

# Kashmir Trek....

## A journey into the Heart of the Himalayas

With Baxter  
max 10 guests

11 days/ 10 nights August 25-Sept 4, 2016



### Highlights:

**Trek:** 8 days, light to medium. For a group of 12 max we will have 12 horsemen/ guides/cooks who set and pack up camp. Horses are available to ride. The gradient is gradual, with 9 mi being our longest day.

**Food:** Vegetarian with plenty of protein. Cooked fresh and sourced locally by our guides.

**Comfort:** Large tents, hot water bottles at night, camp fires, comfortable mattresses, warm sleeping bags, 5 star hotels either side.

**Weather:** warm days, cool nights (28C/ 82F days, down jackets required in the evening and thermals for sleeping).

**Altitude:** "Trek high, sleep low". We reach 11,000ft (3,300m) but never sleep higher than 9,000ft (2740m).

**Costs:** All ground is covered including domestic flights, meals, tips, transfers and accommodation. The only exception is the first dinner on arrival as most guests arrive at different times, and your personal spending money. International airfares and visas costs are not included.

The journey was born from a curiosity of discovering where Yoga began, and although we include a Yoga programme, you are not required to participate nor have any Yoga experience should you wish to try.

Much of Yoga focusses on connecting with your true nature and the origins of Shiva Yoga was born in the Himalayan mountains of Kashmir.

The foundation is **Sat Chit Ananda**.- Truth, Pure consciousness, Bliss .

This 8 day trek (with a couple of days either side to acclimatise) is a journey which will take you into the heart of a space surrounded by the beauty and pure energy of those mountains. Discover how it feels to be where Yoga began.

It is beyond words and imagination. It can only be experienced.

In terms of logistics, you will be supported every step of the way by **the most experienced crew of guides and horsemen in Kashmir**, professionals who have been guiding for three generations. They set up camp for us, provide horses, food, chai, build bridges when necessary, escort you over streams and always keep a watchful eye. Their English is excellent, skills unmatched and nothing is too difficult!

We recommend that you are at a level of walking fitness to ensure you maximize your enjoyment of the trek. Should you require a break however, for any reason, the horses are there to ride (under escort or alone if you prefer).

They can provide great relief if you are tired, have a sore knee or would simply prefer to enjoy the scenery from the saddle.

#### DAY 1: Thursday Aug 25



Making your own international travel arrangements to Delhi, you will be met at Delhi airport by our driver and transferred to the Oberoi Trident Hotel (20 mins from the airport).

Please provide us with your flight information once you have made the booking.

As we all have different arrival times, dinner will be at your own leisure and expense. This is the only meal not included on the tour.

### DAY 2: Friday Aug 26

Yoga this morning will be offered on the lawns at 7.30am before enjoying an impressive breakfast and flying out together as a group to Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir.

We stay on Dal lake on very charming, family-run houseboats.

These houseboats represent an era of elegance in Kashmir's hey-day when foreign diplomats, rock stars and anyone chasing the romance of this curious city would stay.



### DAY 3: Saturday Aug 27

Waking early to catch the Floating Market at 5am, we are paddled out whilst enjoying a cup of hot chai. The peace of dusk is only disturbed by a slap of a paddle and a marketeer's haggle. Expect to float away with some spices, flowers or the famous, locally grown, Kashmiri saffron.

After breakfast we drive three hours to Aru, the basecamp where we meet our guides and have lunch before setting off on foot for a gentle trek to our first campsite, Kolpathri.



### DAYS 4-10: Sunday Aug 28- Friday Sept 2

Every day we begin with a gentle, flowing Yoga class, designed to prepare your body and acclimatise your mind to the environment.

The Yoga classes will be led by Baxter.

Our afternoon sessions will be designed specifically to release any strain from the days' trek





Our trekking itinerary will include staying either one or two nights in meadows alongside rivers with the odd (optional) rest day so you can enjoy reading a book, interacting with local Gujjar (local shepherd) children, a game of cricket, washing clothes in the streams, or just relaxing.

Every day the scenery changes, and every valley presents breath-taking beauty.

We are not there to set world records in pace, rather each step brings you into the present. Like Yoga, it is about the journey, not the destination. We take many breaks to enjoy the scenery and to fill our bottles from natural springs. Maximum distance we cover in the longest day is 16km (9mi ).

The gradients are mild, never severe.

#### DAY 10 Saturday Sept 3

##### Pahalgam Hotel

This is our transition between the old world and new. Like any dietary fast or spiritual journey, we need to respect the energy of where we have been and where we are going and make the transition as smooth as possible.

This hotel is placed at the base of the mountains where "civilisation" re-emerges which includes internet and phone lines. It will be our first dinner at a table, in this old 80's tudor "Twin Peaks-eske" style hotel.



#### DAY 11 Sunday Sept 4

##### Pahalgam-Delhi

We drive three hours to Srinagar to catch our flight to Delhi, enjoying our last home-cooked meal with our ground agent who also designs and weaves some of the finest Kashmiri scarves and shawls in the land. He has over 200 weavers and spinners working (from their own homes) for their label which is sold in Jaipur and New York. It is an experience just to feel them.

In Delhi we organise transfers for you from the domestic to international terminals or to your hotel for those staying on. Our ground agents will be there to return any items we have left with them in their secure locker.

In Delhi we can help plan guides, hotels, cars and drivers with full itineraries should you choose to stay and seek guidance with your onward journey

We can also leave you in Kashmir with an itinerary and driver should you choose to explore this state further.

### Food

During the trek, we will enjoy vegetarian fare with plenty of protein. Vegetables are sourced from the local markets and buffalo milk, cheese, and butter from local Gujjars, when possible.

Breakfasts and dinners are served in camp either inside the dining tent or outside around the fire, weather pending, and everything is cooked fresh.

We dine under a thousand stars at night, and with breath-taking views during the day.

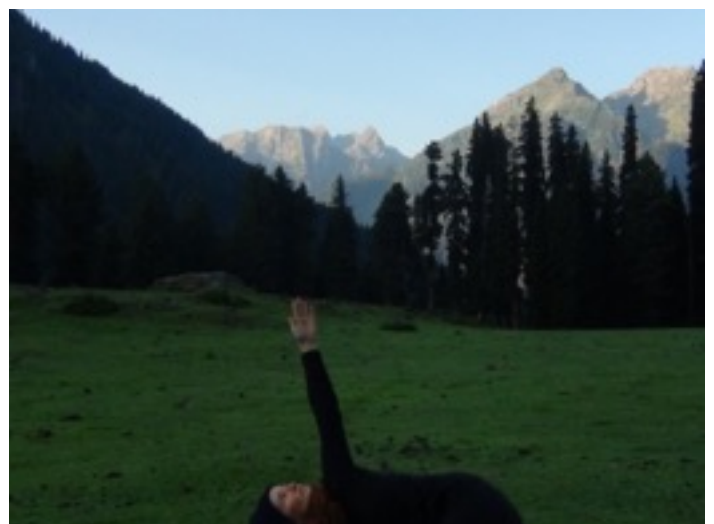


### Yoga

Despite this being called a “Yoga Trek” and asana classes being offered every morning, the emphasis is not entirely on the physical aspects of Yoga.

Baxter encourages students to find a harmonious way to be on the mat rather than focussing on “achievement” of any posture. Because of this, **any level of student is welcome as are partners of students who do not wish to participate in the Yoga classes.**

A private session will also be offered to anyone who wishes to have a programme designed specific to their constitution and goals to continue their practice with at home.





### The Guides

Our noble guides are mountain men who can trace their ancestors back 800 years to their current village. Their Grandfather began the business in the 1950's and his son, Gulham, is now the well-respected head councillor of the village. Gulham, Johnny and their team of horsemen are some of the most faithful, knowledgeable, and trusted men you will be fortunate to spend time with.

We anticipate all conditions and the guides are very quick to offer solutions to any situation. They will do anything to ensure that your trek is as comfortable and fun as they can possibly make it.

### Equipment

Separate to this brochure, we provide an equipment list and all information you require on visas before you arrive so you are appropriately prepared. Equipment such as headlamps, thermals, walking boots and water proofs are all recommended and we can offer direction when sourcing them.

All tents, sleeping gear (each sleeping bag has 2 internal cotton liners) luggage and food is provided, carried by horse and set up and prepared by our guides and horsemen. All you need to carry is a day bag with sunscreen, snacks, camera and water. Should your day pack become a burden, we can also accommodate its journey.



### Climate

September is coming out of the Kashmiri summer and into Autumn. The days will be warm and considering our elevation, sunscreen, hats and long sleeved, light shirts are highly recommended. Sunburn happens without you expecting it, so anticipate this and even have light cotton gloves to protect your hands if your skin is sensitive as we walk with poles.

Night time you would expect mild-cooler temperatures getting down into the 40's. We enjoy camp fires every night and tuck into goose-down sleeping bags warmed with a hot water bottle. We recommend a pair of thermals to both sleep in and practice Yoga with as the mornings remain fresh until the sun comes over the ridge-line. Layers are key and you'll begin to quickly peel them off as soon as we begin walking.

## Altitude

The highest peak ridge we climb to is around 11,000ft (3300mt) but we sleep at no higher than 9000ft (2740mt). As it is a very gradual climb, symptoms of altitude sickness are rare. Slight headaches may be experienced. Should anyone display more serious symptoms, our policy is to descend to a lower altitude, as a group.



## Hygiene

Saucha (cleanliness) is next to Godliness, and we like to make it as comfortable as we can for you. We provide hot water to bathe with, otherwise, a dip in the river at the end of the day can be a brave but incredibly refreshing way to cleanse yourself in more ways than one! Bring your bathers and a microfibre towel.

Ropes are provided which we string up between tents to hang our washed laundry with. A bag of pegs is recommended.

The latrine is privately secluded by a portable enclosure with a toilet seat-frame for those who find bush toilets and squatting a challenge.

## International flights

It is up to you to choose your preferred airline and arrival time into Delhi. When considering the departure from Delhi at the end of the tour (if you choose not to stay in India), please allow enough time from our arrival from Kashmir which will be roughly 6pm (you will need at least 3-4 hours between arriving in Delhi and departing onwards as you will be picked up by our ground staff and taken to another terminal. Consider luggage collection from Kashmir flight, 20 mins to transfer between terminals, time to enter the actual terminal (they check tickets and passports at the door of the terminal building and there can be a queue), plus the actual 2 hour check in time.

Most international flights depart from Delhi in the evening.

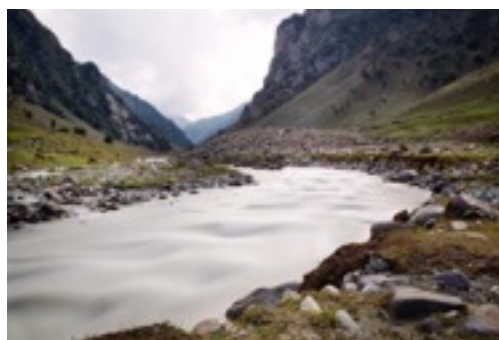
**Important:** You will require a printed itinerary of your ticket to enter any airport in India (we provide your domestic DEL-SXR print-outs but you'll need your Int'l and / or other domestic tickets within India).

### What's included

- Domestic flights Delhi-Srinagar-Delhi.
- Transfers from the Trident Hotel in Delhi (our recommendation if you choose to overnight there before the commencement of the tour) to the airport on the way in. On the way out, transfers from Delhi domestic airport to either the international terminal or any Delhi hotel if you choose to stay on post tour.
- All accommodation. The Trident Hotel in Delhi, the houseboats, trekking, and the Pahalgam hotel in Kashmir.
- All meals from BREAKFAST Aug 26 (some guests arrive late on Aug 25)
- Tips and gratuities (usually around 15- 20% in India and everyone including the airport baggage handler is tipped). We manage this so you do not have to think about it!
- All transfers within Kashmir
- All boat tours in Srinagar
- Yoga and meditation classes
- A private Yoga Therapy session with Baxter who will design a personal programme for you to continue with once you arrive home, based on a full assessment.

### What's not included

- Personal spending money
- Transfers to a hotel other than the Trident in Delhi
- Your international airfare
- The first dinner at the Trident Hotel
- Visa fees
- Personal insurance (we recommend consulting your travel agent for the most suitable policy and certainly do not recommend travelling without it).







Cost

Early Bird (before Apr 30) US\$3900

After Apr 30 US\$4200

If you are a single traveller who prefers their own room, single supps are as follows:

Trident Hotel: US\$100

Houseboat US\$75

Pahalgam Hotel US\$150

Single tent US\$100

The tents are large, sized at 6-man for a double, and 3 man for a single in size so there is plenty of room between the comfortable mattresses when sleeping and for luggage.

Please note that single accommodation on the trek in your own tent can be arranged.

Should sharing not be an option, we can certainly consider your request but carrying and supplying the additional equipment will incur a surcharge for single supp trekking of USD\$100 (as we will need to rent another horse).



## **Your Host**

**Baxter**, your tour leader, is a fully qualified Yoga Teacher and Therapist who has studied and practised many traditions of Yoga from Sivanada, Iyengar, Ashtanga and KYM.

Baxter's focus now lies with viniyoga- the tools of how Yoga can be applied to the meet the special needs of the individual.

She speaks fluent German, Spanish and Italian, was a chef for many years on Yachts in the Mediterranean and held an IFR / Mutli Engine rating in aviation.



Having travelled extensively through different regions of India both as a Yoga student and guide, Baxter has also assisted tours to Spain, France, India and Bali. This will be Baxter's fifth trip to Kashmir after having designed the tour four years ago.

## Visas

An Indian visa is required for most foreigners. They have recently implemented a new "visa on arrival system"

You can **apply on-line** at no earlier than 34 days, but we recommend you apply for it as soon as you can within that time. We will send you a reminder notice a couple of days before so you can prepare a photo (see photo requirements below) and have a scanned copy of your passport ready on file

### **Some advice....**

When requested to offer your career, DO NOT say journalist (or "press", "cameraman", "film producer", anything along the media lines.

DO NOT say your of Pakistan descent (they even ask about your grandparents' nationalities) If you are, then we recommend making personal contact with your local embassy for advice before proceeding.

It is best not to mention you're travelling to Kashmir (processing your visa will take longer due to required security checks on you). We have taken 4 groups into Kashmir and never once been questioned)

When requested "Places likely to be visited" write Delhi, Agra, Jaipur. That's the common path and will suffice.

Local address: write our Ground Agent in Delhi. This is sufficient:  
Royal Expeditions Private Limited 26 Community Center (II Floor)  
Delhi, East of Kailash

You will be given a 30 day, single entry visa with this system. Should you wish to stay longer, you will need to request another type of visa via your local "mission". The form is the same, but the process is longer and you can apply well before 34 days.

Photo requirements:

Format – JPEG

Size – Minimum 10 KB , Maximum 1 MB

The minimum dimensions are 350 pixels (width) x 350 pixels (height).

Recent front facing photograph with white background to be uploaded by the applicant.

Passport upload requirements (you will need to scan your passport)

Format: PDF

Size Minimum: 10 KB

Maximum: 300 KB

You are required to carry printout of the Electronic Travel Authorisation sent through email by Bureau of Immigration.

Please contact Baxter should you have any further questions or require help with

filling this in. **You will need 6 months validity in your passport from the entry date into India plus 2 spare pages.**

**Booking terms and cancellation policy**- please read carefully

As there are limited spaces (10) and upon booking, the deposit of US\$1000 is required to secure your position. To enjoy the early bird discount, the deposit needs to be processed by April 30, 2016. The remaining and final payment needs to be processed by **July 24, 2015**.

We will request copies of your passports and Indian visas once obtained.

As you may be aware, Kashmir has been in conflict- on and off- since 1948 after the Indian/ Pakistan partition.

#### History of conflict

Because of its geography, Kashmir has always been a disputed state. Predominately Muslim, the most recent conflict broke out in 1985 and ended over 10 years ago. This was mainly due to typical Indo-Muslim unrest being fuelled by the end of the Afghan war, leaving trained militants with a bunch of ammunition.

Kashmir hasn't seen any serious fighting for a while now, although there is still an obvious military presence that you'll notice, especially around the airport.

I consider it to be an opportune time to visit a country which has used to have high tourism, the numbers now refreshed by war. It's given the valleys time to replenish themselves, some paths completely untouched, others more worn.

The Australian government however, has listed Jammu and Kashmir as "Do not travel". Please do not let this strike terror to your adventurous nature. Governments certainly err on the side of extreme caution. Great Britain is reported to be reconsidering their status and once that happens, the stream of tourism will return.

Until then, big travel companies do not go in, and it's very rare to see another tourist. It gives you a sense of exploring an untouched corner of the earth.

Some travel insurance will not cover these zones, but some will. Let me know if you need advice here.

Should anything adverse happen, we will activate an alternative plan.

"Plan B" will ensure that we still enjoy a Yoga retreat somewhere in India. The final destination will depend entirely on what is available for the group at last minute's notice from properties we have used before.

In the event that you no longer wish to participate in the alternate Plan B and have a fully refundable or claimable airfare, we will fully refund all possible ground costs of Kashmir but the Delhi hotel will require a cancellation fee (covered by your insurance).

## **Deposit**

Upon your booking, a deposit of US\$1000 is required.

**TOTAL FUNDS DUE BY JULY 25, PLEASE.**

## **Cancellation policy**

In every other circumstance (other than described above)

from deposit paid- 90 days out US\$300 for domestic flight cancellations (we purchase the seats upon receiving the deposit)

60-90 days from departure: US\$700 fee (as per hotel terms and conditions)

45-60 days from departure: 50% of total tour cost

Less than 45 days: 100% cancellation fee of total tour cost (no refund) unless your place is resold, then a 50% of total tour cost will be refunded.

We strongly advise to take out travel insurance and can provide documents in the event you need to make a claim from a cancellation. We can also recommend a suitable insurance plan.

## For payment in USD

Once you have decided to join us and your final account is clear, we will offer you different payment options.

- Either by check or cash
- Bank transfer to a US Wells Fargo account (a/c details upon request)
- Paypal to: [b@palateearth.com](mailto:b@palateearth.com)

# Itinerary

Thurs

Aug 25 arrive Delhi stay at Trident Hotel Gurgaon

Fri

Aug 26 Yoga at 7am, breakfast at 8.30, depart hotel 10am  
fly Del-SRX  
staying at Gurkha Housboats

Sat

Aug 27 5am leave for floating markets (optional)  
7.30 b'fast  
bags out by 9, depart by 9.30. Three hour drive to Aru. Arrive by 1.30  
Lunch at Aru, horses packed, depart trekking at 3  
Arrive at Gagadpathri (elevation 2750m) by 5.30/6pm

Sun

Aug 28 A leisurely chai, followed by Yoga from 8-9.30  
Breakfast at 10, packed and ready to leave by 10.45  
Arrive at Aranpathri (3100mt) by 3pm. Cricket game. Showers.  
30 min Yoga, Dinner at 7pm

Mon

Aug 29 A leisurely chai, followed by Yoga from 8-9.30  
Breakfast at 10, packed and ready to leave by 10.45  
15km walk to Kohlpathri (2500m) which is the closest camp to Aru and  
where the boys will restock for fresh produce  
evening yoga 30 mins

Tues

Aug 30 A leisurely chai, followed by Yoga from 8-9.30  
Breakfast at 10, packed and ready to leave by 10.45  
Overnight at the Lidder Valley camp 1  
evening yoga 30 mins

Wed

Aug 31 A leisurely chai, followed by Yoga from 8-9.30  
Breakfast at 10, packed and ready to leave by 10.45  
17 km walk into the Lidder Valley to Satlanjan (3200m)  
evening yoga 30 mins  
Stay 2 nights

Thurs

Sep 1 Optional walk to Kolahai glacier or free day

Fri

Sep 2 A leisurely chai, followed by Yoga from 8-9.30  
Breakfast at 10, packed and ready to leave by 10.45  
10 km walk to campsite in the Lidder Valley campsite 2  
evening yoga 30 mins

Sat

Sep 3 A leisurely chai, followed by Yoga from 8-9.30  
Breakfast at 10, packed and ready to leave by 10.45  
Return to Aru by 1pm. Unpack the horses, lunch, drive to Pahalagam  
Hotel. Arrive by 3.30

Sun

Sep 4 Yoga at 7am, bfast at 9am depart 10am  
3 hour drive to Srinagar, lunch at Muza's  
SXR-DEL 5pm arr 6.30pm for connecting flights

Transfers to the International terminal or your hotel in Delhi included

## END OF TOUR

**Please note** that this Itinerary is only designed to provide a guidance of how our days will look. In actual time, it may differ according to the organic nature of our environment and group.

You are also invited to **join us in Delhi at the end for a night as an optional extension.** We stay at the Imperial Hotel which is famous for being one of the oldest examples of architecture from the Raj days with the most renowned art collection of those British times. It's a very comfortable museum and a lot of fun.

If you enjoy a drink, a gin and tonic goes down very well here!

In Delhi we have a rough programme, visiting a local orphanage or 'Basti' school run by the Samarpan Foundation of which Baxter is a volunteer. The Foundation does remarkable work to help feed, educate and empower women and children.

And we balance it out with an 'excursion' to local boutiques where we can find beautifully hand-crafted Indian cotton textiles and clothing. We find our guests often appreciate this as one can do very well for very little.

If you choose to stay in Delhi, you may wish to design your own programme and stay at your preferred hotel. If you would like any assistance however, we are happy to help and our agents can organise cars, guides, bike tours through Old Delhi etc, plus suggest an alternative range of accommodation.

