



WINTER EDITION ❄️

Our November edition of TANG breaks away from its traditional format to focus solely on a winter holiday in Ladakh - an often underestimated but overwhelming experience. As temperatures plummet to -30°C, Leh, once a bustling town, becomes a ghostly quiet place, with cold winds whispering through Safaeda trees, and empty streets spinning tales of a different Ladakh. From unique experiences and diverse cuisine to the region's captivating wildlife, the issue highlights the multifaceted charm of this unique destination during the chilly months. Ladakh's winter casts a spellbinding transformation, offering a treasure trove of snow-laden vistas that will leave Switzerland's snowy landscapes far behind.

A WINTER'S TALE IN LADAKH

Ladakh- the land is so barren and the passes so high, that only the fiercest of enemies and the best of friends would want to visit us- goes an old Ladakhi saying.



Now, imagine this barren land in the harshest of winters where temperatures drop as low as -30°C, no running water in the taps, lakes get frozen over and the whole landscape is wrapped in a blanket of snow and ice.

But also imagine, that in this time when Ladakh is literally cut off from the rest of the world, is when its truest form emerges. Having had a busy and a full season, this is when the locals have all the time in the world to smile, to engage in meaningful conversations and share butter tea, local bread (khambir) or a hot bowl of Thukpa with you. That to my mind beats bumping into a friend from your city which is what usually happens when visitors go to Ladakh during the summer peak season. The endurance required to travel through subzero degree temperatures at the altitude that the destination stands ensures that this time of the year is not a natural choice for tourists, hence this is a great time for adventure travellers, nature lovers and those who don't like jostling crowds on their holidays to visit this roof of the world.

What you get for braving the extreme weather are snow coated peaks, rustic maple leaves adorning the streets, vistas of frozen water bodies and dreamlike frames plus the chance to live like and with the locals. Ladakh, in winter - November to February is awesome and a white wonderland with its jaw dropping frozen and starkness.

So what is available for the hardly traveller to do in Ladakh in winter?



SNOW LEOPARD TREK

Ladakh, with its rugged Himalayan terrain, is home to the elusive Snow Leopard, known as the 'Ghost of the Himalayas.' The Snow Leopard Trek is not just an adventure; it's a profound connection with the natural world. Patience is key as these majestic cats navigate snowy cliffs with grace. It is often said that to see a snow leopard in their snow-laden rugged Himalayan habitat is one of those moments that brings your whole world to a standstill. Perfectly camouflaged between the bits of bare rocks and patches of snow, these are some of the most elusive big cats on the planet. Only the luckiest wildlife enthusiasts get to see them. Perhaps a lone animal at a kill, or a mating pair, and often times quietly silhouetted against the perennially blue skies of the region.

BROWN BEAR EXPEDITION

Drass holds the distinction of being the coldest inhabited location in India. With the onset of winter, the Himalayan Brown Bears in this region descend from the higher mountain reaches, providing a unique opportunity for observation and photography. This particular subspecies of Brown Bear is exclusive to the Himalayas. Bears are most active and easy to film during winters or their pre and post-hibernation time.



UNIQUE WILDLIFE ENCOUNTERS

Ladakh, a heaven for exotic flora and fauna, becomes a paradise for wildlife photographers in winter. Yaks, ibex, Tibetan hare, blue sheep, wild ass, bharal, Tibetan antelope, red fox, Tibetan wolf, and mountain weasel, along with many exotic birds, thrive against the snowy backdrop.





ASTRONOMY AT THE DARK SKY SANCTUARY

Located in the Hanle river valley, in the Changthang sanctuary, near the Line of Control with China, is one of the world's highest sites for an optical telescope. At an elevation of 14,764 feet, the cloudless skies and low atmospheric water vapour make it one of the best sites in the world for observing stellar objects and planets not to mention the Milky way through powerful telescopes operated by the astro ambassadors who have been selected from the neighbouring villages and trained for the purpose.

ICE-HOCKEY TOURNAMENT

Being one of the few places in India that freezes, Ladakh is crazy about skating and ice-hockey. Natural ice allows skating from late December to early February. Led by the Indian Army, a few Ladakhi men played ice hockey in the 1970s, and since the 1990s the annual tournaments organized by the Ladakh Winter Sports Club have been the most exciting events of the winter in Leh. Ladakh hosts the world's highest Women's Ice-Hockey Tournament in Changthang, at an elevation of 14,635 feet. Winters are a great time to watch the teams practising for the International Tournaments.



FROZEN PANGONG LAKE MARATHON

The Pangong Frozen Lake Marathon is a unique and challenging event set against the breathtaking backdrop of the Pangong Lake in the Ladakh region of India. Held in the winter months when the lake freezes over, participants brave the sub-zero temperatures and high-altitude terrain to compete in this one-of-a-kind marathon. The frozen expanse of Pangong Lake, surrounded by snow-capped mountains, provides a stunning yet formidable setting for runners, testing their endurance and resilience. The marathon not only attracts seasoned athletes seeking an extraordinary challenge but also promotes the beauty and adventurous spirit of the Ladakh region, offering a surreal experience for both participants and spectators alike. The Pangong Frozen Lake Marathon is officially registered in the Guinness Book of World Records as the World's Highest Frozen Lake Half Marathon.

CHADAR TREK

This is the hero of all winter adventure experiences in Ladakh and considered an item on the bucket list for most adventure enthusiasts - this trek starts in Chilling near the confluence of Indus and Zaskar rivers and continues on till Nyerak, which is a 5-6 day experience. The Chadar Trek has been a traditional route used by the Zaskar locals for centuries during the winter months when the Zaskar River freezes over, making it possible to walk on the ice. In the past, the Chadar Trek served as a vital trade route, connecting the remote Zaskar Valley with Leh, the capital of Ladakh. The trek was a lifeline for the exchange of goods, including food, fuel, and other essentials. Trekkers from around the world are attracted to the unique experience of walking on a frozen river surrounded by the stunning landscapes of the Himalayas.





FROZEN LAKE PHOTOGRAPHY

Two of the most well-known lakes in Ladakh are Pangong Tso and Tso Moriri, and when they are frozen, they are even more beautiful. Capture the mesmerizing beauty of these frozen lakes, against the backdrop of snow-covered mountains. A photographer's dream scene is created by the vast area of white ice, the unobstructed blue skies, and the snow-covered mountains

STOK GURU TSECHU

This festival falls in the month of February and is one of the widely celebrated fairs and festivals in Ladakh. The Buddhist monks of Stok and Spituk monasteries in Ladakh celebrate the Stok Guru Tsechu festival for two days. At this festival, an oracle makes an appearance at the Stok Palace; armed with a sword the oracle makes his way to the highest point of the Palace, he usually also meets the King and has predictions made for the rest of the year. In the past, he has been known to warn the King of any inauspicious events lurking in the future. One has to be fortunate to be able to witness this oracle visit.



LOSAR FESTIVAL

As the chilling winds of Ladakh winter sweep through the region, a festive atmosphere transforms the cold terrain into a vibrant canvas of colour and joy during Losar, the Tibetan New Year. Celebrated in December or January, this significant festival symbolizes renewal and hope, blending rituals, performances, and feasting to infuse warmth into the harsh Ladakh winter. From special meals to cleaning homes and offering prayers, the celebration fosters community spirit with traditional music and folk dances. Losar reflects the resilience and spirit of the Ladakhi people, turning the winter into a celebration of life, warmth, joy, and hope. If visiting Ladakh during winter, experiencing Losar is a must, offering a unique glimpse into local culture and traditions. Losar is a testament to the resilience and spirit of the Ladakhi people, infusing warmth and life into the harsh winter.

MASK DANCE AT SPITUK MONASTERY

Spituk Monastery hosts the Spituk Gustor Festival in the 11th month of the Tibetan Calendar, symbolizing victory over evil. The festival features a mesmerizing mask dance with masks painted in natural colours and adorned with gold and silver on silk and brocade, representing various spirits. Activities like burning effigies and group dances take place, providing moral lessons about legendary deities. The festival, held in the courtyard of Spituk monastery, attracts a large crowd. Celebrated on January 3rd and 4th this year, it begins with a week of prayers by monks, aiming for the welfare of all beings and world peace. Cham performances, exclusive to lamas, depict the destruction of evil spirits. The festival concludes with the burning a sacrificial cake, symbolizing the eradication of evil for the year and fostering peace, prosperity, and harmony among the people.



CUISINE

Trying out the local Ladakhi cuisine is an essential part of experiencing Ladakh winter. The food here not only satiates your taste buds but also offers a warming embrace, making you feel at home even in the frosty weather. Indulge in Ladakh's winter cuisine, starting with Gur Gur Cha (butter tea) for warmth. Thukpa, Momos, and Skyu, a high-calorie Ladakhi dish, provides nourishment and a taste of local flavors.



HOW TO REACH

In winter, road access to Ladakh is limited due to heavy snowfall. The most reliable way is by air, with regular flights operating to Leh's Kushok Bakula Rimpochee Airport from Delhi.

TRAVELING WITHIN LADAKH

BRO now ensures that most highways and roads are all weather and open throughout barring when heavy snowfall may block these temporarily. When traveling through Ladakh in winter, always have 1-2 buffer days to make up for plans that may get disrupted on account of weather conditions



ACCOMMODATION SUGGESTIONS

Very few hotels stay open in Ladakh during winter. With extremely cold temperatures and tough winter conditions, it's a good idea to pick a cozy hotel with effective heating. Here are a few suggestions to help you out.

• The Grand Dragon, Leh



Situated in Leh, Ladakh, The Grand Dragon Ladakh, stands as one of the pioneer luxury hotels in the region. Owned and operated by the Abdu family from Leh, boasting over 40 years of hospitality experience, the hotel is adorned with exquisite handmade paintings by Gulam Mustafa, the first modern artist of Ladakh. Infused with a touch of royalty, the hotel offers a luxurious stay at an altitude of 3,500m above sea level, seamlessly blending traditional architecture with luxury accommodations. With 76 rooms, including three elegant suites equipped with modern amenities, the hotel provides a unique experience. Its strategic location, 3 km from Kushok Bakula Leh Airport, a 10-minute walk from Leh Palace and Leh Market, a 5-minute walk from the Main Bus Stand, and a 10-minute drive from Shanti Stupa, makes it convenient for exploring the area.

• The Dolkhar Resort, Leh



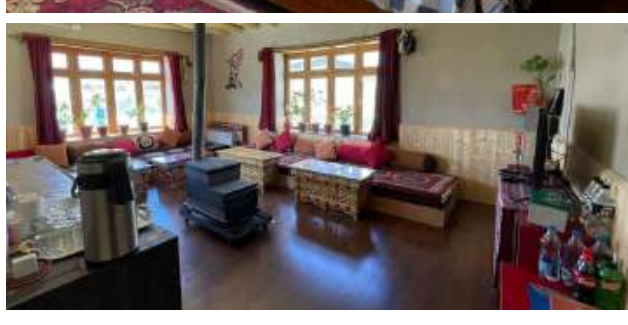
Located in Leh, Ladakh, The Dolkhar Resort is a luxury boutique stay inspired by Ladakh's people, culture, and traditional values. It seamlessly integrates a piece of Ladakh with the world while prioritizing conscious, sustainable, and contextual travel. Ideally situated in Tukcha at the heart of Leh, the boutique stay offers proximity to town conveniences and a serene distance for a mountainous echo. Unique experiences include a Chef's tasting menu with local and sustainable ingredients, a 7-course tribute to Ladakhi culture. Craft Experiences allow guests to explore the Changthang plateau's nomadic tribes and craftsmanship. The resort connects guests with local craftswomen, offering an immersive experience in metal and textile crafts, enriching their stay at Dolkhar.

• Organic Boutique Homes, Hunder (Nubra Valley)



Brownie cake with icing sugar topping! That's how Nubra valley looks like in winter. Sandwiched between Kashmir and Tibet, the valley is among some of the most exquisite sites to stroll in Leh-Ladakh trip in winter. Nestled in Hunder Village, Nubra Valley, Ladakh, Organic Boutique Homes provides a homestay experience with modern rooms featuring attached balconies and kitchen gardens. This highly recommended homestay in Nubra Valley, offers spacious accommodations and a personalized travel experience. Travelers seeking authenticity and lasting connections with the local community find this homestay an excellent choice. Guests often forge strong bonds with their host families, creating enduring relationships beyond their stay.

• Pangong House, Pangong



Pangong House, a boutique homestay, sits just 200 meters from the picturesque Pangong Lake in Ladakh. Offering comfortable and luxurious accommodations with modern amenities, guests can savor authentic Ladakhi cuisine in the cozy dining area while enjoying stunning lake views. The homestay adopts a farm-to-table concept, sourcing organic produce from its garden. Guests experience the traditional Bhukhari heating system, enjoy nomadic walks, and partake in various outdoor activities like horse riding and stargazing. The homestay's commitment to a local experience is evident in its emphasis on organic, self-sourced ingredients and limited television access in common areas.

• Zojila Residency, Kargil











Situated on the banks of the Suru River, Hotel Zojila Residency in Kargil stands out as one of the region's best hotels. Located 1.5 km from the city center in Bemathang, the hotel offers a tranquil setting with the river flowing next to rooms. With 36 well-appointed deluxe rooms, 4 family suites, and 1 presidential suite, it is considered the most luxurious hotel in Kargil. Close to attractions like Kargil War Memorial and Lamayuru Monastery, the hotel provides a peaceful escape while buzzing with activity during the season. Guests can unwind next to a roaring bonfire in the garden area, enjoying the swift flow of the Suru River, providing a comfortable and luxurious base for exploring the region.



Apart from the above, in smaller locations like Maan, Merak, Changthang, Diskit, etc, there are homestays offered by families that stay in Ladakh all year round. They would also be happy to offer local meals at an additional cost.

As enchanting as it may appear, winters in Ladakh can be extremely capricious. So, it's essential to be well prepared to ensure that the holiday unfolds without any health issues. Some basics to remember are:

-  Ensure you are physically fit and mentally prepared to handle the trip
-  Pack well and carry enough woollens and winter clothing, plan to dress in layers to ensure you are always adequately prepared to face any weather changes
-  Seek medical advice to start on a course of medication like Diamox ahead of landing in Ladakh
-  After landing in Leh, take 1-2 days to acclimatise to the altitude and do not start exploring immediately. It helps to consume garlic soup and keep sniffing on a small potli of camphor
-  Always dress in layers, use adequate amount of sun screen and wear good quality sun glasses to protect yourself from the glare of the snow
-  Carry any personal medication with you when you travel to Ladakh
-  If feeling woolly headed, seek help immediately and if things get serious, climb down to a lower altitude soon as you can
-  Keep plans open ended to ensure you can adjust to any changes caused on account of weather conditions

As our journey through Ladakh in winter comes to an end, reflect on the unique experiences from the solitude of snow-laden landscapes. Ladakh in winter is a testament to life's resilience against the harshest climates, leaving you with enduring memories of this winter wonderland in the Himalayas.

India offices:

Mumbai, Delhi, Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Chennai, Cochin, Hyderabad, Indore, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Kolkata, Pune, Trivandrum, Udaipur, Vadodara.

Marketing offices: Canada, Russia, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom

Mumbai: 401, AJ House Marol Maroshi Road, Andheri East, Mumbai 400 059, India

Tel: +91-22-66802500 | **Fax:** +91-22-67102876

Gurgaon: 5th Floor, Building No 91, Sector – 44, Gurgaon 122003, India **Tel:** +91-124-4565454 | **Fax:** +91-124-2570337

Website: www.tamarindglobal.com | **Online:** www.tamarindglobalonline.com | info@tamarindglobal.com

