

Chadar- The Frozen Zaskar River Trek

Trip code	0
Package name	Chadar- The Frozen Zaskar River Trek
Duration	9
Max. elevation	3450 m
Level	MODERATE
Transportation	All grounded vehicals depending on group size.
Accomodation	Hotel and Lodge + Camping twin sharing bed basis during the Tour.
Starts at	Tilad do, Leh
Ends at	Tilad do, Leh
Trip route	Leh - Chiling - Shingra Koma - Tibb Cave - Naerak Camp - Tibb Cave - Shingra Koma - Leh
Cost	USD 1,350 per person

Highlights

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- Trek along the traditional winter trading route connecting Padum to Ladakh along the frozen Zaskar river.
- Gain insight into the remote cultures of Zaskar and Ladakh and you will have the chance to stay with local Zaskaris along the way.
- Sightseeing tour to explore the Gompas and forts around Leh, spot rare Ladakhi animals like snow leopard, ibex, Himalayan Thar, blue sheep, etc.

Overview

Featuring a surreal backdrop of nature colors, the Frozen River Trek, commonly known as the Chadar Trek, is one of the challenging treks in the Ladakh region.

The Frozen River Trek, which is one of the popular winter treks, is also one of the longest trekking trails in the Indian Himalayan region that covers an entire stretch of 90 kilometres in 8 chilly days. Like a walk to paradise, the Chadar Trek swipes several trekkers' dreams making it a part of their diary. The journey leads off from Ladakh to the snowbound villages of the Zaskar Valley. The strenuous mountain trail on the ice-clogged river under the blue winter sky passes through valleys, mountain caves and frozen waterfalls. It is one of the most arduous treks of Indian Himalaya as the trekkers will pass through craggy rocks and the temperature may dip to below minus 10 degrees, a rare climatic condition which can be difficult to survive. With multiple layers and sensible trekking, the Chadar trek is not a very difficult trek. But what sets it apart is its unique experience. Everything about it is unique: the scenery, temperature, atmosphere, the frozen river, sledges, unusual camp sites, caves and the ever changing Chadar. So unique that it has to be experienced. In our India list of treks, the Chadar, by far, is the most unique trek.

Trip Itinerary

Day 1 : Fly to Leh.

After your arrival in Delhi, you will be transferred to hotel for lunch and then again to airport for the flight to Leh. Flying over miles and miles of heavily snowed mountains will tell you just why it's impossible to reach Ladakh by road in the winters. The moment you land at the Leh airport, one of the highest airports in the world, you will feel the fresh and crisp air, and a drastic drop in the temperature. The town has just begun shedding off the thick winter slumber and is slowly coming to life. Taking a stroll through the Leh market, you will find that very few shops and eateries in the town are open for business; but if required, some last minute-shopping for the trek can be done here. The chill in the air will serve only as a preview of the temperatures during this winter trek. The night is spent in a guest house.

Day 2 : Drive to Tilad Do via Chilling. 65 kms drive

Wake up early in the morning, and hike up to Shanti Stupa for witnessing the sunrise view, from where you can get a panoramic view of the entire town of Leh and its surroundings. You can also see the peak of Stok Kangri almost beckoning you to climb it. Return to the camp and have your breakfast and get ready for the exciting adventure. Today adventure includes a very picturesque and thrilling long-drive to Chilling. The roller-coaster ride takes you along the Indus to the village of Nimu, where the Zaskar converges into Indus. After stopping at this confluence point to take in the view, the drive continues and the road begins descending right into the river valley. There are quite a few heart-stopping moments as the vehicle negotiates the steep hairpin bends over snow covered road. The road goes past Chilling to Tilad Do. Among these mammoth mountains, the feeling of insignificance of one's being does not escape anyone. To reach the camp-site, you have to cross the frozen Zaskar river and this is when you take your first steps on the Chadar. It

takes a while to get a hang of walking on the ice sheet. As the evening comes, pitches tents on the banks of the Zanskar, and hands out thick warm sleeping bags. To get some exercise and keep warm, you can climb up the nearby mountains and get a good look at the frozen river. As the sun sets, it drags the temperature down with it, and the sleeping bags in the tents look quite inviting.

Day 3 : Tilad Do to Shingra Koma. Trek 10 kms.

The biggest challenge of this day, and all the remaining days, is to get out of the warm toasty sleeping bags and go out into the giant freezer outside, but the steaming cups of tea being served provide ample motivation. Today is a long walking session, about 10 km, on the Chadar. The trek leaders from our company give a briefing about the day, and give tips on how to walk on the Chadar. Depending on the weather, the Chadar can assume various forms. It can be a cold and hard surface of slippery ice, or it can have a dusting of snow over it, providing a good grip. The ice can be thick or thin, and its best to keep closely following the guide. The locals, it appears, have a sixth sense as to where exactly to step on the Chadar. At places, it might be necessary to wade through ankle deep water, or climb on the cliffs at the side of the river. Eventually you get used to walking on the Chadar, which looks like a cross between gliding and skating. After passing Shingra koma, you reach the camp-site for the day at Gyalpo. The Gyalpo campsite is at a bend in the river, surrounded by high peaks and walls of rock-faces which almost look man-made. All that is left to do is to soak in the views, have an early dinner and sleep in warm tents.

Day 4 : Shingra Koma to Tibb Cave. Trek 15 kms.

Have a good breakfast, as today is the longest walk of the day – almost 15 km. But that is nothing to worry about; all the walking keeps you incredibly warm. Today's walk through the deep ravines of the Zanskar is stunning. The sublime walls of the mountains on either sides of the river keep the sunlight away from the Chadar for most part of the day. There are numerous caves in these mountains, big and small. Today is the day when you can see frozen waterfalls, some higher than the others. As the fable goes, centuries ago the local villagers faced a dearth of water and went to Tibet to plead for water. They were given a box which they were to open once they reached the village, and not any time sooner. But curiosity got the better out of them, and when they opened the box, two fishes jumped out of it, creating two huge waterfalls. One of those waterfalls, miraculously, is not iced-up even in such freezing cold. The rocks below this waterfall are covered with moss, and this is the only greenery you'll see on this trek. At Tibb, there is a big cave. This cave is the dwelling of all the porters, and they welcome you warm-heartedly in here. The highlight of the day is to share a cup of butter-tea with them! Overnight stay in the cave.

Day 5 : Tibb cave to Naerak camp. Trek 12.5 kms.

Today is the most spectacular of all days on this trek. Walking on the river you cross deep gorges and reach a point where Juniper trees are covered with prayer flags. The porters give you a twig of this tree tied with a piece of prayer flag as a badge of good-luck and good-health. A few

steps away stand the mother-of-all frozen waterfalls – a huge instance of suspended animation several feet tall and equally wide. You can see dozens of colors in this enormous ice structure as sunlight plays off its surface. Right next to the waterfall is a bridge across the river which is a part of the summer-time road from Zanskar to Leh. The Naerak village lies several feet above the river, a vigorous hour-long trek can take you to the village if you want to see the life of a Zanskari. The camp is set up close to the river.

Day 6 : Naerak to Tibb Cave. Trek 12.5 kms.

Today you start the return journey and go back to the Tibb cave. And if you thought that it was just a matter of retracing your steps back to Chilling, you can think again. The Zanskar River reacts to the slightest change of temperature, and constantly keeps repackaging itself. The Chadar would have assumed a completely new form, and it will almost be impossible to say whether you have been here before. On the way, you can meet a lot of locals wearing their traditional woolen Gonchas – some of them monks who are hiking from the Lingshed Monastery to Leh, some of them young students accompanied by their parents returning to their schools in Leh after the winter vacation. Watching the locals negotiate the Chadar is a fascinating sight. They are suitably adapted to the climate and seem very much at home in the sub-zero temperature and the biting cold winds. Nothing wipes the smiles off their faces and dampens the warmth of their spirit. Overnight stay in the tents in Tibb cave.

Day 7 : Tibb Cave to Shingra Koma. Trek 15 kms.

Starting from Tibb, go up to Gyalpo today. The high walls of mountains rising from the sides of the river almost look like castle walls. You can see several trails of pug-marks all along the trek – footprints belonging to foxes, ibex or snow-leopards. You would be lucky to view a snow-leopard; but you can almost be sure that you are being watched by one all the time. Overnight stay in camp.

Day 8 : Shingra Koma to Tilad Do and drive to Leh. Trek 10 kms. drive 65 kms.

This is the last day of trekking on the Chadar – the last chance to immerse in the pristine beauty of the frozen river. Once you reach Tilad Do, it is time to say good-bye to the Zanskar and the Zanskaries. Our porters will take good care of you and make this trek one of the most memorable experiences for you. Tonight you get to sleep in a warm guest-house again.

Day 9 : Return from Leh.

As this unforgettable journey gets over, you depart from Leh having a newfound respect for the Zanskaries who brave all odds and survive with style in their beloved land. This trek also leaves behind a tremendous feeling of accomplishment – one of having undertaken and endured an extraordinary and challenging trek. The Chadar trek will be a cherished memory for life. Upon arrival to Delhi, check in to hotel. After freshen up and lunch you will be transferred to

international airport for the flight to onward destinations.

Inclusions

What is included?

Accommodation in Hotel and Lodge + Camping twin sharing bed basis during the trek.

Flight from Delhi to Leh and return to Delhi.

All Transportation AC / Qulise, Innova / Xylo / Mini Tourist Bus

Guide/ leader (Experienced Tour and Trek Guide will lead the tour).

All monument fees, Permit arrangement, All taxes

All meals (lunch, Dinner and Breakfast) during the trek.

Basis medical kit.

What isn't included?

Entry Visa fees India.

Travel and medical insurance.

Personal expenses (laundry, bar bills, snacks, phone calls, internet.)

Tips for guide and driver (tipping is expected)

Loss, theft or damage to baggage and personal effects. (We strongly advise you to get personal travel insurance.)

Complimentary