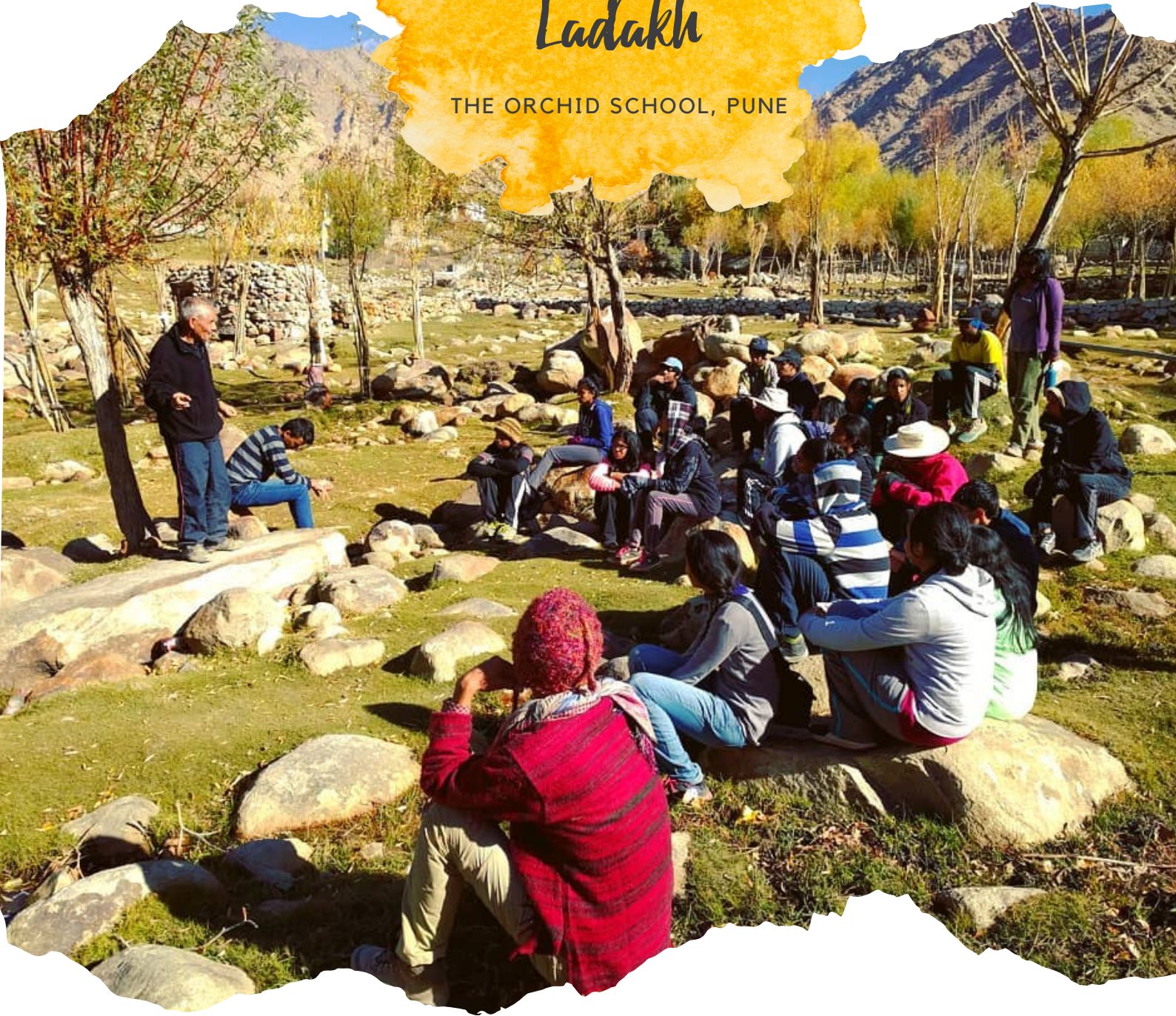


Learning from Ladakh

THE ORCHID SCHOOL, PUNE



curated by

Journeys With Meaning



Day 1 – Arrival and acclimatisation

Students arrive at Leh in the morning along with JwM facilitators. We leave for the SECMOL campus, located on the banks of the Indus river. This will be our base for the first few days. On this day, we will avoid doing anything strenuous as we will need to acclimatise to the lower oxygen levels at this high altitude.

Reach the campus, have breakfast, and retire to the dormitories/rooms for some sleep. Assemble in the dining hall for lunch. Get some more rest post lunch. Over tea, there will be an introduction to the organizations -- Journeys With Meaning and SECMOL -- followed by the trip orientation.

Walk around the campus and familiarise yourself with the place. Chat with the SECMOL students. Over dinner, students get introduced to SECMOL's dinner time activities where students practice speaking in English, sing a Ladakhi folk song, and have a short GK quiz for their students. Get a good night's rest as there are a lot of exciting activities planned over the next few days!

Day 2 – A day in the life of a SECMOL student

Join in the early morning activities as the campus wakes up to the day. After a hearty breakfast, students will join different teams of SECMOL students who will give us a tour of their sustainably-built solar-powered campus, with its rammed-earth buildings.

The SECMOL campus is run entirely by the students. This activity will help our students' get a better understanding of SECMOL and its students, while also learning how these Ladakhi teenagers, who come from remote villages mostly, handle their daily responsibilities and run the entire campus by themselves. After the campus tour, the SECMOL students and our students gather together and participate in some fun games and activities to get to know each other.

Post lunch, both groups of students engage in Conversation Class. The purpose of this exercise is to help SECMOL students practice communicating in English while bonding with visitors. And our students learn about life in Ladakhi villages and the aspirations of Ladakhi youth.

After tea, students can rest a bit, read, or participate in the games-hour with SECMOL students. As the brilliant hues of sunset light up the barren landscapes of Ladakh, we huddle up inside the common hall to beat the outside chill and indulge in a fun and interactive game designed by JwM, followed by a film-screening session. We will end the day with a discussion post-dinner.



Day 3 - Students' day out in Leh. Back to SECMOL.

Gear up for an exciting day outside SECMOL. The group sets out to visit Leh Market today.

SECMOL students and our students will be paired together and sent on a heritage tour of Leh. Each group will be given a list of landmarks to visit and people to meet in and around Leh. The groups will also be given lunch money – they can choose to eat anywhere in the market, including the local places that serve delicious Tibetan and Ladakhi food.

Back at the campus by late afternoon, it's momo-making time! All the students get together and make momos for dinner. It's one of the most fun activities at SECMOL... :)

Day 4 – Trek to Rumbak.

After breakfast, the students along with some SECMOL students gear up for an exciting day outside SECMOL. We head to Zingchen where the road ends and the Markha Valley trek begins. We will be covering the first leg of the trek which is from Zingchen to the village of Rumbak, which is famous for its snow leopard sightings (only in the winter months). The trek will take us about 3 hours one way as we follow a stream all the way up to the village. At the village, we will catch up with the local community while we rest and have our packed lunch. After resting a while, we will trek back to Zingchen and return to SECMOL by late afternoon.

In the evening, if everyone has the energy, we will walk down to the picturesque banks of the Indus River, soak our feet in the cold waters and reflect over the learnings of the day. End this beautiful day with some quiet time under the stars post dinner.

Day 5 – Our final night at SECMOL.

In the morning, the students work on the campus with SECMOL students followed by Conversation class.

End the day with a cultural exchange program and farewell celebration – celebrate with music and dance along with the SECMOL students and end the night with a fun dance party.

Exchange numbers and hugs with your new best friends as we say goodbye to SECMOL with the promise of staying in touch... :)

Day 6 - Learn about Ladakhi culture and traditions at Phyang.

Leave after breakfast for the nearby village of Phyang. Stop over at the HIAL (Himalayan Institute of Alternatives, Ladakh) campus to learn more about the first hill-university in



India focused exclusively on subjects that are relevant to youth living in mountain regions. If possible, volunteer there for an earth-building activity. Reach our homestays and settle in before lunch. Interact with our warm homestay hosts during lunch and learn more from them about their way of life. Rest for some time post lunch. After tea, do some hands-on work on their farm and help our host with a range of activities. Learn about the different traditional and sustainable farming practices of the village. Have dinner under the stars and head early to bed.

Day 7 – Village Day at Phyang. Movie screening.

At breakfast, we will be joined by a naturalist working on wildlife and Snow Leopard conservation in Ladakh who will share their experiments in minimizing animal-human conflict and protecting the endangered snow leopard. He will also help our students understand how the snow leopard is not just an apex predator, but is also a keystone species that plays a hugely important role in maintaining a dynamic balance in local ecosystems *and* Ladakh's cultural systems that have largely depended on the animals they've domesticated.

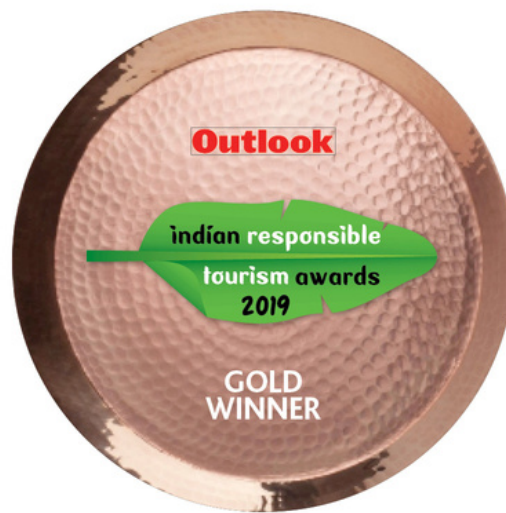
After lunch in a pretty meadow, we go on a village walk led by our Ladakhi friends. Students will be teamed up in smaller groups and each group will interview a local family about the social and ecological issues they (and the community) face. They will also document these stories via essays, photographs, or short video clips. Return to the homestay by tea-time. Relax, share stories, take a nap. In the evening, huddle up inside the warm homestay and watch a beautiful documentary on the lives of the shepherds in Ladakh. Follow up with a conversation over dinner.

Day 8 – Ice Stupa visit and day in Leh.

On our last day in Ladakh, we visit one of the villages that has built an *Ice Stupa Artificial Glacier*. Learn about these ingenious innovations that demonstrate how it is possible for us to develop locally appropriate and environment-friendly solutions to the problems we face. Students will also learn *Systems Thinking* that will teach them to look at the world as an interconnected system. The ST framework will also help them come up with better solutions for the challenges shared by the Ladakhi families the day before. Post this session, leave for Leh where we will have lunch and then the students get the afternoon to explore the market, pick up souvenirs and gifts for their families and friends, and enjoy the many offerings at Leh's quaint and cozy cafes. In the late afternoon, we will head over to the beautiful Shanti Stupa to view the sunset before we return to our homestays in Phyang.

Day 9 – Jullay Ladakh!

Say our goodbyes to Ladakh and fly out...



Journeys With Meaning has been facilitating learning journeys to Ladakh and other regions around India since 2007.

For this, we were recognized as India's **BEST EXPERIENTIAL TRAVEL** organisation in the *Outlook Indian Responsible Tourism Awards 2019*.

Testimonials

"Our daughter went on a trip with JwM in May this year. The concept is fantastic -- that we don't just consume as tourists but learn and contribute, in whichever way we can. That we get to know local issues and get responsible. Also, being a bit of an introvert, our goals for our kid included going out there and talking to people.

Well, she hasn't stopped talking about the trip since they came back. The group coalesced and the kids are still in touch with each other, some beautiful friendships. One of the first things she told us was: "Guys, there are going to be some lifestyle changes in our home. We waste so much!" ... A realization in a home that prides itself on being green, organic, going low on waste, et al. Something that will get into her value system given this trip and the exposure she got.

Thanks a ton, *Journeys With Meaning*! They were so well taken care of in the best way possible – not cosseted, but cared for. Loved that, the independence given with an eye being kept on them."

Sangitha Krishnamurthi (parent)

May 2018, Learning from Ladakh – Students' Program

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