



HIMALAYA ENVIRONMENT AND LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

AT A GLANCE

- Deep engagement with place, culture, and traditional ways of being and knowing
- Epic adventure with real participant responsibility accessible to determined hikers
- Case studies on sustainability, education, and social business
- Stunningly beautiful route with three sunrises at 6000m

June 5 to June 29, 2020



COURSE DESIGN

Place Based Learning

Engage with the complexities of sustainable development, through field visits, guest lectures and discussions, and learn from local ways of knowing, being, and changemaking:

- Locally-adapted, anti-colonial model of education
- Social business: ethical sourcing, traditional skills, and women's empowerment
- Water security and conservation

Expeditionary Learning

Minimally supported 19 day expedition, including three summits above 6000m, focusing on followership, leadership and expeditionary behaviour.

COURSE OUTCOMES

- Understand the impact and interactions of education, tourism, economic policy and conservation in context.
- Gain awareness about how the forces of development & globalisation similarly and differently affect Ladakh and your home context.
- Articulate personal answers to questions including: How am I going to impact this world? Why do I climb mountains? What does culturally-adapted policy look like? Why is decolonizing development work important? What can we learn from indigenous and traditional knowledge systems?
- Reflect on your role in local, regional, and global affairs.
- Connect to the natural environment and practice environmental ethics and stewardship.



PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Himalaya Environment and Leadership Program supports youth in discovering and exercising their agency in a complex world. It takes place in Ladakh, a high-altitude region in the Northern corner of the Himalaya known for rugged mountains and Tibetan Buddhist culture. This is a powerful setting for an expedition and development study, and inspires us to believe that the way things are is not the way they must be.

Local leaders and host families teach us about alternative ways of knowing and being. The recent history of policy interventions shows us the combined impacts of globalization and the neoliberal development doctrine. Ladakh's mountains offer big challenges and rewards as well as protection from the monsoon. Before the expedition, we explore places, traditions, stories and political movements, and set aside time for quietude, sharing and reflection. It allows for a contextualised and critical examination of the global and local incentives and structures that drive power, access, consumption, policy, and the displacement of indigenous knowledge.

The expedition begins 5 days later, with a stunning route selected for a gradual elevation profile, uncomplicated road access, and minimum objective hazards. It leads right up to three impressive mountains between 6000 and 6300 meters that present outrageously adventurous but appropriately challenging objectives to a determined hiker. This is a strenuous and ambitious program that requires dedication and preparation. Participants plan and cook meals; set up camps; learn to use mountaineering equipment to move across difficult terrain; and manage risks intelligently. On three nights we are roped together for 16 hours going up and down a mountain face, but the course is about a lot more than high adventure.



“We live so much of our lives in the middle, comforts of routine protecting us from our rough edges, never finding out who we truly are. But that is what climbing mountains does for us.

We learned how to support each other when we were at our most vulnerable. Compassion made us all stronger and allowed us to accomplish great feats. With this, came the chance to witness what happens when young people are handed real responsibility. To see what happens when they are told - you are needed.”

PHOEBE MASON

2017 expedition participant
2018 expedition student leader

PARTICIPANT PROFILE

We welcome participants from a diverse range of backgrounds. Admission to this program is based on:

- Demonstrated interest in sustainability, peace, global affairs and local development
- Demonstrated commitment and/or leadership in school or college activities
- Exceptional work and team ethics
- Alignment with UWC Guiding Principles
- Preparedness to undertake the expedition

Prior camping and trekking experience is required. There will be consecutive days of tough trekking, long days for crossing high passes, and even longer days and nights for summiting mountain peaks. No crampon, ice axe or roped travel experience is necessary, though this will be taught and used on three summit attempts. Physical preparedness is a prerequisite, and a reasonable benchmark is jogging 5km in 30 minutes. Some days will be cold, in the range of - 10 degrees celsius, and we'll still need to cook meals and do the dishes afterwards.

Applicants must:

- Be 17 or older on the date of application
- Be declared medically fit by a doctor to attempt the expedition
- Provide two references of activity leaders, work supervisors or teachers that can speak to their preparedness for the course.



RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

- We are invested in the region for the long-term and our success is based on personal and professional relationships with local partners and communities. We employ only Ladakhi guides and fund one scholarship for aspiring guides with every trip.
- On trail we balance 'leave no trace' ethics with local customs and traditions.
- A receipt for 5 tonnes of verified CO2 offsets is provided to every participant, an imperfect short-term solution but goes some way towards keeping this course and all associated air travel carbon negative.
- We ask ourselves hard questions: can we be flying to the mountains and simultaneously preaching sustainability? Why are we bringing more people to Ladakh, a sensitive ecosystem already reeling with the impact of tourism on water consumption and waste generation? The answers build on earnest cost-benefit analyses using the best data available, minimising our footprint and time spent in urban areas, generous carbon offsets, and a commitment to inspiring our participants, partners, contracted staff and wider audience to love and protect their environment.

RISK MANAGEMENT

Trips of this nature do not eliminate all objective hazards. High-altitude trekking and introductory mountaineering involve inherent risks that we analyse and mitigate, and that participants must balance in the context of their capacity, passions, and goals.

We mitigate risk by:

- Careful route selection and reconnaissance
- Local support system of partners with specialist expertise and stellar track records
- Adjusting all plans in response to changes in weather, group, or other factors
- Skills training progression for participants
- Leadership team with deep expertise in risk management, wilderness medicine, facilitation, and regional fluency, having led programs for the best outdoor and experiential travel organizations in the world

Our goal is for participants to develop a deepened moral imagination, through the experience of development studies in context and a rugged mountain expedition requiring their biggest effort and best selves, in a place that inspires us to see that the way things are is not the way they must be.

KEY COURSE INFORMATION

Course dates

- Begins in Leh on the morning of June 5, 2020
- Ends in Leh on the morning of June 29, 2020

Course fees

- EUR 3,400 - applications by 20 March, 2020
- EUR 3,800 - applications by 20 April, 2020

Fee excludes

- Visa fees
- Insurance fees
- Personal outdoor equipment such as clothes, sunglasses, gloves, hiking shoes, sleeping bags and backpacks, water bottles

Note that the fee includes specialist personal equipment such as harness, crampons, ice axe, and double-walled plastic boots. Detailed information on the trip itinerary, packing lists, fitness training, risk management, insurance, and travel guidance is available on request to adang@muwci.net.

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