The Mask Dance of Mountains: Hemis Festival Experience

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Day 1

DAY 01 || ARRIVE DELHI || INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT

Welcome to the capital city Delhi, India. Upon arrival in Delhi you will be met and assisted by our company representative at airport. After traditional welcome transfer to your hotel. Rest of the day free at leisure. Overnight at the hotel.

Day 2

DAY 02 || DELHI

After breakfast proceed for guided city tour of Old and New Delhi. Begin your day with an exploration starting in Old Delhi which was the capital of Muslim India between the 17th and 19th centuries. Visit Jama Masjid, the Royal Mosque which was built by the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan in 1656. Enjoy a cycle rickshaw ride through the narrow lanes followed by a short walk in the main street of Old Delhi - the colourful shopping bazaar known as Chandni Chowk. Drive past the Red Fort (a UNESCO World Heritage site) built by the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan. Proceed for a brief visit to Raj Ghat, the Mahatma Gandhi memorial. In the afternoon visit New Delhi - the imperial city created by the British as the capital of India. In 1911, Edwin Lutyens, the most renowned English architect of the day, was chosen to design New Delhi. You will drive past the Rashtrapathi Bhawan is where the Viceroy once lived and now is the official residence of the President of India and India Gate, a war memorial arch built in honor of 90,000 Indian soldiers who lost their lives in World War I. Later visit Humayun’s Tomb & Qutub Minar (a UNESCO World Heritage site), a soaring tower of victory which is 72.5 meters high and has five distinct stories & tour ends with a visit Gurudwara Bangla Sahib (Sikh temple). Overnight at the hotel.

Day 3

DAY 03 || DELHI - LEH || FLIGHT

After breakfast check-out and transfer to airport to board your flight 6E-6571 (Dep: 09:10/Arr: 10:30 hrs) to Leh. Arrive at Leh airport, nestled among isolated mountain peaks, the bustling town of Leh has long been an important stopover for trade between Kashmir, Tibet, India, and China. Upon arrival, transfer to the hotel. Check into the hotel and enjoy lunch. After lunch, relax at the hotel to acclimatize. In the evening, take a walk through the old town of Leh. Overnight at the hotel. Note: Suggested flight is as per the current schedule which may vary at the time of actual travel dates.

Day 4

DAY 04 || LEH LOCAL SIGHTSEEING

After breakfast proceed for a visit to Hall of Fame Museum (run by the Indian Army), is a tribute to the brave soldiers who sacrificed their lives in the defense of the nation. It showcases war memorabilia, weapons, uniforms, and photographs from the Kargil War and other operations, offering visitors a deep sense of patriotism and respect for India's armed forces. Stop at Magnetic Hill, Gurudwara Pathar Sahib, and the confluence of Zanskar & Indus Rivers at Nimu. Later explore Spituk Monastery, is a centuries-old Buddhist monastery perched on a hill overlooking the Indus Valley. Founded in the 11th century, it houses ancient statues, thangkas, and a revered image of Mahakala, unveiled only during the annual Spituk Gustor Festival. The monastery offers a serene spiritual ambiance and panoramic views of the surrounding mountains. Return to your Leh hotel. Overnight at the hotel.

Day 5

DAY 05 || LEH - SHAM VALLEY - LEH || 55 KM / 1 HR – ONE WAY

Today excursion to Sham Valley to visit Alchi Monastery, is one of the region's oldest and most significant monastic complexes, dating back to the 11th century. Renowned for its exquisite wall paintings, wood carvings, and Indo-Tibetan art, the monastery reflects a unique fusion of artistic influences. Its tranquil setting and ancient architecture make it a spiritual and cultural treasure of Ladakh. Also visit Likir Monastery, home to a giant Maitreya Buddha statue. Founded in the 11th century, it belongs to the Gelugpa sect of Tibetan Buddhism and is known for its impressive 23-meter-high golden statue of Maitreya Buddha. Surrounded by scenic hills, the monastery houses ancient manuscripts, thangkas, and artifacts, offering visitors a glimpse into Ladakh's rich monastic heritage. Return via Basgo Fort, a historical ruin with panoramic valley views. Overnight at the hotel.

Day 6

DAY 06 || LEH - NUBRA VALLEY VIA KHARDUNG LA PASS (5,602 M) || 120 KMS / 3 HRS 15 MINS

Today leave for Nubra valley enroute drive over Khardung La Pass, located at an altitude of about 5,602 meters, is one of the highest motorable roads in the world. Situated north of Leh, it serves as the gateway to the Nubra and Shyok Valleys. Surrounded by snow-clad peaks, the pass offers breath-taking panoramic views of the Himalayas. Arrive in Nubra Valley, known for its sand dunes, orchards, and double-humped camels. Visit Diskit Monastery, the oldest and largest monastery in Nubra Valley, was founded in the 14th century and belongs to the Gelugpa sect of Tibetan Buddhism. Perched on a hilltop, it offers stunning views of the Shyok Valley. The monastery is renowned for its towering 32-meter statue of Maitreya Buddha and hosts the vibrant Dosmoche Festival, symbolizing peace and protection. Later enjoy a camel ride on Hunder Sand Dunes at sunset. Overnight at the hotel.

Day 7

DAY 07 || NUBRA VALLEY - TURTUK - NUBRA VALLEY || 95 KMS / 2 HR 30 MINS - ONE WAY

Today excursion to Turtuk, the last Indian village before the Pakistan border. Explore the Baltistani culture, stone houses, apricot orchards, and traditional kitchens. Return to Nubra by evening. Overnight at the hotel.

Day 8

DAY 08 || NUBRA VALLEY - PANGONG LAKE (4,350 M) VIA SHYOK ROUTE || 230 KMS / 5 HRS 25 MINS

Leave for Pangong Lake drive along the Shyok River, enjoying spectacular mountain views. Reach Pangong Tso, the mesmerizing high-altitude lake famous for its blue hues. It is a breath-taking high-altitude lake that stretches from India into Tibet. Known for its ever-changing shades of blue, the lake is surrounded by rugged mountains, creating a stunning natural panorama. Its serene beauty and remote setting make it one of Ladakh's most iconic and photogenic destinations. Free time for photography and nature walks along the lake. Overnight at the hotel.

Day 9

DAY 09 || PANGONG LAKE (4,350 M) - LEH || 230 KMS / 5 HRS

Morning visit to Pangong Lake for sunrise views. Drive back to Leh via Chang La Pass (5,360 m). En route visit Thiksey Monastery, is one of Ladakh's most majestic monasteries, resembling the Potala Palace of Lhasa. Belonging to the Gelugpa sect, it houses an impressive 12-meter statue of Maitreya Buddha and numerous ancient scriptures, thangkas, and artifacts. Perched atop a hill, the monastery offers panoramic views of the Indus Valley and a serene insight into monastic life. Later visit Shey Palace, was once the summer capital of Ladakh's royal family. Built in the 17th century, it is renowned for its impressive 12-meter-tall gilded statue of Shakyamuni Buddha and ancient wall paintings. Overlooking the Indus Valley, the palace offers a glimpse into Ladakh's royal heritage and stunning panoramic views of the surrounding landscape. Overnight at the hotel.

Day 10

DAY 10 || LEH - HEMIS FESTIVAL (DAY 01) - LEH || 45 KM / 35 MINS - ONE WAY

Early morning drive to Hemis Monastery to witness the opening day of Hemis Festival one of the region's most famous monastic festivals, celebrating Guru Padmasambhava's birth anniversary. The 10th day (Tse-Chu) of the Tibetan lunar month is celebrated as the birthday of Padmasambhava's (Guru Rimpoche), the founder of Tibetan Buddhism. The Hemis Monastery celebrates this event in the form of a 2-day festival. Its resident Lamas perform sacred masked dances with traditional music leading to the destruction of the sacrificial offerings. The dances depict the magical feats of Padmasambhava's in his eight manifestations to defeat the enemies of Buddhism. You will also explore the monastery's museum and festival stalls. Return to Leh in the evening. Overnight at the hotel.

Day 11

DAY 11 || LEH - HEMIS FESTIVAL (DAY 02) - LEH || 45 KM / 35 MINS - ONE WAY

Today again return to Hemis Monastery for the second day of festivities to attend morning prayers and mask dances symbolizing good triumphing over evil. Engage with monks and locals, and enjoy Ladakhi food stalls. Explore nearby Hemis National Park area (optional short walk). Return to Leh in the evening. Overnight at the hotel.

Day 12

DAY 12 || LEH - STOK & MATHO - LEH || 35 KM / 50 MINS - ONE WAY

After breakfast proceed for an excursion to Stok and Matho to visit Stok Palace Museum, located within the royal palace of Stok in Ladakh, showcases the rich heritage of the Namgyal dynasty. The museum displays a fascinating collection of royal artifacts, including traditional costumes, jewellery, ancient weapons, thangkas, and the king's and queen's crowns, offering a glimpse into Ladakh's royal history and cultural legacy. Explore Matho Monastery, situated on a picturesque hill overlooking the Indus Valley, is one of Ladakh's oldest Tibetan Buddhist monasteries. Founded in the 16th century, it belongs to the Sakya sect and is renowned for its annual Oracle Festival, where monks believed to be possessed by divine spirits make predictions. The monastery also houses a museum displaying rare thangkas, ancient Buddhist artifacts, and statues. Optional visit to Druk White Lotus School (from 3 Idiots fame). Return to Leh and evening free for shopping or café hopping. Overnight at the hotel.

Day 13

DAY 13 || LEH - TSOMORIRI (4,500 M) || 265 KMS / 7-8 HRS

After breakfast drive to Tsomoriri Lake, a serene high-altitude lake surrounded by mountains, nestled at an altitude of about 4,500 meters in the Changthang region of Ladakh, is a stunning high-altitude freshwater lake surrounded by snow-capped mountains. Known for its deep blue waters and serene beauty, it serves as an important breeding ground for migratory birds like the black-necked crane, making it a paradise for nature and wildlife enthusiasts. En route stop at Chumathang hot springs and remote villages. Upon arrival, check-in at the camp. Evening at leisure by the lake. Overnight at the tented camp/hotel.

Day 14

DAY 14 || TSOMORIRI - LEH || 265 KMS / 7-8 HRS

After breakfast, leave for Leh with stops for photos and local interactions. Farewell dinner with Ladakhi cultural music and dance performance. Overnight at the hotel.

Day 15

DAY 15 || LEH - DELHI || FLIGHT

After breakfast, check out and transfer to airport to board your flight AI-2464 (Dep: 12:10/Arr: 13:35 hrs) to Delhi. Upon arrival, check-in at the hotel. Upon arrival, check-in at the hotel. Rest of the day free at leisure or you can opt for any of our optional activities. Overnight at the hotel. Note: Suggested flight is as per the current schedule which may vary at the time of actual travel dates.

Day 16

DAY 16 || DELHI DEPARTURE || INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT

After breakfast, check out and transfer to Delhi international airport for onward journey with beautiful Himalayan memories.