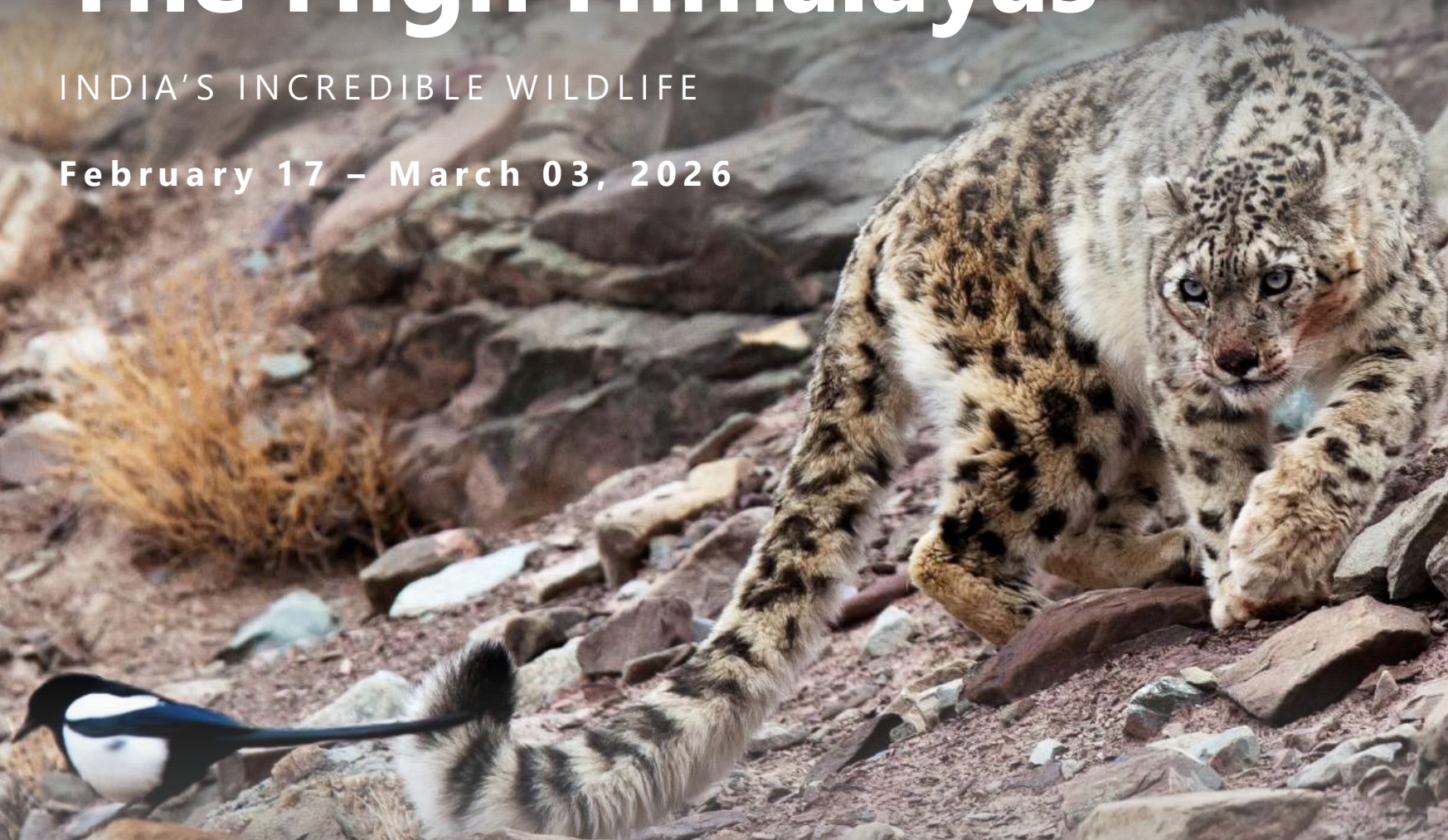


The High Himalayas

INDIA'S INCREDIBLE WILDLIFE

February 17 – March 03, 2026



A CHALO EXPLORERS CLUB EXPEDITION



INTRODUCTION

WITH SANGEETA SAHAYA



Snow Leopards, Tigers, Red Pandas & More

You've heard that old adage "Once Bitten Twice Shy?" Well, that's not our motto at all.

Anytime we get bitten (by the wildlife bug) that only makes us Twice As Curious, and ever more eager to explore our natural world.

This is the spirit in which we have designed this unique 3-pronged safari that will hopefully bring us into proximity with several of the most elusive animals of the Indian sub-continent.

Section 1: The Mountain Kingdom of the Snow Leopard

In the Himalayas, our safari will take place on the other-worldly Ladakh Plateau, and we will focus our efforts on the Snow Leopard, Pallas Cat and the Siberian Lynx. With some luck, we'll also see other Himalayan specialties like the Tibetan Wolf, Blue Sheep, Ladakh Urial, Red Fox, Mountain Weasel, and Large-eared Pika.

Section 2: The Jungle Kingdom of the Bengal Tiger

In the dappled jungles of Central India, we'll shift our focus onto the Royal Bengal Tiger, whilst also keeping a sharp eye out for the Sloth Bear, Indian Wild Dogs (dholes) and Leopards, Jungle Cat, Golden Jackal, Striped Hyena all manner of herbivores, including

the majestic (and enormous) Indian Gaur.

Section 3: The Misty Mountains of the Red Panda & Sipping Tea in Darjeeling

The last wildlife leg of this epic trip will take us on a Red Panda quest to the eastern part of the great Himalayan Range, where in addition to this unique Aluridae, we also hope to see yellow-throated marten, Blood Pheasant, Kalij Pheasant, Satyr Tragopan, and on clear days, four of the world's five highest peaks, including Everest, Lhotse, Makalu and Kangchenjunga.

This trip has been designed in such a way that you can join us for any of Sections 1, 2 and 3 - or do the whole trifecta, if you have the time. Each leg has been priced separately.

I can't wait to go on this one myself! Join me if you can.

- Sangeeta



INTRODUCTION (HIMALAYAS)

We fly from Delhi to Leh, the ancient capital of the Ladakhi Kingdom, situated at a height of 3,500 m with a stunning 16th-century palace in the background. The drastic altitudinal gain from Delhi requires complete acclimatisation to adapt to the new height.

After acclimatising in Leh for two nights with limited activity, we set off eastward toward the village of Hanle, which serves as the base for exploring the marshlands and the expansive Tibetan plateau within the Changthang Wildlife Sanctuary. The rugged rocky outcrops here offer ideal vantage points for spotting one of the world's smallest wild cats, the elusive Pallas's cat, along with a wide variety of bird and

mammal species that inhabit this area.

Later, we drive to Hemis National Park in our quest for the Snow Leopard. Since Snow Leopards are generally found at elevations between 3,350 and 4,500 m, this epic adventure takes us through stunning Himalayan alpine and sub-alpine zones with sparse vegetation and extreme temperatures. Accompanying us are expert local guides whose expertise in this terrain and their innate training to detect the minutest evidence, such as pugmarks, scrapes, and scats, to track this elusive cat are unmatched. While we search for the cat, we will also explore these mountains for other unique mammals found here,

including the Tibetan Wolf, Blue Sheep, Ladakh Urial, Red Fox, Siberian Lynx, Mountain Weasel, and Large-eared Pika. Birdlife is scarce in this harsh environment. The common raptors you can expect to see soaring in the sky are the Golden Eagle, Lammergeier, and Himalayan Griffon.

After our time in Hemis National Park, we return to Leh for a two-night stay, during which we make a day trip to Wari-La Pass in search of Lynx and other wildlife, a two-hour drive one way. Situated at 5312m, it is a high-altitude mountain pass connecting Leh to the renowned Nubra Valley. This is a fantastic Lynx habitat.



ITINERARY (HIMALAYAS)

Day 01 / 17 Feb 2026 / Tue: Arrive in Delhi

Arrive at IGI Delhi airport: complete customs and immigration formalities and exit to the arrival hall meeting lounge. Meet our representative and transfer to the hotel near the airport. Overnight at Novotel or similar. (Meals on your own)

Day 02 / 18 Feb 2026 / Wed: Fly Delhi to Leh

In time, transfer to the airport to board the flight from Delhi to Leh (IndiGo 6E 2283 at

0925/1100 hrs). Arrive in Leh and transfer to the hotel. The rest of the day is spent leisurely or free to acclimate to high altitude. We will walk to the Leh market this evening for a gentle stroll if we feel up to it. Overnight at Chospa Hotel. (B, L, D)

Day 03 / 19 Feb 2026 / Thu: Leh

We start the day at the crack of dawn to attend the prayer ceremony at Thiksey Monastery. This is a moving experience steeped in Tibetan Buddhism. The monastery,

established in 1630, is one of the most impressive in Ladakh. Later, we drive by the Indus River and stop to take pictures of the gorgeous Stakna Monastery from across the River before returning to our hotel for lunch.

In the evening, we can drive to Shanti Stupa, a peace pagoda built by the Japanese in the 1980s. This pagoda offers a birds-eye view of Leh town and the surrounding mighty Ladakh Range. Overnight at Chospa Hotel. (B, L, D)



ITINERARY (HIMALAYAS)

Day 04 / 20 Feb 2026 - Fri: Leh to Hanle

After breakfast, we drive to Hanle (approximately 250 km, a 5-hour drive). The drive along the Indus River will offer stunning landscapes and wilderness. This is a significant travel day as you traverse the length of Eastern Ladakh and the Changthang Plateau, cutting through the scenic Rong Valley alongside the Indus. There are no high-altitude passes on this route, making this a smooth drive. At Loma, the road crosses the Indus and enters the Hanle basin. Along the way, you may spot a variety of Changthang's unique wildlife, like Tibetan Wolf, Blue Sheep,

Asiatic Ibex, Red Fox, Kiang, and Tibetan Fox. Arrive and check in to the homestay. Afternoon, explore the valley for Pallas's Cat. Overnight at homestay. (B, L, D)

Day 05 / 21 Feb 2026 / Sat: Hanle

We will spend the full day in Hanle searching for Pallas's Cat with our local guide. Overnight at homestay. (B, L, D)

Day 06 / 22 Feb 2026 / Sun: Hanle to Rumbak

After an early breakfast, we drive to Rumbak

(approximately 6-7 hours' drive), crossing the Spituk Bridge to reach Zingchen Village. As we continue driving through the Zinchen Gorge, we enter the Hemis National Park. Along the way, we will make stops to scan for signs of wildlife and take in some stunning Himalayan landscapes. Arrive at the Rumbak Lodge and settle in. Our guides would have been out already spotting when we arrive, and we will start our search for Snow Leopards. Overnight at The House of Rumbak Wildlife Lodge. (B, L, D)



ITINERARY (HIMALAYAS)

Day 07 to 11 / 23 Feb to 27 Feb 2026 / - Mon to Fri: Rumbak (Hemis National Park)

The next five days will be spent in the surrounding valleys of Husing, Tarbung, and the Rumbak area. During these days, we will not follow a fixed itinerary but a plan based on the expertise of our local spotters to find the Cats. These seasoned trackers scour the landscape early each morning to help us plan our route for the day and increase our chances of seeing these cats whose camouflage enables them to blend in seamlessly with their habitat. We retain radio contact with trackers throughout the day, so we know when snow leopards wander into

our area. We will always have private four-wheel drive vehicles to maximise our flexibility when moving to where the snow leopards are seen.

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 desire. The lodge offers a cosy respite for warming up with hot beverages between excursions. We will also visit the neighbouring Rumbak Village and see how folks here have coexisted with wildlife for centuries. Overnight at The House of Rumbak Wildlife Lodge. (B, L, D)

Day 12 / 28 Feb 2026 / Sat: Rumbak to Leh

After breakfast, we bid farewell to our lodge staff and spotters for the drive back to Leh, scanning for signs of wildlife along the way. We arrive in Leh and check into the hotel. The afternoon is left free for optional activities.

The afternoon is kept free for optional activities. If our local team reports any wildlife sightings in nearby valleys, we will make the most of the half day by exploring those areas. Overnight at Chospa Hotel. (B, L, D)



ITINERARY (HIMALAYAS)

Day 13 / 1 Mar 2026 / Sun: Leh (Wari-La Pass day trip)

After an early breakfast, we depart for Wari-La Pass, a scenic drive of approximately two hours. We spend the day exploring the surrounding valleys and plateaus using vehicles and short walks. The Lynx, our main target, prefers dense shrubs and lower slopes near the Shayok River and its tributaries. Wolf packs also move through this landscape in constant search of prey. Overnight at Chospa Hotel. (B, L, D)

Day 14 / 2 Mar 2026 / Mon: Fly Leh to Delhi

In time, transfer to the airport to board the flight back to Delhi. Fly Leh to Delhi by IndiGo flight (6E 6003 at 1310/1430 hrs). Arrive in Delhi and transfer to the hotel. Overnight at Novotel or similar. (B, L, D)

Day 15 / 3 Mar 2026 / Tue: Departure

Those participating in the Central India Tiger Safari extension will be transferred to Nagpur

airport this morning.

Others will be transferred to international airports to board their flights for onward destinations. (B)

End of our services



COSTS & INCLUSIONS

- **The 15 day / 14 night Snow Leopard Expedition in the Himalayas costs USD 8740 per person.**
 - **Costs are based on six to eight participants sharing a twin or double room.**
-

Inclusions:

- Accommodation for 14 nights on Snow Leopard Expedition on twin sharing room basis: inclusive of all applicable taxes at the time of quoting
- Meals as indicated in the itinerary as B, L, D (B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner)
- Airfare for Delhi/Leh/Delhi sectors in economy class with an extra 10 kilo luggage
- All transfers by private Toyota MUVs
- Accompanying WWI guide throughout the tour
- Service of an English-speaking local guides/ naturalist & trackers: inclusive of guiding fees and park entry fees payable
- All necessary permits and permissions
- Applicable camera fee
- Community Fee at Ladakh
- Assistance on arrival and departure at each destination
- Government service tax

Exclusions:

- Any expenses of personal nature such as laundry, aerated drinks etc.
 - Personal clothing during the trek, emergency evacuation
 - Meals are not included in the cost unless specified in the inclusions
 - Tips/ gratuities paid to naturalists, drivers, and staff members accompanying you on the expedition
 - Cost incurred in obtaining visa, insurance etc.
 - Cost incurred in case of hospitalization, evacuation etc.
-

Accommodation Envisaged:

Delhi: Novotel - <https://all.accor.com/hotel/7560/index.en.shtml>

Leh: Chospa Hotel – <https://www.chospahotel.com/>

Hanle: Homestay

Rumbak: The House of Rumbak Wildlife Lodge – <https://www.rumbaklodge.com/>



Why Winters?

Snow Leopards thrive in the cold and are more active in winter. Their thick coats keep them warm but can lead to stress in summer. With the heavy snow in the higher elevations during winters, the primary prey of Snow Leopards — Blue Sheep, Urial and Ibex — come down to lower elevation areas, such as the Rumbak Valley, offering you the best chances to see this elusive, top predator of the high Himalayas. Snow Leopards use a smaller area in the wintertime when much of the landscape is constrained by snow. Although the weather and snowfall can be pretty unpredictable nowadays, this would be the ideal period if you were to pick a time for this trip.

Fitness for Ladakh:

The walking effort involved in this tour is moderate, as a network of roads and dirt tracks now exists across Ladakh. We will have dedicated cars for the tour, including 4-wheel drives. Vehicles can drive right up to our lodge and most areas we cover. You can opt for some challenging hikes if you feel up to it. In most cases, the cats are observed from the valley bottoms or ridgelines, usually a short walk away from the road or dirt track, which would be motorable. Our lodge staff will bring us hot meals and beverages in the field, an absolute luxury in this terrain. You will spend a lot of time sitting in vantage points and scanning the surroundings. Patience is a virtue when it comes to wildlife-watching generally, and that is especially true of Snow Leopards and other denizens of the Himalayas.



Climate:

Ladakh is predominantly a dry area, you can expect plenty of sunny days and overcast weather as well. Snowfall can occur at any time, but it is often unpredictable. Temperatures range from cool to cold and can be very cold at night and in the early morning, ranging from highs averaging around -3 to 3°C (26 to 38°F) in the shade (it feels warmer in direct sunlight) to lows averaging about -10 to -20°C (14 to -4°F). The air in Ladakh is arid, so low temperatures do not feel as cold as they do in moist climates. You will need a good down jacket and other clothing and footwear that will keep you warm in such conditions.

Homestay at Hanley offers a total of four rooms, providing basic accommodation in a village house. There is no running water here, and you will be supplied with hot water in buckets. The rooms and common areas would be heated.



Wildlife sightings and photography:

Since their first successful expedition in 2009, our ground partners operated over 35 Snow Leopard expeditions in this area. We can confidently claim to have seen more cats than any other wildlife operator. However, it's good to remember that we will be searching for one of the most elusive cats on the planet, and expectations must be managed. While the area around Rumbak would be where we concentrate on the cats, now with improved cellular networks in most of Ladakh, we can move to other areas once we get news of any Snow Leopards sighted in other valleys using our four-wheel drive vehicles.



- **Notes:**

- Please note that we will make every effort to adhere to this itinerary but dates, times, activities and park rules are subject to change depending on scheduling & availability
- In case of any revision in the park entry fee between now and the date of travel, the same would be applicable
- While this is the suggested itinerary, we reserve the right to make changes to maximize your chances of wildlife sightings
- Flight indicated in the itinerary are as per the current schedule and are subject to change. In case there is any change in flight schedule between now and date of travel and calls for revising the itinerary we reserve the right to do so
- Payment means that you have read, understood, and accepted our Terms and Conditions: <https://www.chaloafrica.com/docs/terms-and-conditions.pdf>

- **Expedition Payment Terms:**

- A 30% non-refundable deposit confirms the reservation.
- An additional 40% deposit is due 180 days prior to trip date.
- Remaining 30% due 90 days prior to trip date
- 100% payment in case of availing Apex airfare

- **Cancellations:**

- Cancellation from confirmation date until 181 days from trip date – forfeit the 30% deposit.
- Cancellation from 180 days to 91 days from trip date – forfeit 70% deposit
- Cancellation 90 days or less from trip date -- forfeit 100% of trip cost.





Registered Office: Santa Fe, USA

Phone: +1 703 220 6393

E-mail: hello@chaloafricainc.com

Website: www.chaloafrica.com



Ranked #1 Outfitter in India by National Geographic Adventure

Mobile: +91 98181 30303 Phone: +91 11 4039 2672

E-mail: wwi@wildworldindia.com Website: www.wildworldindia.com

ALL IMAGES AND CONTENT ARE COPYRIGHT OF WILD WORLD INDIA