**TOURIST ATTRACTION AND POTENTIAL: A CASE STUDY OF LADAKH**

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***Abstract.***

*Ladakh, the crossroad between Central Asia and South Asia when the silk route was used, connects Punjab (India) with Yarkand (China). In 1974, the tourism industry opened for tourists in Ladakh. The record number of tourists in the first year was 527, which increased to a record-breaking 178970 in 2012, and in 2019 it went up to 279937. The primary factor was Bollywood cinema, Adventure Tourism, Culture, Religion and Research.*

*There is also a dark side; if we analyse the dark side, tourism often tempts locals away from their natural state and toward materiality. By bringing money into tribal areas, tourism is seen to foster greed and materialism. The whole generation of locals who were newly encountered with the tourism industry was involved in drugs, sexual activities, local drivers, tourist guides and small businesses.*

***Keywords:*** *Tourism Industry, Ladakh, Human Resource*

**Introduction**

Tourism is the fastest-growing industry today and plays a vital role in a country's economic and social development. Many countries in the globalised era started tourism to develop their economy, reduce poverty, keep contributing toward world peace and improve the cultural and human development index. Tourism activities existed long before it was identified. From the early historical period, human has never been fascinated by travelling. They have had the curiosity or urge to explore and discover new places. For centuries humans as merchants travelled extensively to trade with other parts or different tribes. The first to travel for pleasure was probably the Romans. The security communication system in the Roman Empire was good compared to other empires. In the Middle East, travelling was undertaken for religious purposes, in the form of pilgrimage to holy places for worship. The concept of holiday was introduced in the 18th century in Europe, and the great age of travelling was raised in the same period (Bhatia, A.K, 1983).

After that period, the increasing significance of tourism as an economic development engine or social transformation and undertaking other nations/tribes increased. The desire to develop domestic tourism has also risen in other parts of the world. It was parallel with the development of the industrial society in the 19th century the proper tourism concept took birth. The working class was overburdened by the long working hours and poor living conditions in the industrialization era. On a large scale, people increasingly searched for relief, comfort, pleasure, and development. Relaxation from stress and day work routine. (ibid)

The era of mass tourism started in post-world-war-II, the transformation of travel in tourism began, and the mass movement of humans started.

In most European countries, the rapid rise of tourism development was witnessed in the post-world war-II due to the increased standard of living and improved communication and infrastructure. Only after that was tourism seen as an economic development engine by other nations. Hodgrason & Adele (1987) observed that over the year, the tourism industry has filled all the vacuums of the world, and no part of the world remains isolated. It has also redrawn the contours of the planet, opening new dimensions for trade and economic development. It has also strengthened the socioeconomic relation between nations which control and experience the vast possession of economic empires. The new era to travel and tourism has shown a new lifestyle for humans, and many distant corners of the world and is not accepted as holiday centres.

There are different views on the history of Ladakh due to the unavailability of academic or minimal unauthentic literature. With the reflection of unknown sources, it may have been said that the region was ruled by many *Cho* (tribal rulers) and also explains that there were different tribal settlements. The *Cho’s* were the chief commandant of many small tribal settlements or villages, Tashi Rabgyas (2002). The Mon’s (a class of tribe) was the first settlers in the high reached mountains, which were assumed to be migrated from *Karja* (Kullu, Himachal Pradesh). On the lower sides of Suru Valley and Zanskar, the dards were the known settlers, who migrated from Afghanistan or other parts of Central Asia, Tashi Rabgyas (1984), and they are still found in the villages of Garkon, Dha, Hanu and Aryan Valley.

Ladakh was an independent kingdom from the early 11th century. *Lhachen Palgyi-Gon* is known to be the first king of Ladakh, who was the eldest son of *Skylidey Nima-Gon*, the king of Western Tibet. During the rule of King *Senge Namgyal* in the 17th century, his kingdom was at its peak, extending Up to Western Tibet beyond the sites of Mansarovar lake. The last king of the kingdom was Tsewang Namgyal, who was administratively a weak king and could not hold his kingdom. In 1834, the king of Jammu, Maharaja Gulab Singh, attacked Ladakh under the leadership of Wazir *Zorawar Singh*. In 1840, Ladakh came under the kingdom of the Dogra regime, and since then, Ladakh has been part of Jammu and Kashmir. On 5th August 2019 Government of India separated Ladakh from Jammu and Kashmir and created a union territory directly controlled by the Central Government. Administratively Ladakh consists of two districts, Kargil and Leh.

**Defining Tourism:**

Seth P.N. (1978) defines tourism as “the sum of the phenomena and relationship arising from the travel and stay of non-residents in so far as they do not lead to permanent residence and are not connected to any earning activity”. The International Association of Scientific experts on tourism adopted this definition of tourism. This definition clearly distinguishes tourism from migration. It’s mentioned that the movement should not be followed by permanent residence or stay, which happens in migration. The temporary movement of people outside their normal residential or place of work to the destination and undertaking an activity during their stay creates the cartel to their needs (Mathieson A. and Wall G., 1972).

Smith J. (1984) defines tourism as providing facilities like accommodations to the people visiting a locality travelling for pleasure; providing tourists with these facilities is not one aspect of tourism.

The word ‘Tourism’ is derived from ‘tour’, which comes from the Latin word *‘tornos’,* which means a tool for explaining a circle or turning the wheel. This means the end of a pin in the compass stretched, which is used to describe a circle. It’s from this word *‘tornos’* that the notion of a ‘round tour’ of the world has come into being. The term was first read in 1643 A.D, which terms as going around or moving from one place to another, a journey to many new places to embrace the region or a country and moving back to the original destination. (Seth P.N., 1978) in Hebrew, the term ‘tour’ is derived from *‘Torah’*, which means learning, searching or studying. An attempt to learn, search or study, to discover something new about a place he/she visits. (ibid)

**Attraction and Potential**

Ladakh was the crossroad to Central Asia when the silk route was functioning. The movement of people to Ladakh was for trade and commerce purposes. In the summer, the capital city used to become a huge market for traders for the exchange of goods with goods. However, the whole economic and political system changed after India’s independence and partition from Pakistan in 1947. Before this historical juncture, many travellers visited Ladakh and contributed to Literature and History. Such as Fa-Hien, Hyder Douglat, Ou-Kong, Moorcraft Mirza Jesuit Missionaries, Cunningham, Nicholas Notovitch and many more. Many religious missionaries came to Ladakh from east and Central Asia (Norberg H. Helena 1992).

There was a disruption in the movement of people to this region after India’s independence. It changed in 1974 when 527 tourists arrived in Ladakh, of which 500 were foreigners and 27 were Indians (Hand-book, Tourism Department, Leh 2018-19). The record arrival of foreign tourists in Ladakh has been increasing since then. There are four registering points for Tourism while entering Ladakh. Those who come by road are registered at Drass (Kargil) checkpoint, as tourists mainly use this national highway (NH1D). Upshi (Leh) keeps records of on-road tourists coming from the Manali side. There is also a window of the tourism department at Kushok Bakula Rinpoche airport at Leh, which makes the entry of travellers coming (national/international) via direct flight. Padum (Zanskar) is the entry point for those tourists who go trekking, mountaineering, hiking, and rafting and those who enter Ladakh from the Himachal side. There is also a tourist entry/exit checkpoint at Shikletchey (Kargil). The complete data of all the entries/exits from all the points are assembled by the director of the tourism department, Kargil. Afterwards, the department issues the weekly, monthly, and yearly tourist arrivals statistics. However, the figures represent tourists’ arrival in Ladakh at different times.

**Table 1:**

*Tourist Arrival Table in Ladakh*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Year | No. of Foreign Tourist | | | No. of Home Tourist | | | | Total |
|  | Kargil | Leh | Total | Kargil | | Leh | Total |  |
| 1974 | N/A | 500 | 500 | N/A | | 27 | 27 | 527 |
| 1975 | N/A | 650 | 650 | N/A | | 128 | 128 | 778 |
| 1976 | 4325 | 2527 | 1798 | N/A | | 253 | 253 | 2051 |
| 1977 | 5866 | 1261 | 7127 | N/A | | 266 | 266 | 7393 |
| 1978 | 8345 | 403 | 8748 | N/A | | 873 | 873 | 9621 |
| 1979 | 10165 | 952 | 9213 | N/A | | 621 | 621 | 9834 |
| 1980 | 10889 | 2215 | 13104 | N/A | | 1013 | 1013 | 14117 |
| 1981 | 10992 | 3008 | 14000 | N/A | | N/A | N. A | 14000 |
| 1982 | 11162 | 1624 | 12786 | N/A | | N/A | N. A | 12786 |
| 1983 | 10385 | 2448 | 12833 | N/A | | N/A | N. A | 12833 |
| 1984 | 8522 | 3263 | 11785 | N/A | | N/A | N. A | 11785 |
| 1985 | 10301 | 1944 | 12245 | N/A | | 6666 | 6666 | 18911 |
| 1986 | 11412 | 1416 | 12828 | 1855 | | 1828 | 3683 | 16511 |
| 1987 | 10008 | 3660 | 13668 | 2165 | | 1949 | 4114 | 17782 |
| 1988 | 11916 | 4340 | 16256 | 5495 | | 3113 | 8608 | 24864 |
| 1989 | 11876 | 4203 | 16079 | 5625 | | 1044 | 6669 | 22748 |
| 1990 | 924 | 5418 | 6342 | 210 | | 186 | 396 | 6738 |
| 1991 | 1962 | 6052 | 8014 | 430 | | 611 | 1041 | 9055 |
| 1992 | 3148 | 10432 | 13580 | 430 | | 2008 | 2438 | 16018 |
| 1993 | 3326 | 9075 | 12401 | 220 | | 1780 | 2000 | 14401 |
| 1994 | 4792 | 9577 | 14369 | 780 | | 1300 | 2080 | 16449 |
| 1995 | 1962 | 10429 | 12391 | 381 | | 5213 | 5594 | 17985 |
| 1996 | 2255 | 10781 | 13036 | 740 | | 2797 | 3537 | 16573 |
| 1997 | 3111 | 9699 | 12810 | 1020 | | 2971 | 3991 | 16801 |
| 1998 | 2636 | 12593 | 15229 | 2230 | | 4537 | 6767 | 21996 |
| 1999 | 2636 | 7598 | 10234 | 2230 | | 120 | 2110 | 12344 |
| 2000 | 190 | 11638 | 11828 | 132 | | 6095 | 6227 | 18055 |
| 2001 | 1510 | 13929 | 15439 | 1077 | | 3183 | 4260 | 19699 |
| 2002 | 440 | 4680 | 5120 | 740 | | 2219 | 2959 | 8079 |
| 2003 | 2044 | 13318 | 15362 | 2200 | | 10831 | 13031 | 28393 |
| 2004 | 3271 | 18337 | 21608 | 3770 | | 9713 | 13483 | 35091 |
| 2005 | 4289 | 20247 | 24536 | 8258 | | 5186 | 13444 | 37980 |
| 2006 | 3460 | 22654 | 26114 | 9767 | | 7940 | 17707 | 43821 |
| 2007 | 3240 | 24938 | 28178 | 7889 | | 18279 | 26168 | 54346 |
| 2008 | 3648 | 31663 | 35311 | 13543 | | 25480 | 39023 | 74334 |
| 2009 | 3179 | 27391 | 30570 | 16968 | | 31549 | 48517 | 79087 |
| 2010 | 2984 | 19131 | 22115 | 26772 | | 28913 | 55685 | 77800 |
| 2011 | 2692 | 33970 | 36662 | 54392 | | 88437 | 142829 | 179491 |
| 2012 | 3155 | 35355 | 38510 | 57603 | | 82857 | 140460 | 178970 |
| 2013 | 1634 | 29509 | 31143 | 46614 | | 59945 | 106559 | 137702 |
| 2014 | 2204 | 57101 | 59305 | 47174 | | 74822 | 121996 | 181301 |
| 2015 | 2393 | 27221 | 29614 | 59790 | | 57097 | 116887 | 146501 |
| 2016 | 1760 | 36245 | 38005 | 62168 | | 135525 | 197693 | 235698 |
| 2017 | 4612 | 41981 | 46593 | 97312 | | 133350 | 230662 | 277255 |
| 2018 | N/A | N/A | 49477 | N/A | N/A | | 277889 | 327366 |
| 2019 | N/A | N/A | 38652 | N/A | N/A | | 241285 | 279937 |
| Total | 209621 | 595376 | 886168 | 539980 | 820725 | | 1879639 | 2765807 |

Ladakh has proved to be one of the most important destinations with great potential for different types of tourism, such as adventure, religious, and pleasure activities. The mysticism and charm of the land fascinate most tourists. Word-of-mouth marketing also multiplies the constant increase in the arrival of tourists (Negi J. M. 1990, Nawang T. Shakspo 1993).

The arrival rate of tourists got affected directly due to some social disturbances in the country from 1984-1990. In this period, the imposition of emergency and Kashmir’s political instability impacted the arrival of tourists. The table above reflects the decrease in the rate of tourism by 43.88% in 1999. Most of the regions of Ladakh, which share borders with Pakistan, got affected due to the war. After this, the arrival of foreign tourists further decreased by 14.69% in 2002 due to the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Centre. Since then, the influx of international tourists has reduced, but at the same time, domestic tourist arrival has increased. After the release of the movie 3 Idiots in 2009, there was a sudden increase in domestic tourists. Later, due to a mass flash flood in Ladakh in 2010, many domestic and international bodies advised not to travel to Ladakh.

The reflection in the Bollywood movies is that in 2011 tourist arrival increased by 126.95% if 2009 is taken as the base year. If we saw in 2009, only (79087) tourists arrived, but in 2011, Ladakh saw a boom of 179491. It also attracted marketing agencies for the promotion of advertisements and more movies. The region (Pangong Tso) where the film was shot became a hotspot for tourists.

In 2009, 241285 domestic and 38652 international tourists visited Ladakh. The growth rate of tourist arrival increased after 2011 because of more movies and advertising shootings in Ladakh. Infrastructure development is taking place on a larger scale due to the boom of tourists. Today, Ladakh is positioned to cater to many tourists with growing hotels, guest houses and many other physical infrastructures. The decadal growth (2009-2019) of tourists in Ladakh is 253.96%.

**Table 2**

*Country Wise Tourist Arrival in Ladakh*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| S.No. | Nationality | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
| 1 | Canadian | 409 | 585 | 785 | 586 | 1120 | 564 | 826 | 883 | 846 |
| 2 | American | 1654 | 2074 | 1909 | 2770 | 4798 | 1994 | 2240 | 3070 | 2820 |
| 3 | French | 2974 | 3715 | 3677 | 4913 | 8110 | 3842 | 4210 | 4825 | 5067 |
| 4 | German | 1380 | 2150 | 1872 | 2950 | 4429 | 2185 | 2103 | 2810 | 2891 |
| 5 | Swiss | 770 | 852 | 867 | 1340 | 2860 | 1165 | 886 | 1115 | 942 |
| 6 | Australian | 398 | 565 | 818 | 963 | 1886 | 948 | 1108 | 1261 | 1317 |
| 7 | British | 1272 | 2099 | 2605 | 2639 | 4301 | 2419 | 2532 | 2351 | 2784 |
| 8 | Italian | 720 | 1341 | 1980 | 1599 | 3240 | 1245 | 2018 | 2235 | 2025 |
| 9 | Others | 12538 | 23281 | 23997 | 14123 | 28561 | 15252 | 22082 | 28043 | 30785 |
| 10 | Indian | 55685 | 142829 | 140460 | 107412 | 121996 | 116887 | 197693 | 230662 | 277889 |
|  | Total | 77800 | 179491 | 180993 | 139295 | 181301 | 146501 | 235698 | 277255 | 327366 |

Historically, Western Europe, dominated the international tourism industry, receiving and generating revenues (William. S., 1998). Following this global trend, Ladakh was also overlooked by western European tourists. The table above shows the region-wise tourist arrival in Ladakh during 2010-2018. It shows that European tourists dominated the whole decade tourism industry, followed by North America and Asia. European tourists always contributed more than 81% of total international tourist arrival in Ladakh. South America and African countries contribute marginally (less than 2%) of the share of international tourists, and the countries in Oceania (mainly Australia) contributed 0.50% to 1% of the percentage of international tourists. If one can see the important tourists contributing nation to Ladakh are French, British, American, Canadian, Swiss, Australian and Italy. The contribution of domestic tourists to Ladakh has always been more than 75% of the total tourist arrival, and it is growing very fast.

Ladakh has been considered the moon land where the sky and earth meet, and it is believed to be the world's roof (Hassnain F. M, Sumi T.D. and Oki M., 1977). Due to this unique landscape and moonlike surface, nearly 18% of the tourists come to Ladakh (Sood Vibha, 1990). Most of the tourists are attracted by the unique topography of Ladakh, which is not found elsewhere except the Trans Himalayan belt and central Tibetan plateau. The barren land is spread across Ladakh. The naked Himalayan and Zanskar range makes the region more unique. The exposed rock surfaces, Rocky Mountains, and sandy and dry soil give it another uniqueness. The rocks and bounders are scattered all over the region. Geologically the whole region is like a laboratory with layers of rocks and sand. Geographically, the mountaineers, rafters, boulders, and trekkers conquer these majestic mountains and wild rivers, Georges. The elevated regions with great diversities please all kinds of tourists.

Similarly, the unique and pure culture has proved to be a source of constant knowledge and fascinates foreign and local tourists of all ages and sexes. The Buddhist religion has dramatically influenced tourism in this region. Tourists mainly come to Ladakh to see its unique culture and religious practices and learn more about the culture and religion (Sood Vibha, 1990). Like material goods, knowledge, religion and culture are sold and consumed (Eppler P., 1983). The Buddhist religion practised in Ladakh is Lamaist Buddhism. It is the queer mixture of local poly demonism and Mahayana Buddhism tantrism. This makes it a unique religion. The missionaries believe that around 250 B.C. Ashoka penetrated Tibet and propagated Buddhism in the region (Khosla S., 1978).

Most of the Gompas (Buddhist praying places) are situated away from the main settlements, on hilltops, or a slope. Gompas's structure raises tier upon tier as much as eight to nine storeys with massive walls and small doors and windows. The small praying rooms are connected so that one shall not intersect with the other, and in the centre is a large praying hall. The walls are carved with images and pictures. The structure covers the whole slope of the hilltop, which gives the appearance of fortes. The Gompas, monasteries, mosques and its pure culture are the real glories of Ladakhi (Rizvi J, 1983). Buddhism continues to thrive in Ladakh long after disappearing from its birthplace. (Harjit Singh, 1977). Buddhism and Muslims are both equally honoured in Ladakh. This blending of religions in one region makes the region more fascinating to visitors. The Ladakhi music, folksongs and dances can be appreciated everywhere. Around the year, cultural and religious festivals bring life to the dry and silent land. The mixture of all these different motivating types of tourism in Ladakh can be classified into the following.

In this 21st century, where the whole world is just a search away on a mobile phone or laptop, information about any region or tourism destination can be gathered through a wide range of sources of information such as social media platforms, televisions, OTT platforms, books, magazines and travel agents. The visitors get to know about Ladakh from these sources.

As a primary survey done in the town of Leh from 300 travellers in the form of a questionnaire, the following results came:

**Table 3**

*Source of Information about the Region*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Source of Information | Respondents (%) |
| T.V Advertisement, Movies, Screen | 39% |
| Social media (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter), Websites | 27% |
| Books, Literature, Magazines, Literary festivals | 6% |
| Own Previous Experience (Travelled in the past) | 16% |
| Others (travel agents, friends) | 12% |

Source: primary Survey by the Researcher, 2018/19

Most of the traveller’s source of information is through television, advertisements, movies and web series approx (39%). This means that majority of the information is shared via these platforms. Most domestic tourists come to Ladakh after watching movies, followed by social media like Instagram, Facebook and Twitter.

A Sea survey shows that more than 31 % of travellers are students and youths easily influenced by social media. They get information from these platforms about different regions. Many tours and travel agencies also create social media pages to inform more and more about the region. Government departments also promote the region on social networking platforms through web pages and organise fest and festivals to attract more national and international tourists. Around six per cent of the tourists received information through literature such as books, magazines and literary festivals. At the same time, other remaining 12 % got information about Ladakh through their friends, relatives, travel agents and other sources. Many tourists visited multiple times, as 16% show that they had an experience and seen earlier.

The sudden boom in the tourism industry in Ladakh after 2011 shows the influence of movies and social media on the industry. Many studies were conducted worldwide (Chib Som, 1989; Harsel J. V., 1989; Lea, John, 1997; Shrestha Pushpa, 1999) on the motivation to travel more or why people wish to travel more. Mahtsoh, explains the four basic motivations to travel. He differentiated motivation into cultural, physical, interpersonal, status and prestige.

He further elaborates them:

1. Physical motivation includes travelling, mountaineering, rafting, and meditation, which are connected with one’s body or mind.
2. Cultural motivation includes the desire to involve in other cultures and to learn about other people’s religions, regions, food habits, dance, drama, art and architecture.
3. Interpersonal motivation involves human relations like meeting with friends, and relatives, person-to-person interaction and the desire to meet new people.
4. Status/prestige motivation means identifying personal needs, like posts on social media, to show prestige among society by travelling to new places and hobbies.

Motivation to Visit

Experience the culture 13%

Experience the landscape 21%

Movies, television advertisements 28%

Social media 16%

Research purpose 03%

Adventure 12%

Other (mediation, meet a friend) 17%

Source: Primary Survey by the researcher, 2018/19

It is observed from the survey that movies, television advertisements and series influenced most of the tourists who visited Ladakh. These are the primary motivating factors for tourists to visit Ladakh. Twenty-one per cent of tourists visited Ladakh to experience the moon landscape, the barren land, the mountains, valleys and lakes. Thirteen per cent visited the region to experience the unique culture of Ladakh. These tourists visited to live within the culture and to experience them within a short period of visits. Three per cent of visitors came to Ladakh for research purposes or other literary assignments.

It shows that television, movies and social media are the primary motivating factors in the tourism industry of the mountainous region of Ladakh. Other motivating factors include meditation, learning the Buddhist religion, and meeting new friends. These constitute 17% of the tourists. Therefore, the survey observes that the tourists who visited Ladakh during the year 2018-19 had travelled with different motivations.

This influence pattern of travellers also depends on the occupational structure of tourists. It is an essential socio-economic factor. It can be observed in the primary survey that most of the visitors are from the younger generation. The occupation-wise tourist arrival to Ladakh was also diversified.

Occupational Structure of the Travelers

Occupation Respondent

Business-men/women 14%

Ex-servicemen 3%

Professionals 9%

Students 31%

Technicians 7%

Others (Startups, Travelers, NGOs,

Teachers, Farmers) 36%

Source: Primary Survey by the researcher, 2018/19

The table gives the distribution of occupational structure of tourists who visited Ladakh in the year 2018-2019. The survey reflects that 31% of the visitors were students, businessmen/women, and professionals. Technicians were 7%, and ex-servicemen were 3% of the visitors. Other visitors include travellers, NGO’s and farmers contributing to 36% of the tourists visiting Ladakh.

Trekking, mountaineering, white river rafting, mountain biking, mountain cycling and gipsy riding are the main form of adventure tourism in Ladakh. The rising topography and altitude with harsh climate make adventure tourism very prospective. The major adventure tourism is trekking and mountain biking. As Ladakh is a region with many high mountains and the world’s famous peaks ranging from 5000 to 7000 meters, most of which are unnamed and unclimbed. The region lies between the ranges of Ladakh, Karakorum, Mustang and Kulung mountains which are suitable for camps and trekking (Hassnain F. M., 2012). The passes in these mountain regions are called ‘La’. Besides, there are many other glaciers which are also for adventure sports. Many tourists from other countries come to visit Ladakh to scale the mountain ranges and glaciers.

The central geography of Ladakh is covered by the Himalayan and Kailash ranges, along with Kunlun and Karakorum ranges. The whole elevated mass is an excellent interest for mountaineers. These huge mountains are cut into narrow Georges or deep valleys by the rivers flowing between them. The mean elevation of mainland Ladakh is above 12,612 feet above sea level, and the mean elevation of mountains is more than 20,000 feet above sea level (Hassnain F. M., 2012).

Area Mean Height

Drass 11,063

Leh 11,500

Nubra 12,763

Zanskar 13,154

Rupshu 15,634

The above mean height is from various habituated corners of Ladakh, meaning no part is below 8000 feet.

Some of the significant peaks and ridges of Ladakh are:

Nubra peak 25,180 (Sisar khangri)

Shayok ridge 25000

Nun peak 23,410

Kun peak 23,219 (Nun and Kun is called as NunKun peaks)

Stok peak 21,000

Tsomoriri peak 21,000

Hanle peak 20,650

Mustang range 20,000

Zanskar bridge 20,000

Trekking is considered to be the most adventure tourism in Ladakh. It is mainly done from April to October in the mountain ranges. However, the best month is from July to September. It is challenging to trek in winter due to the harsh cold and snow at the high elevated places. The hilly terrains and mountainous peaks of the region offer some of the most fascinating trekking in the world.

The most popular trek routes are: Leh-Kargil via Suru valley: This trek is one of the most extended and most challenging treks in Ladakh. Half the trek runs parallel with the Indus River, and en route to the trek, one can see beautiful small villages and homestays. The Markha valley trek also runs similarly to the Indus River, shifting between the stock Khangri and Zanskar ranges. On their way to the trek, they gets exposed to wild animals and small villages (Broks). The trek is usually 608 days, of which the highest peak is Kongmaru la (5260 m), and the Nubra valley trek runs parallel the international border of India and Pakistan. It covers the distance from Phyang to Hundar. The double-humped camels can also be found on this trek. This trek is also part of the ancient silk route, which connects India with central Asia. Its highest point is Lasermo la pass (5438 m), stretching to the Karakorum Range. The trekkers get exposed to the ice and snow even in the summers.

The Rumtse to Tso-moriri trek is a week-long trek covering the beautiful valleys and mountains of the Ladakh range. In this trek, different textures of rocks and soils can be experienced. It is one of the longest and most difficult treks, crossing six passes (La). The scenic beauty of Tso-car and Tso-memories can be experienced on this trek. Changpa nomads can be found on the way to the trek. Stok and Khangri trek is an introductory trek in Ladakh and is visible from the main town. The mountain is not so tough with the summer's high elevation (6153 m). Thus, one can experience snow throughout the trek. Some basic instructions are given at the beginning of the trek. The other trek routes are Leh-Zanskar via Suru valley and Nun-Kun trek at the Suru valley.

**The major trek routes of Ladakh**

Drass to Shargole-la 7 days

Padum to Manali

Tia-Timosgang to Likir via Hemis 3 days

Padum to Lamayuru 11 days

Markha Valley 10 days

Lamayuru to Saspol 5 days

Rafting is also one of the adventure tourism in Ladakh. The best months for white water rafting are from June to August. Because of the cold climate, the water freezes in the winter. The two most commonly rafted rivers are the Zanskar River and the Suru River, the tributary of the Indus. Some other small rivers are also rafted in the region. The water flows from the glaciers between the valleys and big boulders, making the rafting very adventurous.

The Zanskar River makes a perfect flow of down streaming, and many tourists visit this place for adventure rafting. The Suru River originated from the Nun-Kun glacier in Kargil, also the hotspot for white water rafting.

The newest form of adventure tourism in Ladakh is Bouldering, mountain biking and cycling. In 2017, 16 foreign tourists came to Suru Valley for bouldering in the year 2017, which increased to 28 in 2018, and 34 tourists came for bouldering in 2019 (Kargil Tourism booklet, Department of Tourism Kargil, 2018-19). Bouldering is becoming the new attraction for adventure tourism. Due to huge rocks and boulders lying on the barren lands, it becomes so challenging to chase and climb. The district administration of Kargil has taken steps to make it to the national level. The administration is also training and funding the youth to promote rock climbing, which has a massive future in this region. Due to the barren and mountainous terrain, the tourists feel more challenging to ride a bike and cycle between the valleys and Georges or riding parallel to the river. It’s the other kind of emerging tourist attraction.

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