



aranya
by sita

Redefining The Wildlife Experiences

In Pursuit of the Ghosts across Ladakh

with Uditchandra Pal | 16th - 26th January, 2027



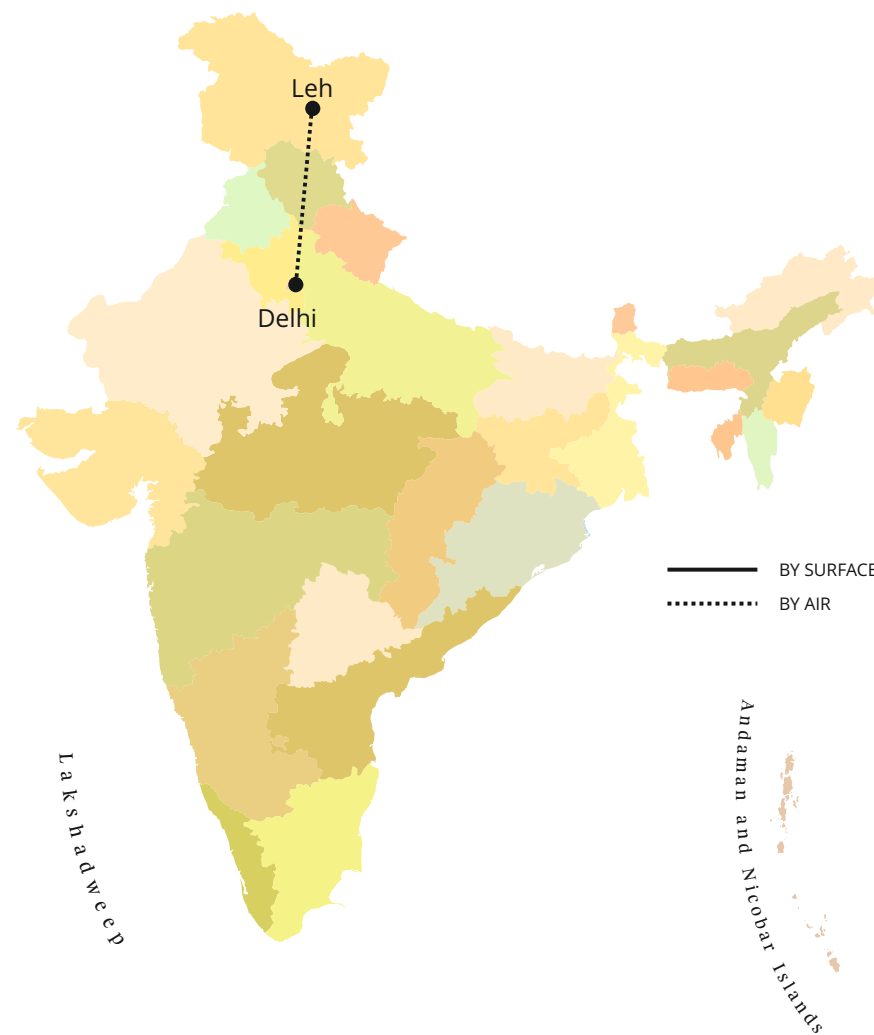
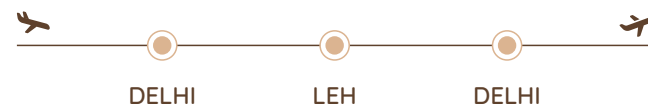
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Uditchandra Pal

Raised amidst the forests of eastern Rajasthan, Uditchandra Pal developed a passion for wildlife from an early age, identifying birds by the age of six and later honing his skills through the study of photography as an art form. His journey as a photography and trail guide grew naturally from this foundation, combining a keen eye with a love for the wild. Over the years, he has tracked elusive species across diverse landscapes - from snow leopards, lynx, Pallas cats, Tibetan wolves and Argali in the high Himalaya to caracals, Indian wolves, and hyenas in the plains. For the past six years, Udit has blended ecological knowledge with ethical wildlife photography, crafting experiences that emphasize both the thrill of discovery and the importance of conservation. His guiding philosophy goes beyond sightings, encouraging travelers to appreciate ecosystems, animal behavior, local cultures and the deeper journey of coexistence with nature.



Map



Trip Highlight

- Immerse yourself in the winter magic of Ladakh, where snow-draped peaks and ancient monasteries create a surreal Himalayan dreamscape.
- Spectacular scenery during flight from Delhi to one of the world's highest airports at Leh
- Track the elusive snow leopard, guided by expert trackers through remote valleys and rugged terrain one of the world's rarest wildlife encounters.
- Stay in a secluded mountain village, nestled deep in snow leopard territory, offering an authentic glimpse into high-altitude life.
- Discover Ladakh's rich cultural tapestry, from fluttering prayer flags and sacred stupas to centuries-old gompas and warm-hearted locals.
- Explore dramatic landscapes and pristine wilderness, with chances to spot wolves, lynx, blue sheep, and rare Himalayan birds including Tibetan Partridge, Himalayan Snowcock, Golden Eagle, Lammergeier and Red-billed Chough
- Learn photography tips and techniques from a celebrity mentor accompanying you throughout the journey.
- Sharpen your photography skills in a pre-departure session with the mentor with optional gear rentals available.



Ladakh

Tucked away in a remote fold of the Western Himalayas, where ancient trade routes once threaded through mountain passes, lies Ladakh - a land of stark beauty and spiritual calm. Once a thriving kingdom on the Silk Road, its soul still lingers in the prayer-flag-lined streets of Leh, where old palaces gaze over bustling bazaars and Buddhist chants echo through centuries-old gompas.

This journey takes you beyond the ordinary, into a realm where snow-draped valleys cradle secrets of the wild. Led by expert trackers, you'll venture into the heart of snow leopard country seeking the elusive ghost cat that roams silently across icy ridges. Along the way, encounter wolves, blue sheep, and Himalayan birds, and immerse yourself in the warmth of mountain life in a remote village. It's a rare communion with nature, culture, and the quiet majesty of Ladakh's winter world.

Detailed Itinerary



Day 1: Arrival at Delhi

Welcome to India!

Our executive will meet you on arrival hall at Delhi airport after you clear all immigration and custom formalities. You will then be chauffeured to your hotel

Meet your accompanying photographer over high tea at the hotel, followed by a quick introduction to the adventure ahead.

Overnight: JW Marriott (Deluxe Room/Breakfast)

Day 2: Fly from Delhi to Leh

Board a scenic flight over snow-capped Himalayan peaks, you will arrive in Leh - the gateway to Ladakh's high-altitude wonderland.

Flight from Delhi to Leh / AI-2454 [0800/0905 hours nonstop/
Economy/Baggage Allowance –20 kgs per person]

Arrive in Leh by early morning offering breathtaking aerial views of the Himalayan and Karakoram ranges. Upon arrival at Leh Airport (3,500 m), you will be received by our local team and transferred to The Grand Dragon Ladakh, the region's finest luxury hotel.

The rest of the day is dedicated to strict acclimatization, essential for high-altitude travel. Guests are advised to rest, hydrate well, and avoid physical exertion. Warm welcome drinks are served at the hotel, followed by a briefing on altitude awareness and the upcoming wildlife expedition.

A soft orientation session introduces Ladakh's fragile ecosystem, Snow Leopard conservation efforts, and what to expect during tracking days in Ulley. Dinner at the hotel with Ladakhi and continental options.

Overnight: The Grand Dragon (Luxury Room/Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner)





Day 3: Into the Valleys

After breakfast, embark on gentle local drives around Leh Valley, combining acclimatization with wildlife exploration. These areas act as important winter habitats for Himalayan birdlife and smaller mammals.

Wildlife & Birding Highlights:

- Black-necked Magpie
- Tibetan Snowfinch
- Horned Lark
- Himalayan Griffon & Golden Eagle
- Red Fox sightings along riverbanks

The drive may include areas around Shey Marshes, Indus river stretches, and surrounding barren slopes, ideal for spotting winter migrants and raptors.

Afternoon: Return to the hotel for lunch and rest.

Evening: Visit Leh Palace surroundings and old town (optional, light walking only) for landscape photography and understanding Ladakh's cultural relationship with wildlife and nature. Dinner and overnight at the hotel.

Overnight: The Grand Dragon (Luxury Room/Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner)

Day 4: Into the Wild: Journey to Lodge

After an early breakfast, drive westward from Leh to the remote Ulley Valley, one of Ladakh's most successful community-based Snow Leopard conservation regions.

The journey itself is rich with wildlife potential. As you leave Leh's urban limits, the landscape transforms into dramatic gorges and open slopes—prime Snow Leopard terrain.

En-route Wildlife Possibilities:

- Blue Sheep (primary Snow Leopard prey)
- Himalayan Ibex
- Tibetan Wolf tracks
- Lammergeier & Himalayan Griffon

Arrive at Snow Leopard Lodge, a warm, traditional Ladakhi homestay-style lodge run in collaboration with local communities and trackers.

Afternoon: Post-lunch orientation with experienced local trackers, who share insights into Snow Leopard behavior, tracking techniques, and recent sightings. Short acclimatization walk near the lodge to scan slopes for wildlife signs.

Evening: Early dinner followed by weather and sighting briefing for the next day.

Overnight: Snow Leopard Lodge (Standard Room/Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner)



Day 5 to Day 8: Tracking the Ghost Cat: Valley Explorations

These four full days are dedicated to intensive Snow Leopard and Lynx tracking, following a rhythm shaped by wildlife movement, weather and terrain.

Daily Routine:

- Early morning tea followed by departure with trackers
- Strategic scanning using binoculars and spotting scopes
- Slow drives and short hikes to vantage points
- Picnic lunches in the field or return to lodge depending on conditions

Target Species:

- Snow Leopard - primary focus
- Eurasian Lynx - rare but possible in this region
- Tibetan Wolf
- Blue Sheep
- Himalayan Ibex
- Red Fox
- Woolly Hare

Birdlife:

- Golden Eagle
- Bearded Vulture (Lammergeier)
- Himalayan Snowcock
- Chukar Partridge

Trackers read pugmarks, scrape marks, kill sites, and movement corridors, often scanning vast slopes for hours—an authentic, patient wildlife experience. Sightings can occur at any time of day, rewarding perseverance.

Evenings: Return to the lodge for hot meals, storytelling sessions with trackers, discussions on conservation success in Ulley, and reviewing photographs or footage captured during the day.

Overnight: Snow Leopard Lodge (Standard Room/Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner)

Day 9: Farewell to the Wild: Return to Leh

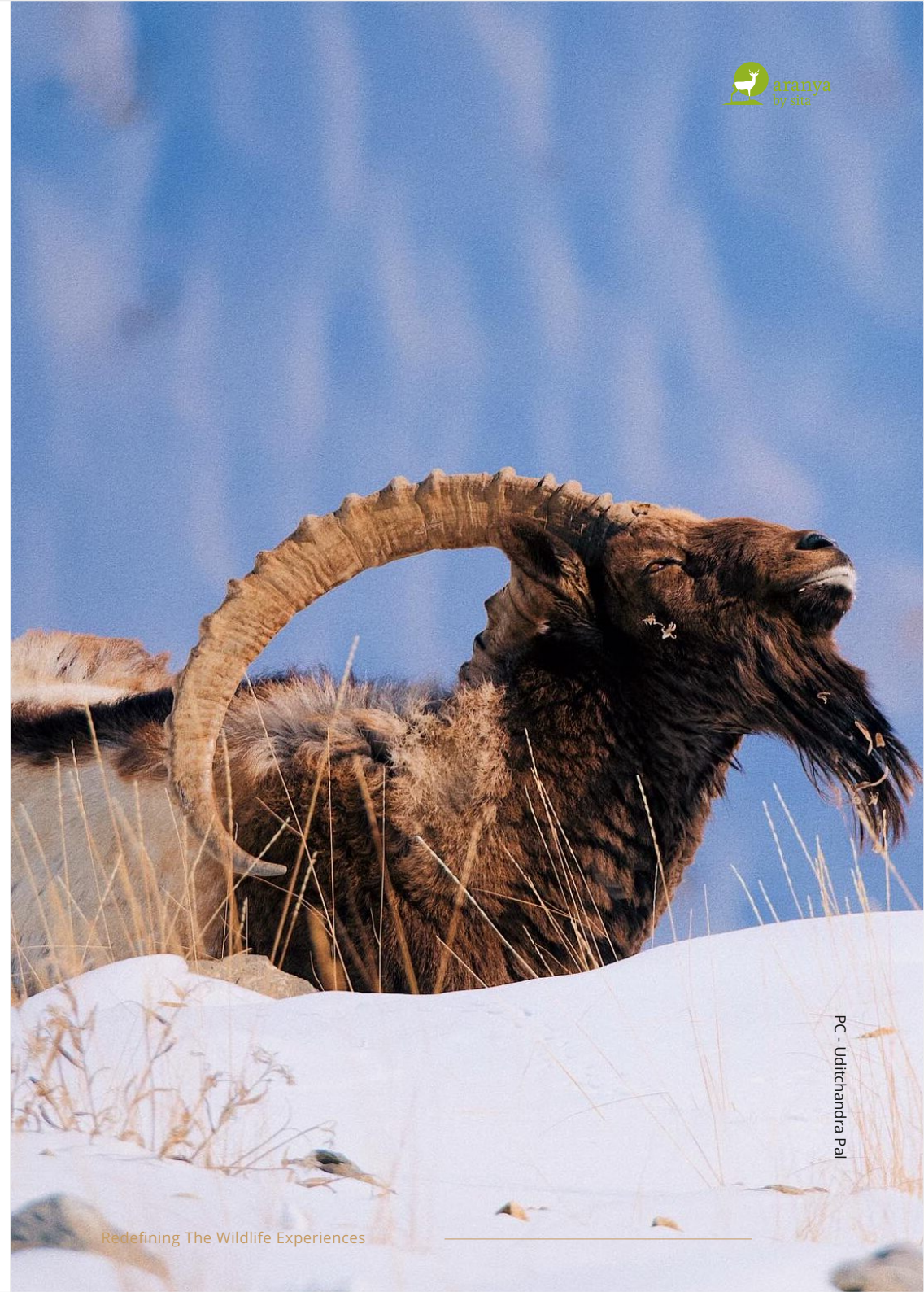
After breakfast, bid farewell to the Ulley team and drive back to Leh. The return journey offers one last chance to spot wildlife along the route.

Upon arrival in Leh, check in at the hotel, conveniently located near the market.

Afternoon: At leisure for rest, souvenir shopping, or café visits. This is also a buffer day in case of delayed wildlife days due to weather.

Evening: Farewell dinner celebrating the expedition, sharing highlights and memorable encounters from the wilderness.

Overnight: Chospa Hotel (Club Room/Breakfast)





P.C. - Snow Leopard Lodge

Day 10: Fly from Leh to Delhi

After breakfast, we bid farewell to the mountains and memories as we check out from the hotel in Leh. A short transfer to the airport marks the end of this unforgettable journey into Ladakh's winter wilderness. As you fly back to Delhi, the snow-cloaked valleys, silent ridges, and fleeting glimpses of the ghost cat remain etched in your heart a quiet reminder of nature's magic and the serenity of the high Himalayas.

Flight from Leh to Delhi / AI-2464 [1210/1335 hours] nonstop / Economy/
Baggage Allowance -20 kgs per person]

Check in to the Delhi hotel and say goodbye to your accompanying naturalist.

Overnight: JW Marriott (Deluxe Room/Breakfast)

Day 11: Departure

After breakfast, we bid farewell to the India. You will be transferred to airport for your flight back home.



P.C - Snow Leopard Lodge

Flora of Ulley, Leh

- **Alpine Plants:** Hardy species like edelweiss, primula, and wild roses bloom during the brief summer months.
- **Shrubs:** Sea buckthorn (locally known as Leh Berry) is common along river valleys, valued for its medicinal properties.
- **Steppe Grasslands:** Rugged grasses adapted to arid conditions dominate the terrain.
- **Medicinal Plants:** Species like Ephedra and Rhodiola are used in traditional medicine and thrive in the harsh climate

Fauna of Ulley, Leh

- **Snow Leopard:** Ulley is one of the best places in Ladakh to spot this elusive predator, often called the “Ghost of the Mountains”.
- **Himalayan Blue Sheep (Bharal):** A key prey species for snow leopards, commonly seen on rocky slopes.
- **Ladakh Urial (Shapo):** A rare wild sheep found in lower valleys.
- **Tibetan Argali:** The largest wild sheep, related to the Marco Polo sheep.
- **Siberian Ibex:** Wild goats with impressive, curved horns, adapted to craggy terrain.
- **Birds:**
 - › **Black-necked Crane and Bar-headed Goose:** Migratory birds nesting in summer.
 - › **Golden Eagle and Lammergeier:** Majestic raptors soaring above the valleys.
 - › **Tibetan Snowcock, Chukar, and Red-billed Chough:** Common high-altitude birds

Hotels

JW Marriott Delhi

Stay in style and sophistication at the award-winning JW Marriott New Delhi Aerocity in New Delhi, India. An unforgettable experience awaits you at our luxury hotel in New Delhi offering luxury accommodations, personalized service, and an ideal location for your stay.



The Grand Dragon Leh

In the cradle of the great Himalayas, surrounded by the spectacular setting of Ladakh, nestles a 5 star hotel waiting to welcome you to an incredible experience of the old mountain kingdom. Located in the heart of the ancient city of Leh, this is one of the highest luxury hotels in Ladakh. So prepare to be pampered like never before. You are, after all, on top of the world.



Snow Leopard Lodge Ulley

On the borders of Tibet is the Indian district of Ladakh – probably the best place to see Snow Leopards in the world. Here in the high, desolate grandeur of arid mountains, tourism is being leveraged to protect these magnificent cats. In the austere beauty of Ladakh’s winter landscape, your search for the snow leopard will become the adventure of a lifetime.





Chospa Hotel

Leh

Hotel Chospa is a stunning retreat nestled in the heart of the vibrant city centre of Leh, located on the Old Leh Road. This enchanting abode has been curated to cater to the discerning explorer and those who appreciate the finer things in life.





Travel Information

High Altitude & Acclimatization: Preparing for the Heights

Ladakh's breath-taking beauty comes with its own set of challenges chief among them, the high-altitude cold desert conditions. Acclimatization is not just recommended; it's essential. A well-acclimatized body allows you to safely journey deeper into the mountains and fully experience the snow leopard's habitat.

Our experienced team along with your tour leader, will closely monitor your health and comfort throughout. Their guidance is based on years of expertise in high-altitude wildlife expeditions, and their decisions regarding your readiness to proceed will be final. Should acclimatization take longer, guests may need to rest in Leh until fully fit or in rare cases, return to Delhi for recovery. Your well-being is our highest priority, ensuring that your adventure remains both safe and unforgettable.

Weather – Max +15 C, Min -14 C

Fitness Required - Above average

PRE-DEPARTURE ESSENTIALS

Documents & Permits

- Valid government-issued photo ID (passport for international travellers).
- Travel insurance covering high-altitude trekking and medical evacuation.

Health & Fitness

- Consult your physician before traveling to high altitudes, especially if you have respiratory or cardiac conditions.
- Begin light cardio and endurance training 3–4 weeks prior to departure.

PACKING LIST: WINTER IN LADAKH

Clothing (Layering is Key)

- **Base layers:** thermal tops and bottoms (2–3 sets).
- **Mid layers:** fleece jackets, wool sweaters.
- **Outer layers:** insulated down jacket, windproof shell.
- **Pants:** insulated trekking pants, waterproof over-pants.
- **Accessories:** woolen cap, neck gaiter, gloves (inner + outer), warm socks (multiple pairs).
- **Footwear:** insulated hiking boots, comfortable shoes for lodge wear.
- Sunglasses with UV protection and anti-glare.
- Sunblock and lip balm (SPF 30+).

Gear

- Headlamp or flashlight with extra batteries.
- Binoculars for wildlife spotting.
- Camera with zoom lens (optional but recommended).
- Trekking poles (optional but helpful on uneven terrain).
- Electricity may be intermittent; carry a power bank and extra camera batteries.

Photographic Equipment (Provided or to be Brought)

It is highly recommended to bring your own photographic equipment, as

renting gear in Leh is challenging. While few lodges may offer limited equipment for in-house guests, but most do not.

If required, equipment can be rented from Delhi with prior planning.

- **Recommended Lens:** Minimum 500mm for Snow Leopard photography.
- **Tripod:** Essential.
- **Spotting Scopes:** Usually provided by lodges, shared among approximately 6 guests

TRAVEL RECOMMENDATIONS

Acclimatization Tips

- Rest well upon arrival in Leh (Day 2).
- Stay hydrated drink warm fluids regularly.
- Avoid strenuous activity for the first 48 hours.
- Eat light, warm meals and avoid alcohol.
- Inform your guide immediately if you feel dizzy, nauseous, or unusually fatigued.

Wildlife Etiquette & Safety

- Maintain silence and distance during wildlife sightings.
- Do not attempt to approach or feed animals.
- Follow the tracker's instructions at all times.
- Respect local customs and avoid disturbing sacred sites.

Physical Condition

- Daily walking distance ranges from 1 km to 5 km, with steep climbing involved sometimes.

- High altitude in Ladakh means lower oxygen levels, which can make even short walks tiring.
- Those who prefer not to walk can stay at the vantage points - sightings may be at a distance, but it still offers the chance to view the animal.

Notes:

- In case of medical emergencies or high altitude sickness Ulley is within a days reach to the government hospitals.
- Ulley to Leh is 3hrs drive.
- First 2 days is recommended for complete rest and acclimatization to ensure rest of the trip carries off smoothly.
- The homestays are basic & simple rooms with dry compost toilets.
- Hot water will be provided in buckets if needed.
- Personal Spotting Scopes & high-quality binoculars are highly recommended to increase the chance of sighting the cat and high-altitude birds.





24 Hour
Assistance

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