

## About Ladakh

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Ladakh, also known as «the land of high passes», is a high-altitude region on an average altitude of more than 3,500 m. It is one of the most sparsely populated regions in the world, and its culture and history are closely related to that of China occupied Tibet, therefore, Ladakh is also known as «Little Tibet» or «Shangri-La».



The population of Ladakh counts more than 200,000 inhabitants which is a blend of many different ethnic groups, predominantly Tibetans, Monpas and Dards. Most Ladakhis in Leh district and Zangskar are Tibetan Buddhist while most of the rest of Kargil district are Shia Muslims. There are Ladakhi Christians who converted in the 19th century. Among Non-Ladakhi residents, there are followers of Hinduism and Sikhism, and a small number of followers of the Bon religion.



The principal language is Ladakhi, a Tibetan language. Educated locals usually know Hindi, Urdu, and often English. Within Ladakh, there is a range of dialects, but they are all mutually comprehensible. Administrative work previously was carried out in Urdu, since few years, however, English is predominant.

In the past, Ladakh gained importance from its strategic location at the crossroads of important trade routes. But since the Chinese authorities closed the borders with Tibet, and Central Asia in the 1960-ies, international trade has dwindled except for tourism. The region has been opened to tourists from 1974. The Indian military maintains a strong presence in the region.

Due to its altitude, the temperatures in Ladakh are extreme. During the summer months, the weather and temperatures are pleasant during the day, having cool nights and mornings. The temperatures can easily get to minus 15 degrees Celsius during winter. Harsh winters have seen mercury dropping until -30 degrees Celsius. Tourists visiting Ladakh in summer should consider to bring a good sun protection (hat, shades, sun cream), casual as well as warmer clothing so that it can be layered up or down accordingly. Trekking enthusiasts should not forget to bring good shoes and a comfortable backpack. People embarking to a mountain expedition can lease good mountaineering gear with us. People visiting the region during winter need to have sophisticated and VERY WARM CLOTHING.



The majority of roads in Ladakh are looked after by the Border Roads Organisation. If you want to reach Ladakh by road, please inform yourself about the opening of the roads leading into/coming from Leh. The roads Manali-Leh and Srinagar-Leh are leading over high passes, some of them higher than 5,000 m, and are open usually from May till November. However, this can vary from year to year as the weather is unpredictable. Local buses from Leh to villages run throughout the year. Ladakh can be reached throughout the year by flight. The airport is in Leh.

The economy of Ladakh rests on three pillars: the Indian army, tourism, and civilian government in the form of jobs. For centuries, Ladakh enjoyed a stable and self-reliant agricultural economy based on growing barley, wheat and vegetables, and keeping livestock, especially cows, dzos (a cross-breeding of yak and cow), sheep and goats. Agriculture, the mainstay of only one generation ago, is no longer a major portion of the economy, although most families still own and work their land.