

LHAKHANG EXPEDITION

This is a further and largely pictorial report on the expedition last autumn. Both the alpine valley on the Kinnaur side and the rugged beauty of the high altitude desert in Spiti and Rupshu were fantastic, and none of the team will forget the mirage-like panorama across Tso Moriri as shown overleaf. The area is well worthy of further photographic recording.

Only unseasonable snowfall and the attendant avalanche risk prevented the team fulfilling all their ambitions but it was a memorable expedition for all that. The mountains around the upper Pare Chu valley and Pakshi Lamur valley certainly deserve more exploration and there are still well over a dozen unclimbed 6000m peaks in the area.



The Dover brothers at Shimla

The team flew into Delhi with the monsoon still very evident before transferring to the Kafnoo road-head via Shimla.

At the end of the expedition proper they trekked out along the shore of Tso Moriri and past various mani walls to finish up in Karzok from where they were picked up by jeeps. These took them down the Indus Valley to Leh. This capital of the area was explored at leisure before flying out to Delhi.



Mani stone

Mani stones or walls are stone plates, rocks and/or pebbles inscribed, usually, with mantra, as a form of prayer in Tibetan Buddhism. Mani stones are intentionally placed along the roadsides and rivers or placed together to form mounds or cairns as an offering to spirits.

Delhi itself was explored by most of the team before returning home.

Ghandi cremation site



QUTB - MINAR
 THE FOUNDATIONS OF THIS WORLD-FAMOUS TOWER, KNOWN AS THE QUTB-MINAR, WERE LAID BY QUTBUDDIN AIBAK OF THE MAMLUK DYNASTY TOWARDS THE END OF THE TWELFTH CENTURY. THE CONSTRUCTION WAS INTERRUPTED AT THE FIRST STOREY BY HIS DEATH, AND THE REMAINING THREE STOREYS WERE COMPLETED IN MATCHING MATERIAL AND STYLE BY HIS SUCCESSOR ILTUTMISH COMMONLY KNOWN AS ALTAMASH IN A. D. 1230. IN A. D. 1368 THE MINAR WAS DAMAGED BY LIGHTNING. LATER, FIRUZ SHAH TUGHLUQ (A. D. 1351-88) REPLACED THE TOP STOREY BY THE EXISTING TWO STOREYS FACED WITH MARBLE. SIKANDAR LODI (A. D. 1489-1517) ALSO EXECUTED SOME REPAIRS TO THE MINAR IN A. D. 1503, WHEN IT WAS AGAIN INJURED BY LIGHTNING. THE TOWER HAS A DIAMETER OF 14.32 M. AT THE BASE AND OF ABOUT 2.75 M. AT THE TOP WITH A HEIGHT OF 72.5 M. AND ASCENDED BY 379 STEPS, IT IS THE HIGHEST STONE-TOWER IN INDIA AND A PERFECT EXAMPLE OF MINAR KNOWN TO EXIST ANYWHERE. THE VARIEGATED PLAN OF ITS THREE LOWER STOREYS, THE PROJECTING BALCONIES WITH STALACTITE PENDENTIVE BRACKETS AND ORNATE BANDS OF INSCRIPTIONS ON ITS FACADES HEIGHTEN ITS DECORATIVE EFFECT.

Amongst the sites visited were Raj Ghat where Ghandi was cremated and the Qutb complex which is an array of monuments and buildings at Mehrauli, the most famous of which is the Qutb Minar. This is the tallest brick minaret in the world, and an important example of Indo-Islamic Architecture. The Qutb Minar is 72.5 metres (239 ft) high. The diameter of the base is 14.3 metres and the top floor measures 2.7 metres. It is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



Leh as pictured was the capital of the Himalayan kingdom of Ladakh, now the Leh District in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, India. It stands at 11,500 feet above sea level. Right includes the expedition liaison officer.





Tso Moriri



Camp beside Tso Moriri below Lungser Kangri



Crossing Pare Chu to enter Pakshi Lamur valley



Upper Bhaba valley



Bhaba River valley



Himalayan Blue Poppy



Ki Gompa gateway



Fording the Pare Chu River



Indus Valley



Pare Chu Valley



Pakski Lamur Valley



The full team

The locals





Parang La Pass

Ascent

Descent



Descent from Pin-Bhaba Pass



Pin Valley



Keeping feet dry



Lhakang under fresh snow



Kibber Village