

Cultural Understanding

The culture in Ladakh is in rapid transition, yet it is one in which the traditional values are still largely intact. For mutual respect and comprehension, please keep in mind and observe the following points:

Dress code

The temperatures in summer are pleasant during the day. Wearing a shirt, t-shirt or blouse as well as long cotton trousers during the day is very fine. The sun is strong here, so do bring good sun protection (cream, sunglasses, hat). While travelling in Ladakh, it is important to keep in mind that short clothing is not well seen upon. Kindly keep your shoulders and legs nicely covered. This will keep a possible sunburn minimal, too.

The mornings and evenings, however, are fresh and a warmer clothing is necessary so that you don't suffer a cold. Bring a fleece or wind-proof jacket with you, so that you can layer up or down whenever needed.

In winter, mercury drops below zero, so comfortable and (very) warm clothing as well as warm shoes are essential. A wind-proof down jacket, warm cap, gloves, muffler or balaclava are advisable to bring.

If you plan to do a trekking or want to climb a peak in Ladakh, adequate shoes are a must. They have to be comfortable and you should have worn them several times before you embark to your hiking tour.

In Ladakh, you will encounter different people, eg. Hindus, Sikhs, Kashmiris, Buddhists etc. Kindly try to avoid tight, provocative, or very minimal clothing as it can be a cause of possible harassment. Shorts, sleeveless tops, mini skirts should be generally avoided in public places, and especially in religious buildings. Under no event should swimwear (for women bikinis) be worn in Ladakh as these are taken as sexually provocative.

Behaviour code

Wherever you are travelling, a friendly smile is the best decoration on your face. Maybe you can learn few Ladakhi words, like "julley", "jimpo rak ley", and the encounters with the local inhabitants are joyful and memorable ones.

Before visiting religious sites, please make sure your clothing appropriate. Do remove your shoes before you enter these buildings. Also, do not offend the monks while sitting on the small tables or on places reserved for them. If you want to meditate or you feel tired, the monks will show you happily where you can have a seat.

Travellers coming with their partners shall please keep the affection for the own partner a private matter. It should be confined to your own rooms or tents, and not be displayed in public. Walking hand in hand is no issue, but kissing and hugging in public is definitely a no-go.

Photography code

Kindly do not hold your photo lens directly in the face of the locals. Before you take openly a photograph of them, kindly ask them permission first. Do not give them money in change of a photo! Maybe this tip will give you a nice opportunity: You can for example hide yourself behind a pillar, take the photo from a distance, etc. This might be better options to make photos of one or several locals without annoying them.

Photography in religious buildings or at religious ceremonies needs the permission of the monk, priest, mullah or pastor in charge. Remember that flash photography is mostly prohibited in religious buildings as it is damaging ancient wall paintings and tapestries (eg. thangkas). In some places, fees are asked for filming, and photography tools.