



Questions and Answers for Ladakh Buckwheat Project Volunteers – 2019

Q) Where will the participants/volunteers be staying? (which villages, how large are the villages, how far from Leh, etc.; plus, description of the family homestay)

A) Participants will stay at a family house in different project villages and will become a member of that family from the very first day of staying. Volunteers will have an opportunity to learn various knowledge and skills like how to cook Ladakhi food, language and understanding the relationships among the community, along with the buckwheat research. The home stay families are very closely known to us and quite reliable and trustworthy.

Project Villages:

The project villages are not so far from the Leh city and the farthest village is around 60 km.

1. Shey: Located near the bank of the Indus river off the Leh-Manali highway, around 15 km/20 minutes from Leh city. Beautiful views of Shey Palace and Thiksay monastery nearby. Lowest altitude.
2. Saboo: 8 km from leh city, just to the east.
3. Sakti: About 50 km from Leh toward the east. The village is just before the road to Changla pass (Second highest motor able road in the world). The village is large and long in shape. It is the second largest village in ladakh. This village is bit higher at 4000 mtrs above sea level than others village so it is little bit cold.
4. Shara: It is around 60 km form Leh city towards Tsomoriri lake. This village comes under the sensitivity area so it needs permit from the local government to go to that area.
5. Gangles: This is very closest project village to Leh city with a distance of 5 km. It is located at just upper Leh towards Nubra valley below Khardungla pass.

Q) Will the volunteer have own private room?; sleeping bag needed or not?; what sort of food to expect?; dechot or flush toilet?

A)

Room: Yes, volunteers will have their own private room. It is requested to all the volunteers to lock rooms when not occupied. While the family members can provide blankets, pillow and other bedding, it would be advisable to carry your own sleeping bag.

Food: Volunteers should expect a mix of traditional dishes (skyu, chu tagi, thukpa, paba-tangtur, kholak, phemar, khanbir, tagi tranmo and a variety of other breads and cookies etc.), and more Indian-style dishes (rice and dal, sabzi, etc.). Volunteers should inform us of any dietary restrictions (e.g. vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free etc.) so the family can be



informed accordingly. You will be served sweet milk tea and butter tea as well if you like. Butter tea may be an acquired taste, but if you do not prefer it, chai (sweet milk tea) will also be available, as well as simple black tea without milk (sweetened or unsweetened). Ladakhis use some spices in some of their food but far less than in the rest of Indian. If you don't like spiciness you can ask the family to reduce chilli etc.

Toilet: In the village (especially Shara and Sakti) only traditional compost toilets ('dechot' in Ladakhi) are available. More information will be provided on the use and importance of the dechot.

Q) Will filtered water be available in the home stay?

- A) Water quality in the villages, being glacial meltwater or spring water, is generally still very good. Of course locals drink this local water without incident, and many visitors do as well. However, to help safeguard your health from any unexpected bugs, it is advised to filter/purify the water for drinking. Please inform us if you whether you will be bringing a filtering/purifying device with you or not, and if not, we will request the family to provide boiled water for drinking if you are uncomfortable drinking the local water as-is. Kindly bring your own water bottle.
- B) We discourage the purchase and consumption of plastic-packaged/bottled water, as this is contributing to a serious plastic waste problem in Ladakh.

Q) Language gap: will there be an English-speaker in the homestay; will the volunteer need to learn basic Ladakhi before arriving?; will the project coordinator (Skarma) be around most of the time to help with any communication issues and other issues that arise to do with homestay living arrangement?

A) There might be English speakers in the home stay like children who learn English at school. But most of the mothers ('ama-les' in Ladakhi) do not speak English. It would be recommended that volunteers learn some basic Ladakhi language before arriving, to facilitate communication with the mother of the home stay family. You will be provided with a Ladakhi language primer upon confirmation. During the stay, if you have any problems whatsoever, you can freely contact either project coordinator Skarma at: 9906993366, other staffmember of Julay Ladakh, Mr. Urgyan at: 9622485023, and the Local Futures staff members (numbers will be obtained upon arrival in Ladakh, early July).

Q) Will there be internet connectivity in the house/village, or will volunteer need to travel to Leh for internet?

A) Most of our project villages have network connectivity. You can ask a member of family for Wi-Fi and they will provide you a hotspot connection. For brief, light use, this will not



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cost anything extra. But if you will use internet heavily, we would ask you to please offer to help contribute some payment directly to the family for that. Buying a local SIM card for Internet and calling would be the most convenient and efficient option.

Q) Should the volunteer expect to do much travelling during the project, and if so, how far and where (approximately)? Or will the volunteer mostly stay in the village with occasional trips to Leh?

A) It is not obligatory to stay all the time in the project villages for buckwheat research and analysis. You can go sightseeing, make necessary trips to Leh, etc. But please communicate with your host family, and with Skarma or any other staff before leaving the home stay well in advance.

A cultural orientation session will be given after arriving in Ladakh and before placing in the village, covering topics like: cultural norms, do's and don't's, dechot (Ladakhi dry compost toilet) protocol, and Ladakhi language pronunciation (please familiarize yourself with the Ladakhi language basics document that will be sent out to you in advance).

Transportation:

We don't have a set budget for transportation. We are expecting the volunteer to use local bus services which is very cheap and can be paid directly while in use. The farthest village (Shara) costs INR 110 (roughly \$US 1.5) for one way, Sakti Village INR 80, Shey village INR 20-30, Saboo Village INR 20. There is no bus service to Gangles Village, so JULAY LADAKH will arrange the transportation. However, for the first time JULAY LADAKH will take the Volunteer to the villages either by car or bus.

Further, for any transportation not related to the Buckwheat Project, the volunteer will need to pay for his or her own travel expenses. It is cheaper to travel by local bus services, but if you prefer you can also ask for a taxi or a car. It can be arranged through the staff of JULAY LADAKH; so inform at least one day in advance and pay cash after the use as per the designated rate list of the Leh Union.

Payments:

1. Volunteers will have to pay for their stay charges of INR 500 / night in advance to JULAY LADAKH Leh office for whatever number of days the volunteer is planning to stay. However, if the volunteer goes out for site seeing and other visit away from the designated home stay family, that number of days shall be returned before the volunteer leaves Leh.



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2. The Volunteering stay period dates need to be informed to JULEY LADAKH LEH office preferably in advance or at least at arrival.
3. All flight costs to Ladakh are for the volunteer's account.

Weather/ Temperature:

Ladakh is a high altitude desert, and temperatures vary a lot from day to night. The capital of Leh is at about 3,500 metres (11,482 feet) elevation. Generally, during summer, there is strong sun during the day and temperatures are pretty hot, but not like the Indian plains where it can (and is) upward of 45 degrees C (~114 F). In Ladakh, the hottest days might get up to 30 C (86 F) at the hottest, and nights can drop down a lot, probably to 10 C (50 F), though note these are estimates, and things can be drastically different depending on particular conditions at the time, elevation (obviously much cooler higher up), and as things are in great flux with climate change. In recent years there have been more cloudbursts and heavy rain, which is very unusual historically. Overall, though, prepare for pretty hot, intense sun during days, and cool evenings. We recommend lightweight cotton long-sleeves, and a hat, to protect from the sun, and a light sweater or warmer layer for going out in the evenings/nights.

Thank you for participating and Ju-Le!