

vets beyond borders

Improving animal welfare and public health in developing communities

FAQs

How long do I need to volunteer?

Volunteers need to be able to stay for 2 weeks, and are welcome to stay for longer. It can take 2-3 days to acclimatise to the high altitude (Leh sits at 3500m above sea level) before you are able to work.

Many volunteers stay much longer for up to 4-6 weeks, and take the time to go trekking, or traveling around Ladakh in between working.

How do I get to Leh?

The most direct way to Leh is to fly from Delhi. . All flights leave Delhi around 5-8am, and the flight takes just over an hour.

- Jet Airways is a premium airline, very comfortable with great service and flies daily. Tickets usually cost around \$150-\$250 one way Delhi-Leh.
- Indian airlines is usually cheaper than Jet Airways and flies three times a week.
- Air Deccan – a budget airline but with a good reputation - flies daily to Leh and you can get very cheap tickets.

Leh is accessible by road in the summer months. The roads are closed over the winter and usually open in June when the snow and ice has been cleared. From Delhi it is about a three day drive. A popular route is by train and/or bus to Manali and then with a bus or jeep from Manali to Leh. Manali to Leh is over high mountain passes and involves an overnight stop. Many volunteers have taken this route one way, and have all said how beautiful the scenery is. It is a long trip, and apparently the bus is more comfortable than the jeeps.

Where do volunteers stay?

There is a choice of accommodation, and VBB will cover the expenses of accommodation whilst you are volunteering –

1/ Royal Zilzom Guest House. This is a traditional Ladakhi family home in the village of Sabu (about 1 km from surgery site). The extended family (including Kunzang Namgyal - president of LACS) lives here and there are several rooms

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available for volunteers. There are 3 double rooms and one dormitory of 4 beds. All meals are provided and are home cooked – in the Ladakhi style – usually vegetarian. Lots of home made bread, home made apricot jam, noodles, rice, dumplings, sweet milk tea. The vegetable garden is large and cows are kept under the house and milked daily.

There are (cold) showers and western toilets as well as the traditional drop toilets. Hot water can be heated on the fire in the kitchen for a 'bucket' shower. There is electricity in the house, however there are often power cuts. Clothes washing is done by hand in the nearby stream. Sabu is 7 km from Leh – it is possible (and safe) to hitch hike into Leh, and there are also local buses 2-3 times daily. It is easy to get back to SAbu from Leh with a taxi.

2/ A guest house in the town of Leh. The guest house has single or double rooms, with a bathroom attached, hot water (at least in the mornings) and it is close to internet cafes, and a choice of restaurants. The guest house is close to the centre of Leh, about 10 mins walk, and in a quiet area. It has a nice garden and the people that manage it are friendly.

Is traveling around Ladakh restricted?

Some places in Ladakh require a permit, however these are quick and easy to obtain. You usually do not need to organize a permit more than 1-2 days ahead of when you would like to travel. Travel agencies in Leh can organize this. Many places do not require a permit, and traveling around Ladakh is easy. There are many buses or you can take taxis, hire jeeps and drivers for a private trip, rent motorbikes, or mountain bikes.

There are numerous travel agencies in Leh and treks can be organised with or without horses, or ponies, with or without guides/cooks etc., or you can rent a pony and go on your own. There are also many opportunities for mountain climbing/mountaineering.

Can volunteers bring a friend?

For the Ladakh project, it is no problem to bring a friend or partner. They are welcome to stay with the volunteers but would be required to cover their own expenses of accommodation and food. This is usually around \$10-\$15 per day.

What visa do I need for India?

Please apply for a **tourist** visa, for Australians the fee is \$93 which is valid for 6 months and is multiple entry.

In Australia, please visit <http://www.vfs-in-au.net>, for information. In Sydney, the centre is at the following address:

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India Passport and Visa Services Centre
Level 1, 64, Clarence Street,
NSW, Sydney 2000

Tel: 02 9299 3539

Fax: 02 9279 4312

Rabies vaccinations?

All volunteers should have had rabies vaccinations before working with the street dogs.

The vaccination schedule is three vaccines given over 1 month (day 0, day 7 and 28).

A booster vaccine is required after 1 year then every 2 years.

Ideally volunteers should go to a travellers medical centre to get advice on appropriate vaccinations and preventative medicine for travel in India.

It is a legal requirement that you send us a copy of your rabies vaccination certificate before you come to volunteer.

What are the general working hours?

Start around 8.30 am and work until all surgeries have been completed – usually around 4 -5 pm. Monday – Friday. If we plan well before hand, we can accommodate people taking time off to go trekking and site seeing.

Apart from performing spays and castrations, volunteers will need to help the dog catchers sedate the dogs and if not doing surgery, will have to assist with prepping the surgery site, monitoring anaesthesia, giving antibiotics, identifying dogs (ear notching), treating other injuries, parasites etc.

Volunteers will need to check the dogs daily postoperatively and supervise the release of dogs back on to the streets.

What is the weather like?

Ladakh is a high altitude desert and normally rainfall is very scarce in the summer. The main source of water is the winter snowfall on the mountains. However, the last couple of summers, there has been unusually high levels of rain and flooding. The air is extremely dry. In summer the weather is usually mild, with average temperatures between 10 and 20 C. In June there is still plenty of snow on the surrounding mountain tops that nearly disappears over the summer until september when there is often fresh snow falls.

The direct sun feels very hot and burning.

So although in general it is nice during the days, it can be very hot in the sun, and cold in the shadows!

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