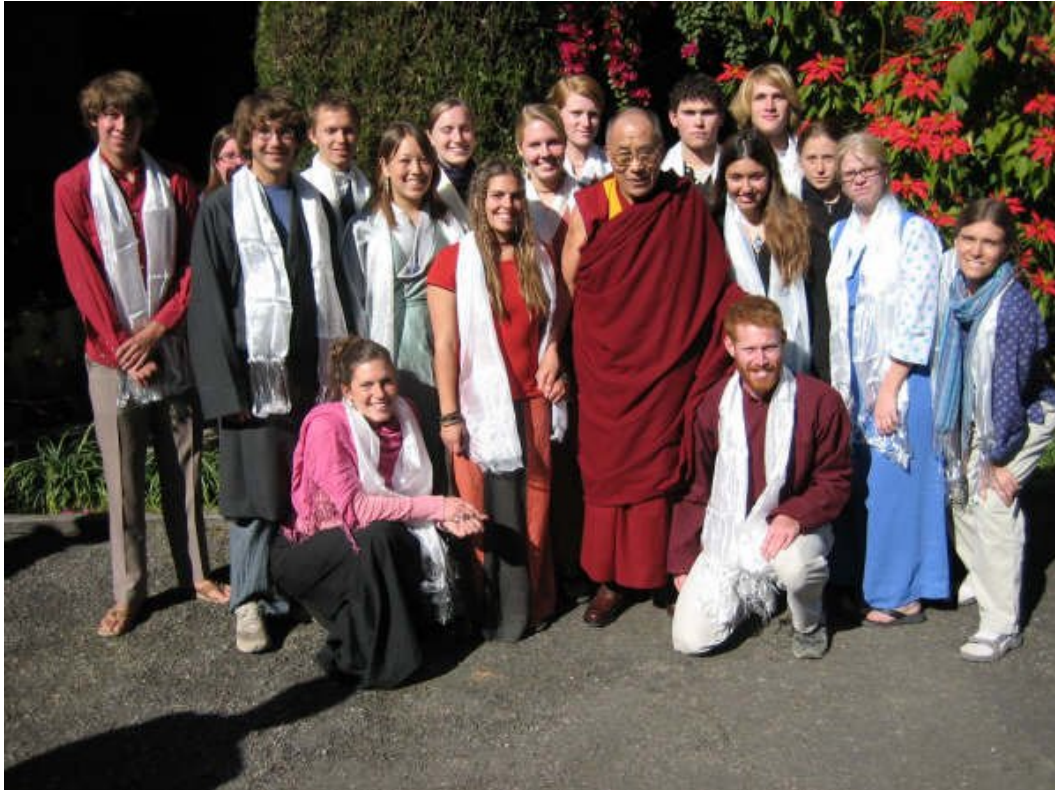




Global | **Learning
Across
Borders**

EXPERIENCE MATTERS

**From Brahma to Buddha:
The Cultures of the Indian Himalayas and the Ganges River**
Spring/Fall Semester Program



• *Whenever I meet a 'foreigner', I always have the same feeling: 'I am meeting another member of the human family.'* This attitude has deepened my affection and respect for all beings. May this natural wish be my small contribution to world peace. I pray for a more friendly, more caring, and more understanding human family on this planet To all those who dislike suffering, who cherish lasting happiness, this is my heartfelt appeal. •

--Tenzin Gyatso, the XIV Dalai Lama of Tibet who lives in exile in Dharamsala, India.



Exploring a traditional village perched on the Tibetan Plateau. Sipping butter tea around a kitchen fire. Smelling jasmine flowers and curries sold in the bazaar. Hearing horns and bells echoing over ancient monastery's walls. Watching colorful prayer flags blowing in the wind on top of a mountain pass. Throughout this program, students will have the chance to live and study in the country that gave birth to two of the world's major religions—Hinduism and Buddhism—and to travel amid some of the most spectacular landscapes on earth. On this journey, we will meet many of the people who keep ancient traditions and spiritual practices alive, including possible audiences with the Dalai Lama and/or the Karmapa. Though it is impossible to predict the most memorable experience you will have during Global LAB's India semester, those who participate can expect to embark on a journey of discovery that may well last a lifetime.

Primary Locations

Ladakh

Few things could be lonelier than that landscape of storm-beaten rose-brush and rock, and yet I never felt alone. All round me, along the path, in the willow grove, by the stream, on and between the rocks, there were signs that others had passed the same way. Prayer flags shook out their yellow and red rags from the heart of a gully or from the tops of crags above me; stones arranged in half circles, in sacred letters...I came to the fork in the path and looked up. There, half a mile above me, was the monastery; there Go-Tsang was at last, high in its cradle of rock, with nothing but the wide, burning sky behind it.

--Andrew Harvey, "A Journey in Ladakh"

High on the Tibetan Plateau in India's northern-most region is the former kingdom of Ladakh. Known as "Little Tibet", Ladakh has been open to foreigners only since 1974. Prior to 1962, when the threat of Chinese invasion prompted the rapid construction of a road into the region, travel to Ladakh involved several weeks of difficult walking at high altitudes. Over the centuries, many teachers, nomads, traders, and pilgrims did make this journey over mountain passes, across vast plains and from one sparsely settled town to the next, most with ancient monasteries built into the cliffs above the villages. Because of the nearly impassable Himalayan ranges to the south and southwest, almost all of Ladakh's cultural influences came from its neighbor in the other directions—Tibet.

As you walk through some of the quiet side streets of Leh, Ladakh's capital, it is easy to think that you've stepped back in time and are wandering through a traditional Tibetan town before the Chinese invasion. In fact, as many experienced travelers have noticed, Ladakh is one of the very few regions in the world where Tibetan Buddhism and all its cultural forms have flourished without interruption since introduced more than 1000 years ago. This continuity and endurance of a religious tradition and the people that support it, set in a landscape of austere and formidable beauty, help make Ladakh one of the world's most magical destinations.

Varanasi (Benares)

Benares is older than history, older than tradition, older even than legend, and looks twice as old of all of them put together. --Mark Twain

A thriving holy city whose history goes back nearly two thousand years, Varanasi, also known as Benares, continues to be a fascinating, bustling destination. Here one can observe religious practitioners

and festive celebrations, as well as somber cremation ceremonies on the funeral pyres along the banks of the Ganges. Walking among the narrow cobblestone streets of the Old City, we visit the most sacred Shiva temple in all of India and take boat rides on the Ganges at sunrise and by moonlight. We will have the opportunity to watch traditional dances performed on the steps of a Hindu temple, attend a candlelight sitar and tabla concert and drink many cups of chai with inhabitants of this intriguing city. Eleven kilometers away is the sacred Buddhist city of Sarnath, where the Buddha gave his first teaching after reaching enlightenment. A visitor to Sarnath can listen to Zen chanting and drumming in the Japanese temple, hear monks offering Tibetan prayers and take a turn spinning prayer wheels at the Tibetan temple, and make visits to Chinese Buddhist and Thai Buddhist temples to witness examples of religious ritual and tradition from those cultures as well. Each of the Buddhist temples in Sarnath is constructed in the traditional style found in the host country that built the temple. Resident monks from all over Asia maintain temples in this holy city.

Dharamsala

From a modest monastery on the side of a hill, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the spiritual and political leader of the world's Tibetan Buddhists, holds quiet court in the bustling town of Dharamsala. In this large



village tucked inside the folds and valleys of the foothills of the Indian Himalayas, prayer wheels spin in the hands of the faithful while novice red-robed monks in training dart through the streets. Over the last 45 years, Tibetans have transformed this former British hill station into what is now known as “Little Lhasa.” Dharamsala is home to the Tibetan Government-in-Exile, as well as dozens of monasteries and important cultural organizations such as the Tibetan Library and Archives. With a vibrant mix of people conducting sacred daily rituals, bargaining in open markets and shops, and having lively discussions about Buddhist philosophy or how best to reclaim

Tibet from the Chinese, Dharamsala is an endlessly fascinating city. It is also where Tibetan traditions of medicine, astrology, law, religion, language, and the arts are preserved and nurtured. In short, Dharamsala is now the epicenter of the contemporary Tibetan world.

Semester Program Overview

We begin our program with a flight to New Delhi, the capital of India. After a few days of orientation in Delhi including exploring one of the most colorful markets in Asia, Chadni Chowk, India's largest mosque, Jama Masjid, and the historic Red Fort of the old city, we will fly over the Himalayas onto the Tibetan Plateau and land in Leh, the capital of Ladakh. We will spend our first few days in Leh, acclimatizing to the altitude and getting oriented to the new region and culture. We will meet with local people working with NGOs on issues of sustainable development and cultural preservation and begin to develop our own understanding of the challenges Ladakh has been facing in recent decades. Here we will also start our Ladakhi language lessons, designed to be both practical and fun.

Next we will head to a traditional village within an hour of Leh where we will stay with Ladakhi families and continue our cultural orientation in a rural, traditional community. We will likely be helping with harvesting barley and other crops, milking cows and yaks, and learning and assisting with other

components of daily life. Students will enjoy traditional meals with their families (usually breakfast and dinner), but will spend the bulk of each day with the group participating in visits, lectures, and discussions to learn about culture, religion, politics, and environmental issues and a range of other topics.

We will also make excursions to a number of the nearby cultural sites and monasteries in the Leh Valley, exploring as far east as Hemis and as far west as Lamayuru. We will meet with the Thiksey Oracle; visit the SECMOL school, which is educating the next generation about sustainable agriculture, energy production, and media issues; and will help with other projects as requested by local organizations.

At the conclusion of this phase of the program, we will enjoy a farewell gathering with our families and then travel even further into rural Ladakh. Here, we begin an 8-10 day trek that will take us over 17,000 foot passes to remote villages and unsettled areas. The trek brings us through some of the most beautiful parts of the Himalayas and may provide views of several of the tallest mountains in the world. Because of the isolation of the region, we will feel as though we are stepping back into time as we camp in fields along the trail or stay in small villages along our route.



After the trek, we will fly from Leh to New Delhi. We will take the train north to the Punjab region of India where we will spend a couple days in Amritsar, staying with Sikh pilgrims at the sacred Golden Temple, doing volunteer service work in the kitchens with pilgrims there, visiting the Jallianwalabagh (Amritsar Massacre Site), and learning about the challenges this region has faced due to partition and the complicated demographics in the area. One evening we will go to the India/Pakistan border at Wagah and witness the flag-lowering ceremony where nationalistic fervor is still apparent on both sides of the border.

Next we will catch the morning commuter train to Pathankot, and then connect to a local bus to Dharamsala, the home of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile. As guests of this community, we will live with contemporary Tibetan families, meet Tibetan doctors, teachers, and political prisoners, and learn something of these Himalayan people who have bravely persevered as refugees and maintained their cultural identity for the past 45 years in exile. A weekend excursion to Tso Pema to visit an important pilgrimage center associated with Guru Rinpoche who brought Buddhism to Tibet in the 7th century will be another adventure during our time in Dharamsala. During this portion of the program, we will also request audiences with religious leaders including the Dalai Lama and the Karmapa, the young head of one of Tibetan Buddhism's most important lineages, who escaped from Tibet in 2001. In Dharamsala we also may attend an Introduction to Buddhism retreat at the Tushita Institute.

In Dharamsala Independent Study Project options include studying Tibetan massage, learning Reiki or Yoga, receiving musical training, learning Tibetan Thangka painting, teaching English to newly arrived refugees, learning Tibetan or Indian cooking, or volunteering at a children's school. Conducting research with refugees or other segments of the population is another ISP option to pursue.

After concluding our stay among the foothills and mountains of northern India, we will travel south and east to the Indian plains. We will continue our journey in Varanasi where we will have two weeks to

explore what is considered by many to be the earthly abode of Lord Shiva and the most sacred Hindu city in the world. Here we will have the opportunity to learn about life on the Ganges Plain: to live with Hindu families, to learn and practice conversational Hindi language, and meet with social and religious leaders in the community who will help us understand issues such as the caste system, Muslim/Hindu relations, traditional Ayurvedic medicine, and religious art and ritual from Hindu, Buddhist, and Islamic traditions. Here, we will view temple and mosque architecture, walk along the ghats to observe the intense activity along the riverbanks, and enjoy boat rides on the Ganges. On the banks of the river, students will witness a variety of religious practices where people perform daily rituals. In Varanasi, Independent Study Project opportunities include working with children at a street children's shelter and school, taking yoga or traditional dance instruction, receiving lessons in the classical music traditions, researching religious practice in the city, or studying intensive Hindi language.

Before leaving Varanasi, we will make a day trip to Sarnath, where the Buddha gave his first sermon on the Four Noble Truths. Then we will retrace his footsteps and travel to Bodh Gaya, where he is believed to have attained enlightenment by meditating under a bodhi tree more than 2,500 years ago. We will visit the Mahabodhi temple and several other temples and monasteries in Bodh Gaya. We then begin to make our way back to Delhi, but en route, we'll visit the ancient abandoned city of Fatehpur Sikri then stop in Agra to experience one of the world's most famous architectural achievements: the Taj Mahal.

The final days of the program will be coordinated with the students selecting the destination and determining the itinerary. Previous groups have chosen to end the semester with visits to the desert of Rajasthan or with an excursion to the holy Hindu cities of Rishikesh and Hardiwar near the mouth of the Ganges River.

The semester concludes with a couple of free days in New Delhi and a farewell banquet before we board the plane to return home to the United States.

Note on the fall and the spring itineraries: *In the fall term, the program will begin in Ladakh and then continue in Dharamsala, Varanasi, and Bodh Gaya to avoid the cold weather of the Tibetan Plateau in the winter. In the spring term, the order of the program is reversed as we will begin in Varanasi, Bodh Gaya, and Dharamsala then conclude in Ladakh to avoid the hot weather of the plains in late spring.*



2008 Program Dates

Spring Term: February 15 – May 17, 2008

Fall Term: September 12 – December 14, 2008

Applications are accepted year-round on a rolling admissions basis (group size: 8-12 students).

2008 Semester Program Tuition

\$9,845 (*not including r/t international airfare or travel to point of group departure—NYC*). Tuition includes: pre-trip preparatory and educational materials and orientation; dedicated student web pages for program communications and resources; all logistical facilitation; all hotels and guest houses; all meals; all domestic air fares/taxis/buses/trains; museum, park and temple entrance fees; Global LAB faculty and instruction; local coordinators, cooks, porters; all program elements (independent study projects and apprenticeships, community service projects, home-stays, community support/charitable contributions).

Please note: Additional expenses not covered by Global LAB include: inoculations, travel insurance and international medical and evacuation insurance; visa/passport processing fees; personal costs (laundry, phone calls/emails, souvenirs, etc.).

Cancellation/Refund Policy

While Global LAB would like to provide as much flexibility as possible, this policy is based on the timing of our commitments to instructors, international airfares and travel arrangements, confirmation of in-country program components, logistical administration, and student preparation. We recommend that participants purchase travel insurance to protect themselves against financial loss in the case of personal emergency or other unforeseen events requiring last minute cancellation.

Program Deposit

A \$500 program deposit is due with student application. \$250 of the deposit is refundable up to 90 days prior to departure. If a participant withdraws his or her application within 90 days of program departure, the deposit is nonrefundable. The \$500 deposit is fully credited toward program tuition. If Global LAB does not accept a student's application, the full deposit is refunded less a \$25 processing fee.

Tuition Balance

Tuition balance is due in full 60 days prior to program departure and is 50% refundable up to 30 days prior to departure. If cancellation occurs within 30 days of departure, 20% of tuition is refundable.

How to Apply & Eligibility

Global LAB accepts applications on a rolling admissions basis, accepting qualified applicants until programs are full (maximum of 12 participants). For this reason, we recommend candidates submit their applications as early as possible. Semesters are open to those ages 16-22. No language prerequisite is required. While the semester is geared toward interim or 'gap' year students, high school seniors as well as college students will be considered.

Credit

For high school seniors, Global LAB works closely with you and your school to ensure that you receive the fullest credit possible for participating. University students may also be eligible for credit. Contact our Director of Programs for the very latest credit information and guidance.



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Global Learning Across Borders, a non-profit 501(c)(3) based in New York, exists to educate and inspire new generations of young people and adults to become responsible and committed global citizens in their local communities and beyond. We do this through international cultural immersion and community service programs for young adults; global studies professional development programs for educators; partnering with schools to help design and launch experiential global education and service programs; and through global expeditions that offer exceptional cultural experiences for adults.