedition. These should be windproof (not all are), and insulative. They are mostly made of soft polyester and sometimes resemble a neoprene finish which makes them very mobile and comfortable to wear. While offering a degree of weather repellence, they are not waterproof, which is why you must also have:

Hard Shell — These jackets (and trousers) are thin, highly waterproof and windproof and worn over all other items of clothing. They are your last line of defence against harsh weather. You'll find these made of Gore-Tex or other proprietary waterproof yet breathable technology. Inexpensive hard shells that aren't breathable will prevent evaporation, making you sweat intensely and are not recommended.

Down jackets — generally made using feathers, these are the ultra-warm and insulated layer that are used when at camp or in extremely cold environments. Those with a windproof outer fabric will provide the best insulation.

Am I fit enough?



This trip involves sustained physical effort and calls for a state of high conditioning. You should already have experience of tough challenges and be regularly training as part of your normal routine. Expect days of up to 8 hours and longer while carrying a pack up to 6kg in weight. It involves harder scrambling and when snow is encountered then glacier travel with ropes, ice axes and crampons will be necessary. Basic mountaineering skills are required but will also be taught on the trip.



Frequently Asked Questions

THE TREK

What is the best time of the year to do this trek?

From June to late September is a good period for the mountains, but the best time is beginning to mid September, when there are fewer trekkers and the weather is more stable.

How cold / hot can it get?

The temperature in the mountains can vary from 30°C during the day to 0°C in the evenings. Add some windchill on summit day and it could be somewhat cooler. In Leh the temperature can vary between 15 - 35°C.

What is the overall success rate for climbing the mountain?

The success rate for Stok Kangri is about 80%.

How long is summit day?

The summit day is about 10 - 14 hours.

What is the ratio of leaders to clients?

On the trekking phase we have one overall 360 leader who runs the expedition, assisted by 1 local guide per 8 clients. Once we reach base camp the team increases and we use 1 local guide per 4 clients.

How out of my comfort zone will I be?

On a day to day level remember that you will be camping at altitude in cold temperatures. You are likely to be cold, washing and toilet facilities will be limited, your appetite may be affected by the altitude and as you get higher on the trek you are likely to suffer shortness of breath and many people experience difficulty sleeping. Remember that everyone on the trek is likely to be experiencing exactly the same symptoms, physical and mental.

Where do I meet my Leader?

Your guide will generally meet you at the airport. At the check-in desk look for someone wearing a 360 logo.

How fit do I need to be for this expedition?

Climbers are expected to be in good physical condition. The better your physical shape the more you will be able to handle the demands of trekking to the base camp and then climbing the peak. Having a good level of fitness will allow you to enjoy the expedition all the better and increase your chances of reaching the summit.

Any tips on how I can maximise my chances of success?

The 360 training programs have been devised to be expedition specific. Use these as a guide but also feel free to contact us for individual advice on how to best incorporate the most suitable fitness program with your own lifestyle. The idea is to increase the

intensity of the exercise over 4 to 6 months before you leave for the expedition. Concentrate on cardiovascular work-outs during the initial weeks by taking short runs when time allows and try to spend at least 2 weekends a month going on long duration walks (longer than 6 hrs) carrying a rucksack of around 10kg. As you get stronger increase this rate of exercise and the duration by walking every weekend and running 5km every second day.

A focused regime will not only prepare your body for carrying minor loads but will harden your body against the big days on the mountain itself. In addition the weekend walks will help break in your boots and get you used to your equipment. In combination this will pay dividends when you reach Stok Kangri because even though you can't train for altitude your body will be ready for arduous days and you will be familiar with how to best use your equipment.

ACCOMMODATION

How big are the tents?

We use 3 man tents for two people to give you a bit more personal space and more room for your gear.

Will I have my own room/tent?

Most altitude related symptoms manifest themselves at night. We therefore recommend room and tent sharing from the onset of all our expeditions. Room share is always organised according to sex and where possible age groups. Obviously if you are climbing this mountain with a friend or partner then share rooms with them. If you have joined the team by yourself then it is highly likely that you will be sharing a room with your pre-assigned room buddy unless prior arrangements have been made.

If you would like your own hotel room, please contact the office to make arrangements, a modest single supplement fee will be requested.

Do you use a mess tent for dining and relaxing?

Yes, we provide dining tents for meals and to relax and wind down in after a day's walking.

Will the camp be freshly set up or will we be staying at existing camps at a set site on the way up? What will the lavatorial facilities be?

There are no fixed camps in the mountains, so we carry all camping gear with us on horses, pitching camp near some of the reliable water sources. **In terms of the camp "facilities", there is a portalo toilet in its own tent, and a shower tent.**

FOOD AND WATER

What will we be eating?

Food served on this trek is vegetarian and consists of a wide variety of Tibetan, Indian and continental dishes.

Breakfast: Chapati, bread, jam, cheese, butter, cornflakes, omelette, porridge, pancake, tea, coffee

Lunch: bread, cheese, jam, fruit, spring rolls, chocolate, boiled potato and egg.

Dinner: Tibetan, Indian and continental dishes.

If you have food allergies, let us know in advance and we'll do our best to cater for these.

Where does the drinking water come from?

Drinking water comes from a stream or spring near the campsite.

As it's mostly rain run off or snow melt it's going to be pretty pure to start with but we'll boil or treat anyway for good measure.

How often is fresh water available to top up during the day?

There are streams and springs on the way so bring purification tablets or a water filter (the latter are noticeably heavier and bulkier than the former) you can replenish whenever you run out, but generally we fill our bottles up in the morning before we set off.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

What happens if I get altitude sickness?

There are different types of altitude sickness. Although our acclimatisation regime ensures that everybody enjoys the best possible chance of getting high on the mountain, altitude-related problems can happen. The most common of this is high altitude sickness, (AMS - acute mountain sickness). Symptoms for this generally include headaches, nausea and vomiting. It all sounds quite dramatic but generally this is just the process your body naturally goes through to adjust to the higher altitudes and the reduced partial pressure of the atmosphere. For some people the acclimatisation process is a little longer and harder than others. For our guides this is all part and parcel of trekking at relatively high altitude and ascending a 6,000m peak and although we assess each client's personal situation carefully we also further consider the compounding affects of dehydration brought on by excessive vomiting and lack of appetite.

AMS might sound frightening but our guides are fully trained (and experienced) in helping relieve your symptoms and providing advice on how to best proceed. HACE and HAPE rarely occur on this trek and our guides are fully trained in recognition of the onset of these problems and will deal with them at the first sign of their development.

In most cases AMS can be avoided by following guidelines:

- *Drink lots of water*
- *Walk slowly*
- *Stay warm*
- *Eat well*

We recommend that you familiarise yourself with the various affects that altitude can cause. During your pre-climb briefing, we describe altitude sickness to you in detail, and advise you how to cope with it. The most important thing is not to fear it, but to

respect it and to know how to deal with it and more importantly tell your guides how you feel. Our guides have seen every condition that can occur on this trek, and they will always know how to deal with problems.

What happens if there is a problem on the mountain?

We're in the developing world now, and help isn't quite so easily at hand. However, if there's a serious injury or sickness the 360 leader carries a satellite phone and we can get a helicopter from the Indian Air Force to airlift a casualty to Leh. Remember you'll need insurance to cover the expenses if this happens.

What happens if I need to leave the expedition early (not requiring medical evacuation, but I need to get home quickly)?

If something has happened at home and you need to get back quickly, we can get you to the nearest road head and arrange a pick-up to drive to Leh. If you've had to be turned back, or you feel you've reached your limit for the expedition, normally you will be led back down to base camp to wait for the others unless it is felt you need to return to Leh. Unfortunately you will be liable for any additional costs that this has incurred.

Do I need to take Malarial drugs? Do I need to have a yellow fever certificate?

There is no malaria or yellow fever in Ladakh, and you don't need a yellow fever certificate UNLESS you are traveling from an area where YF is present.

What vaccinations do I need?

The standard vaccinations that are generally recommended for travel to the Indian subcontinent are Hepatitis A, Typhoid, Diphtheria, Tetanus and Polio, some people consider a rabies jab to be important. However you should consult your doctor, travel clinic or nurse practitioner for the most recent accepted advice rather than take our word for it.

You advocate taking a small first aid kit, what should it have in it?

We advocate a little bit of self-help on the trek. If you have a blister developing for example then please stop take off your boot and treat it before it becomes a problem. Your own first aid kit should contain: a basic blister kit, plasters, antiseptic, sun-protection, your own personal medication (sometimes your porter might get to camp after you and if he is carrying your medication you may not be able to take it according to the regime you are used to), basic pain relief (aspirin and Ibuprofen,) a personal course of antibiotics if prone to illness etc. Foot powder in your socks every morning is great for preventing blisters. Generally the best approach packing your first aid kit is to include such basic medications as if you would on a family or personal holiday.

Your 360 expedition leader and/or a local porter carries a very comprehensive first aid kit which contains a wide range of supplies and medications. They are fully trained to use whatever is needed

for any emergency that may arise. We advocate keeping this in mind when packing your own first aid supplies and keeping your own FA kit as compact and light as possible.

CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT

What clothing should I wear on the mountain?

If this is your first foray into high altitude climbing and don't already own much equipment then we advocate borrowing gear from friends, buying second hand (not shoes) or hiring from our partners Outdoorhire.co.uk as the cost of buying everything on the kit list can be more than the trip itself.

Our guides usually start the walk wearing long, lightweight trekking trousers and T-shirts. Long trousers are recommended as a deterrent to insects, stinging plants and to act as sun protection. Shorts can also be worn on the initial few days of the trek as the temperature is usually warm. Ensure that you apply sun-protection frequently, or buy a once a day product such as P20 if you're not very good at remembering to apply it.

The prevailing conditions on the mountain will dictate what you will wear: if it is cold when you leave the camp in the morning then wear your fleece. As things warm up take advantage of the zipper system which most trekking clothing has - open and close the zips to adjust to your own preferred temperature. If you get too warm then take a layer off.

On summit day it gets cold and temperatures of 0C to -10C are not unusual. Typically our guides wear 2 sets of base layers (long johns), a thick fleece layer (top and bottom) and then on the legs waterproofs whilst on the upper torso a down jacket is worn. As the wind picks up near the summit ridge our guides will put on their windproof layer to ward off the wind chill. On their hands they'll wear a thin layer of fleece working gloves over the top of which a thicker set of ski gloves or mittens is worn.

Their heads are covered by a thermal beanie hat or a thick balaclava and the hood of their down jackets. On their feet the guides wear one pair of thin socks and one pair of thick. Sunglasses are worn for most of the trek as well as sunhats.

Plastic boots are essential for climbing 6,000m peaks. They should be the double boot (with a soft inner and hard plastic shell) the basic model would be Scarpa Vega's or La Sportiva Spantiks. Temperatures high on the mountain are sometimes well below freezing and only plastic boots can withstand such conditions. Ensure that you have tried the boots on before you leave home and that you can wear a thin and a thick pair of socks in them and still be able to wriggle your toes (adequate circulation).

Crampons are worn for a majority of the time you spend on the glacier and for the actual summit day itself. Your crampons should preferably be of the easy "heel clip" variety (rather than the strap systems which are fiddly). It is not necessary to use specialist technical climbing crampons as standard 12 point all round crampons such as those from Grivel will do the job very well. Crampons WILL be provided if you don't have your own.

Over the top of your clothing you will wear a climbing harness and be attached to a rope for some of the day.

Waterproofs are needed on hand at all times. Stok Kangri is a big mountain that creates its own weather system. It is not unusual to be caught out in an afternoon rainstorm low down on the trek. Waterproofs should be Goretex material or similar. On summit day these are used as an invaluable windshield to protect you against the effect of wind chill when a strong wind blows.

What is the best type of footwear to use?

You will only be using your plastic boots for the mountain phase of this trek. You will not be wearing them on the trek to the base camp. All the mountain hardware (plastics, crampons, ice axes, etc) are brought directly to the camp by porters.

Because of the huge variety of terrain encountered on the trekking phase it is very important to wear the right footwear. Trekking boots should be sturdy, waterproof, insulated against cold temperatures and offer adequate ankle support. In addition it is highly recommended that your boots are well worn in to prevent the formation of blisters. A range of suitable boots are on the market and further advice as to which brand names are available can be found online or at your local gear store.

What about back in Leh?

The temperatures in Leh will be anywhere between 15°C and 35°C so shorts and t-shirts will be fine, possibly trousers in the evening on a cooler day.

Can I leave my civvies at the hotel whilst we're on the mountain?

Yes, you can leave a bag of clothes and personal effects that you're not planning to take up the mountain in Leh, they will either be looked after by our local team or left in a lock-up at the hotel.

How much will my pack weigh during the trek?

A daysack is worn by the climber at all times during the trek. The content of this is mandatory and should include: a fleece (for when taking breaks or the weather changes); a full set (top and bottom) of waterproofs; sufficient water for the day; snacks; camera equipment; personal medication and a head torch.

Your day-to-day rucksack should weigh no more than 3 - 4 kilos and a rucksack of around 30 - 40 L capacity will more than suffice. This rucksack can be filled to the brim with extra stuff when checking in at the airport. Our guides for example put their down jackets or a thick fleece and a pair of mountain socks in this bag so as to free up space in their hold luggage. It is important that your day sack has an adjustable waist belt to transfer the weight of your daily load onto your hips and from here onto your legs (strongest muscles) to do most of the carrying. Another handy feature would be a compartment in which to fit a platypus/camelbak or water bladder.

Our main luggage will be carried from camp to camp by horses. Our initial check in luggage should be around 22kg

Are down jackets necessary?

They are highly recommended and are worth their weight in gold on summit day. Our guides wear them every evening from the high camp up. A layer system comprising of several layers of base and thermal layers, fleeces, and a thick jacket will suffice on most summit nights but nothing beats the efficiency of a good down jacket (especially when topped with a water proof layer).

How warm does my sleeping bag need to be?

Should be rated within the -10C comfort zone. From the first camp upwards it is not unusual to experience frosty nights and a good night's sleep is important to giving you the best chance to climb this mountain. Ensure you get a sleeping bag that has this temperature rating at this comfort zone rather than as its extreme zone. Our guides take sleeping bags rated to well below -10C to ensure that they are warm at night. 3 season sleeping bags can be enhanced by using an inner silk liner (or similar), and ultimately by draping your down jacket over you. The idea is to be as comfortable and warm as possible for the night and henceforth to ensure plenty of sleep for the arduous days ahead. It is important to remember that down sleeping bags work by your own body heating the down that's inside the bag. Once you have warmed the bag up the feather down will retain the heat and ensure that you sleep at a temperature that's your own body temperature. For best results wear as little as possible when inside your sleeping bag. Our guides will often only wear a set of thermals in their bag. It is important for the bag to trap the heat. By wearing multiple layers of clothing your clothing will trap this heat and your bag will not function properly.

Is it possible to rent equipment before I go?

You can rent equipment from our friends at www.outdoorhire.co.uk. Look under Partner Kit Lists, 360 Expeditions. However, we do advocate the use of personal equipment when it comes to footwear, your boots should be well worn in to your own feet.

FINANCE

When is the money due for this expedition? What kind of payment do you accept?

Generally speaking deposits are due upon booking as we need to book your international flights well in advance. The full amount should be paid 4 months prior to departure. However having said this, our aim is to get you to the top of this mountain and we understand that personal financial situations can vary. Please contact our friendly office crew to discuss a suitable payment plan if monthly payments would make life easier.

What is your cancellation policy? What is your refund policy?

Please read our terms and conditions careful before you depart. 360 Expeditions highly recommends trip cancellation insurance for all expeditions. Due to the nature and heavy costs of government and operator permits we must adhere to a stringent refund policy.

Money: what currency should I take?

British pounds and American dollars are both readily recognised and are easily converted to the local currency. Upon arrival there will always be a bureau de change at the airport. There are also plenty of ATM's around Leh. Generally either of these provide a better rate of exchange then your hotel.

What additional spending money will we need?

The amount of money you will need depends on how many presents you wish to buy or how much you wish to drink when you come off the hill. As a basic rule of thumb \$200 should be more than adequate for any post expedition spending. India is a relatively cheap place and when indulging in the local custom of haggling then goods can be very good value for money. The only cash you'll need to consider taking with you on the mountain is the local crew tips which are presented to them usually on the final evening at the last camp before you sign out from the national park.

How much do we tip our local crew?

Our local crew work extremely hard to ensure that your expedition runs well. While tipping is not compulsory, once you see how hard the crew work and realise the small amount of money they get paid relative to one's own income tipping will seem the least they can do to say thank you. As a general rule we suggest between INR 3,000 - 6,000 for each Indian guide, and around INR 2,000 - 4,000 for the helpers. For the leader this is your call.

AND FINALLY...

Will my valuables be safe?

While we will do everything we can to provide adequate safety for the group and security for your possessions, the general rule is that if you don't need it, don't bring it. This includes jewellery, necklaces, rings and even watches. Your passport and money should be kept on you at all times. As with travel in any foreign country, you need to look after yourself and your possessions, and this is no different.

Will I be able to charge my camera/phone battery on the trek?

Opportunities to charge your batteries will be limited. If you can get hold of a solar battery charger this is probably the best option. This together with making sure that you keep your spare batteries warm i.e. by keeping them near your body day and night should mean that you can keep snapping all the way!

Is there mobile phone reception on the trek?

Your best bet is to buy a local SIM to use in and around Leh to call out as it's very unlikely that the local networks will let you join through your UK operator.

TRAINING PROGRAM

To begin 6 months prior to the expedition where possible.

1. CVS: Cardiovascular exercise which is low impact such as swimming, cycling, cross trainer, rowing.
2. Weekend walk should be done over undulating terrain. Only a light rucksack needs to be carried.
3. For specific exercises it is worth doing static squats and heel raises on a regular basis to improve leg muscles prior to the trip. Static squats are especially useful to help protect the knees. Please remember that it is still important to have a well balanced workout using a variety of muscle groups.
4. It is worth winding down and resting in the week leading up to the trip, doing several light walks to keep things going.
5. When walking going at a pace of a brisk walk with a light sweat and enough to feel breathless is recommended
6. During the program, rather than step up suddenly each month it is better to build up gradually each week so there isn't a large transition

It is important you seek medical advice prior to starting any training program, especially if you are not used to regular physical exertion.

MONTH ONE

2 x 30 mins weekday walk
1 x 1 hour weekend walk
1 x 10 mins CVS
or
1 x 30 mins weekday walk
2 x 1 hour weekend walk
1 x 10 mins CVS

MONTH TWO

2 x 45 mins weekday walk
1 x 2 hours weekend walk
2 x 10 mins CVS
or
1 x 45 mins weekday walk
2 x 2 hours weekend walk
2 x 10 mins CVS

MONTH THREE

2 x 1 hour weekday walk
1 x 3 hours weekend walk
2 x 15 mins CVS
or
1 x 1 hour weekday walk
2 x 3 hours weekend walk
2 x 15 mins CVS

MONTH FOUR

3 x 1 hour weekday walk
1 x 4 hours weekend walk
3 x 15 mins CVS
or
2 x 1 hour weekday walk
2 x 4 hours weekend walk
3 x 15 mins CVS

MONTH FIVE

3 x 1.5 hours weekday walk
1 x 5 hours weekend walk
3 x 20 - 25 mins CVS
or
2 x 1.5 hours weekday walk
2 x 5 hours weekend walk
3 x 20 - 25 mins CVS

MONTH SIX

3 x 2 hours weekday walk
1 x 6 hours weekend walk
3 x 30 mins CVS
or
2 x 3 hours weekday walk
2 x 6 hours weekend walk
3 x 30 mins CVS

360

EXPEDITIONS

360 employs only the very best leaders in the industry. We know from personal experience that these remarkable individuals can make or break an expedition. All our 360 Leaders bring considerable knowledge, enthusiasm and expertise to every expedition. As well as being your guide, comfort and support, our Leaders have an extensive range of abilities such as in depth wilderness first aid and survival skills, but equally importantly they have a dedicated and caring attitude towards you. Your success is their success. Many clients leave their comfort boundaries while out in the field with us, emotionally and physically. You will always have the utmost support from your leader and the whole 360 team.



Our attention to detail doesn't just stop with our 360 leaders and local teams. Our office staff have a huge amount of travelling and field experience themselves, which helps them understand what you want from your trip. Everything from comprehensive, yet salient and common sense information prior to your trip, to offering knowledgeable advice and support when necessary, to liaising with you and listening to your thoughts and feedback after you return.

+44(0)207 1834 360
360-expeditions.com