

ECO-FRIENDLY GUIDEBOOK FOR LEH CITY



Introduction

At the moment, the presence of thousands of tourists in Ladakh is exerting a huge strain on the region's scarce resources. However, it needn't be so. There are many ways in which the negative impacts of tourism could be reduced, by supporting the traditional practices which have sustained Ladakhi culture over thousands of years.

This Eco-Friendly Guide seeks to:

- ✓ Encourage tourists to lend moral and financial support to those establishments in Leh where environmentally friendly practices and products can be found.
- ✓ Prompt tourists to demand more such products and services.
- ✓ Directly reduce the environmental costs of tourism.
- ✓ Foster a stringent ethic of mindful travel generally that will hopefully stay with people wherever they go henceforth (importantly, this means avoiding destructive things as much as it means giving preference to sustainable things).
- ✓ Change the perception that tourists need or want 'Western' amenities (e.g. flush toilets) and food (e.g. imported white bread).

The more tourists use the guide and communicate that they are supporting local establishments *because* of their environmental/traditional credentials (or demand them when they're not available) the more sustainable services and products will increase to meet the growing demand.

The perception gap between what locals believe tourists want, and what they actually want, is often wide indeed. Surveys have shown, for instance, that most Ladakhi hoteliers believe that their guests need water flush toilets, while a majority of foreigners said they actually preferred or could accept Ladakhi compost toilets. A majority of Ladakhis also believed tourists want a TV in their hotel room, while in fact a majority of foreign tourists said they did not need a TV.

Food is another example. Many locals assume that tourists prefer imported, packaged and refined products to the traditional, fresher whole foods. However, our research has shown that just the opposite is true.

The perception gap extends to architecture and building materials. Ladakhis believe that tourists have a preference for modern industrial products like concrete, plastic, and steel. In fact, the majority of tourists strongly prefer the charm and beauty of traditional architecture made of natural materials.

By actively selecting and requesting the local, traditional, and sustainable, tourists can change the misperceptions that are leading to unsustainable practices, offer cultural affirmation and solidarity, and significantly reduce their environmental impact on Ladakh.

Speak up! Make a difference.

The information contained herein is based primarily on verbal communications from the owners or other workers of the various establishments. In addition, the tourism sector is undergoing rapid change. Therefore, we cannot vouch for the accuracy of all information. To help make this book as accurate and up to date as possible, please inform us of any inaccuracies or new developments at infousa@isec.org.uk, infouk@isec.org.uk

For this guide to really make a difference, it is critical to show guesthouse/hotel owners the entry that led you to them.

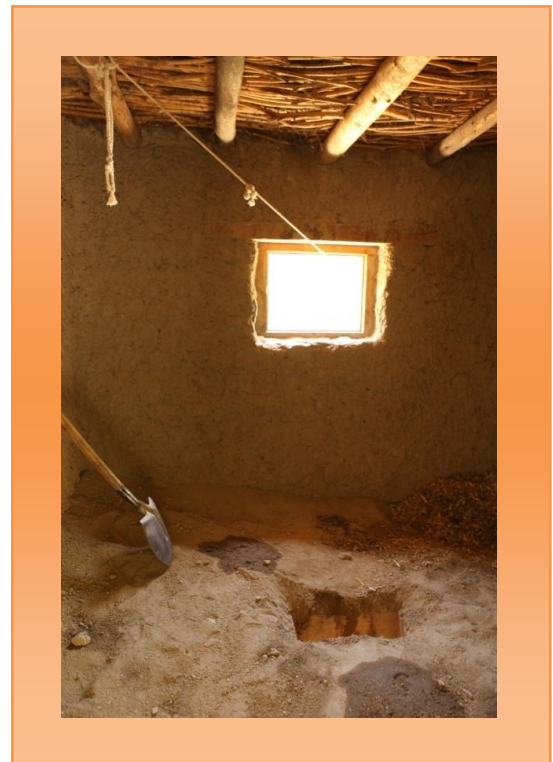
About the Book

Within this guide, you will find information about a selection of guesthouses, hotels and restaurants which are considered, as per the categories selected, more eco-friendly. The categories we have focused on for the selection of guesthouses and hotels are: Compost toilet; water refilling service; plastic avoidance; local food; traditional building; traditional stay; photovoltaic electricity available for guests and solar water heating. For your convenience, you will find as well the price range and contact information. In the case of the restaurants, only the water refilling service category has been considered.

The reasons for selecting these categories are explained below.

Compost Toilet

The Ladakhi compost toilet is the traditional system that has served the people, land, and agriculture well for centuries. Unlike Western style flush toilets that consume and pollute precious fresh water and in the process carry away and waste a valuable natural fertilizer, Ladakhi toilets are based on the concept that human 'waste' is not waste at all, since it is recycled into compost for use on agricultural fields. No fresh water is consumed or polluted in the process, and only natural materials are used to mix with the feces and urine and let sit until the process of decomposition has yielded a rich fertilizer.



Western style flush toilets have sprung up primarily for the use of tourists in Ladakh, to the point where they are now widespread in the hotels, guesthouses, and some restaurants of Leh. The best bet for finding a compost toilet is in a family run guesthouse or hotel, where it may not be advertised for use by guests, but where, if you ask, the owners will have no objections to your using. Other places openly advertise their compost toilets and encourage their use.

KEY Info when using Ladakhi compost toilet:

It is important to remember to cover your deposit with a shovel-full or two of soil or whatever other material may be provided after you are finished. This will keep unpleasant odors down and also help in the decomposition process. Feces and urine are high in nitrogen, and the way to prevent excessive smells and encourage the microorganisms that perform decomposition is to balance out the nitrogen with carbonaceous material.

- ❖ *In order to qualify for inclusion in this category, the guesthouse/hotel owners were required to have a compost toilet and put up a sign indicating that the service is available.*

Water refilling service



We have included this category because packaged drinking water is problematic for a number of reasons: taking water from distant communities; using scarce fossil fuels unnecessarily; and creating one of the biggest waste problems in Ladakh. The approximately 30-50,000 tourists in Ladakh each season are collectively generating huge quantities of plastic bottle waste. Here in Ladakh, no recycling facilities exist, and only a small amount is collected and sent out for recycling (which itself

wastes energy and causes pollution elsewhere). In Leh, the bottles are either taken and dumped outside of town, or burned in the open, producing toxic byproducts such as chlorine gas and ash containing heavy metals.

Corporate appropriation of the world's fresh-water supply represents one of the most serious contemporary threats to the local self-reliance of peoples across the planet. Commodifying and privatizing what was once the common right of local communities, companies like Coca Cola and Pepsi are depriving rural communities across India.

Moreover, plastic used to make water bottles is derived from crude oil. Worldwide, some 2.7 million tons of plastic are used to bottle water each year. Additionally, transporting all those plastic bottles full of water over the Himalayas consumes enormous amounts of fuel and pollutes the atmosphere along the way.

Finally, everyday, an average of ten trucks of garbage from Leh city alone is dumped in a nearby valley. Much of this is plastic water bottles (see the category 'Plastic Avoidance' for more).

All of this waste and destruction is totally unnecessary in Ladakh, as the glacier water locally available here is drinkable after boiling or filtering.

- ❖ *To qualify for this category, guesthouses/hotels in Leh were required to put up a sign informing guests that this service is available, as well as actually provide an easily visible refilling station.*

Plastic Avoidance

Plastic waste – such as water bottles, soft drink bottles, tetra packs, and food packaging – is piling up on the streets and paths, in the streams, and almost everywhere else all over India, including Ladakh. The effects of this waste are many: clogging drainage; damaging our health when burned; filling the stomachs of animals that eat it; and tarnishing the beauty of this unique region.

Many people feel the solution to this problem is simply to install more rubbish bins. However, the authors of this guidebook recently made a trip to the dump outside of Leh where all of the garbage from the rubbish bins is taken. We were astounded by the mountain of plastic we found there (see picture). We realized that simply improving garbage collection without reducing the creation of garbage is not the solution.

To address this problem:

Don't buy new bottles of water. Refill your existing bottle with filtered water from your own handheld filter or with iodine drops, or with boiled glacier water. In this guide you can find information about the establishments that offer refilling service.



To address this problem:

Refuse and reduce as much as you can beverage bottles, snacks, food and any other supplies packaged in plastic. Try to buy local whole-foods in bulk whenever possible instead, using cloth or other re-useable bags.

There is NO safe or environmentally benign solution for 'managing' plastic waste.

In addition to the plastic water bottle problem mentioned before, there are many other kinds of plastic waste, mostly food packaging.

- ❖ *To qualify for this category, guesthouses/hotels in Leh were required not to sell any type of plastic such as bottles or packaged food.*

Local Food

The erosion of the world's diversity of cuisines due to increasing concentration of corporate control of the food system is now affecting Ladakh to a high degree. For instance, in place of roasted barley (*yos*), apricot nuts (*tsigu*), and walnuts (*starga*), many people are now snacking on chips made from ingredients coming from distant industrial, chemical-intensive farms.

On the other hand, especially in Leh, restaurants and hotels mainly offer continental cuisine (Italian, German...), Indian, Chinese or the closest to Ladakhi,

Tibetan cuisine, but hardly any of them offer on their menu Ladakhi dishes. Therefore, many tourists may leave Ladakh not knowing what Ladakhi food actually is.

Support local food:

Ask in your guest house or hotel for some of the local dishes mentioned below. Try herbal teas or local juices instead of sugary chemical soft drinks packaged in plastic or aluminum.

The benefits of eating local and seasonal foods are numerous. Some benefits include: improved health due to an avoidance of chemically contaminated and highly processed food; a dramatic reduction in energy and fossil fuel consumption and thus reduced pollution and greenhouse gas emissions otherwise created when subsidized food is shipped far from the farm to the consumer; and a strengthening of the local economy, ecology and community .

- ❖ *To qualify in this category, guesthouses/hotels in Leh had to offer not only dishes made with local ingredients, but local recipes. Having a kitchen garden was also considered under this category, giving importance to family-grown vegetables.*

Here is a list of various and delicious Ladakhi dishes to ask for:

- ✓ Khambir: Ladakhi round bread made from local whole wheat
- ✓ Paba: An edible dough of a mixture of roasted flours of barley, wheat, buckwheat, Ladakhi black beans and peas.
- ✓ Tang-Tur: Buttermilk with wild local vegetables



- ✓ Namthuk: Soup made with *ngampe* (roasted barley flour), salt, black pepper and local butter.
- ✓ Mok Mok: Steamed dumplings stuffed with local vegetables.
- ✓ Chu Tagi: Hearty stew made with vegetables and bow-tie shaped wheat noodles.
- ✓ Thenthuk: Hearty stew made with vegetables and wheat noodles.
- ✓ Skyu: Hearty stew made with vegetables and cut-shaped wheat noodles.
- ✓ Thi-mok: Steamed local wheat dumplings served with sautéed vegetables.

*Please note that the above dishes are described in a vegetarian version. Meat can be added to most of the recipes.

Beverages and sweets:

- ✓ Butter Tea: Ladakhi tea with butter and salt.
- ✓ Apricot Juice: Made with local apricots (*chuli*).
- ✓ Sea-buckthorn Juice: made with local sea-buckthorn (*tsesta lulu*) berries.
- ✓ Phating: Whole dried apricots (*chuli*) soaked in hot water and sugar.

Source: Women's Alliance Local Food Café

Traditional Building

The manufacture of industrial building materials like cement, plastic pipes and paints, iron and tin is extremely energy intensive and polluting, whereas the traditional building materials of Ladakh – mud, wood and stone – are low-energy, non-polluting, and in harmony with the landscape because they are *of* the landscape.

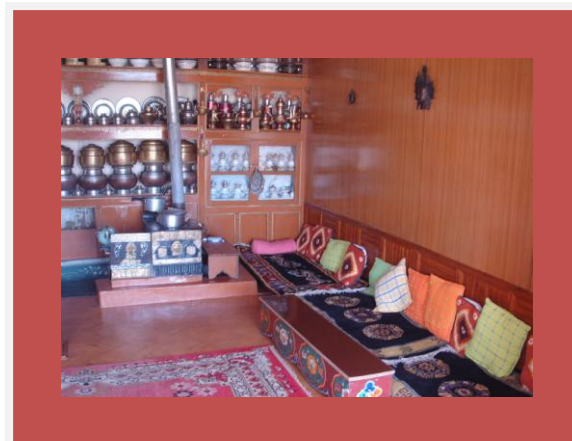
We have included this category to emphasize the importance of the traditional architecture and building materials for conserving the environment both within Ladakh as well as outside, where industrial materials are manufactured. Most buildings in Leh today retain the traditional architectural style, but utilize a combination of traditional and industrial materials.



- ❖ *Guesthouses/hotels that qualified for inclusion in this category had to have the traditional architectural style along with a mixture of the traditional building materials. Because we could not see the building process, we had to rely on the word of the proprietors. Therefore we hope you will understand that the different levels of 'traditional' are not absolutely precise.*

Traditional Stay

Directly linked to the importance of the traditional architectural style to preserve the environment as well as the culture, is the lifestyle that Ladakhis have within their houses. An excellent way to participate in and enjoy the Ladakhi culture is to be able to share their customs when eating in the kitchen or in a Ladakhi-style living room.



- ❖ *Guesthouses/hotels that qualified for inclusion in this category had to have a traditional living room available for guests or share their own kitchen or dining room with guests.*

Photovoltaic Electricity Available for Guests



Photovoltaic solar panels generate electricity directly from sunlight. Although manufacturing the panels is energy intensive, afterwards they create pollution-free energy for many years. With over 300 days of intense full sun per year, Ladakh is ideally suited to this type of renewable electricity. Many families in Ladakh have at least one panel to power a small lantern in case of power outages.

- ❖ *However, to qualify for inclusion in this category, the requirement was that the solar panel-generated electricity be available for guests as well.*

Solar Water Heating

Guesthouses and hotels in Leh have a variety of water heating systems. A common practice today is for Ladakhis to use wood stoves to heat water, but the pollution and amount of wood needed make this system unsustainable. The most effective, cheap and clean system found as a substitute is the passive solar heater. Blessed with abundant and strong sunshine, Ladakh is ideally suited to the application of such simple passive



technologies. As the sun's rays strike a glass panel or tube, the water inside heats up and expands, moving upward into an insulated storage tank. These systems can be so effective that one can often take a piping hot shower in the morning from water that was solar heated the day before. Although like photovoltaic panels the initial investment can be quite high, we hope with this guide to promote the increasing availability of lower-cost, locally-made models.

- ❖ *To qualify for inclusion in this category, the guesthouse/hotel had to have a passive solar water heater installed which provides hot water for guests.*

Price Range

Within this category you can find three types of symbols to indicate the level of prices for rooms in guesthouses and hotels. Note that the prices given refer to high season (July and August) and normally in double stay basis. Some of the establishments may have two different symbols as their price options are wide.

\$ = Rs 100 – Rs 250

\$\$ = Rs 250 – Rs 800

\$\$\$ = Above Rs 800

Contact Information

E-mail address and/or telephone number is provided in the charts as additional information. You can find the location of the guesthouses/hotels in the map marked by areas as names of streets are rare in Leh and addresses are given with the area.

LIST OF ECO-FRIENDLY GUESTHOUSES AND HOTELS IN LEH CITY

No. on Map	GUEST HOUSES/HOTELS Name	Ladakhi Compost Toilet	Water Refilling Service	Plastic Avoidance	Local Food	Traditional Building	Traditional Stay	Photovoltaic Electricity Available for Guests	Solar Water Heating	Price Range
9	Chandan GH	√	√	√	√	√	√	√		\$
5	Dorje GH	√	√	√	√	Mostly	√	√		\$\$
4	Glacier View GH	√	√	√	Breakfast	Mostly	√		√	\$\$
10	Greenland GH	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	\$ - \$\$
20	Green Villa GH	√		√	√	√	√	√		\$\$
22	Katpapa GH	√		√	√	Mostly	√			\$\$
11	Lhari GH	√	√	√	√	2 Buildings (1 yes - 1 not)	√		√	\$ - \$\$
18	Lakrook Garden GH	√		√	√	√	√		√	\$\$
14	Lamo GH	√		√	√	√	√			\$
17	Magsoom GH	√	√		√	Some	√			\$\$
21	Norbulinga GH	√	√	√	√	Mostly	√			\$ - \$\$
6	Norzin Holiday Home	√	√	√	Breakfast	Mostly	√			\$\$
13	Nurboo GH	√	√	√		Mostly	√	√		\$
12	Oriental Hotel	√	√		Some / Buffet	2 Buildings (1 yes - 1 Some)	√	√	√	\$\$ - \$\$\$
2	Padma GH	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	\$\$
19	Rahela GH	√	√		√	√	√			\$
8	Raku GH	√		√	√	Mostly	√	√		\$\$
1	Semnet GH	√	√	√	√	Mostly	√			\$ - \$\$
15	Ser-Thi Travellers Home	√	√		Breakfast	Mostly	√		√	\$\$
16	Skit Tsal GH	√	√	√	√	Mostly		√		\$
3	Ti-Sei GH	√	√		√	2 Buildings (1 yes - 1 Some)	√	√		\$ - \$\$
7	Zal GH	√	√	√	Breakfast	Mostly	√			\$\$

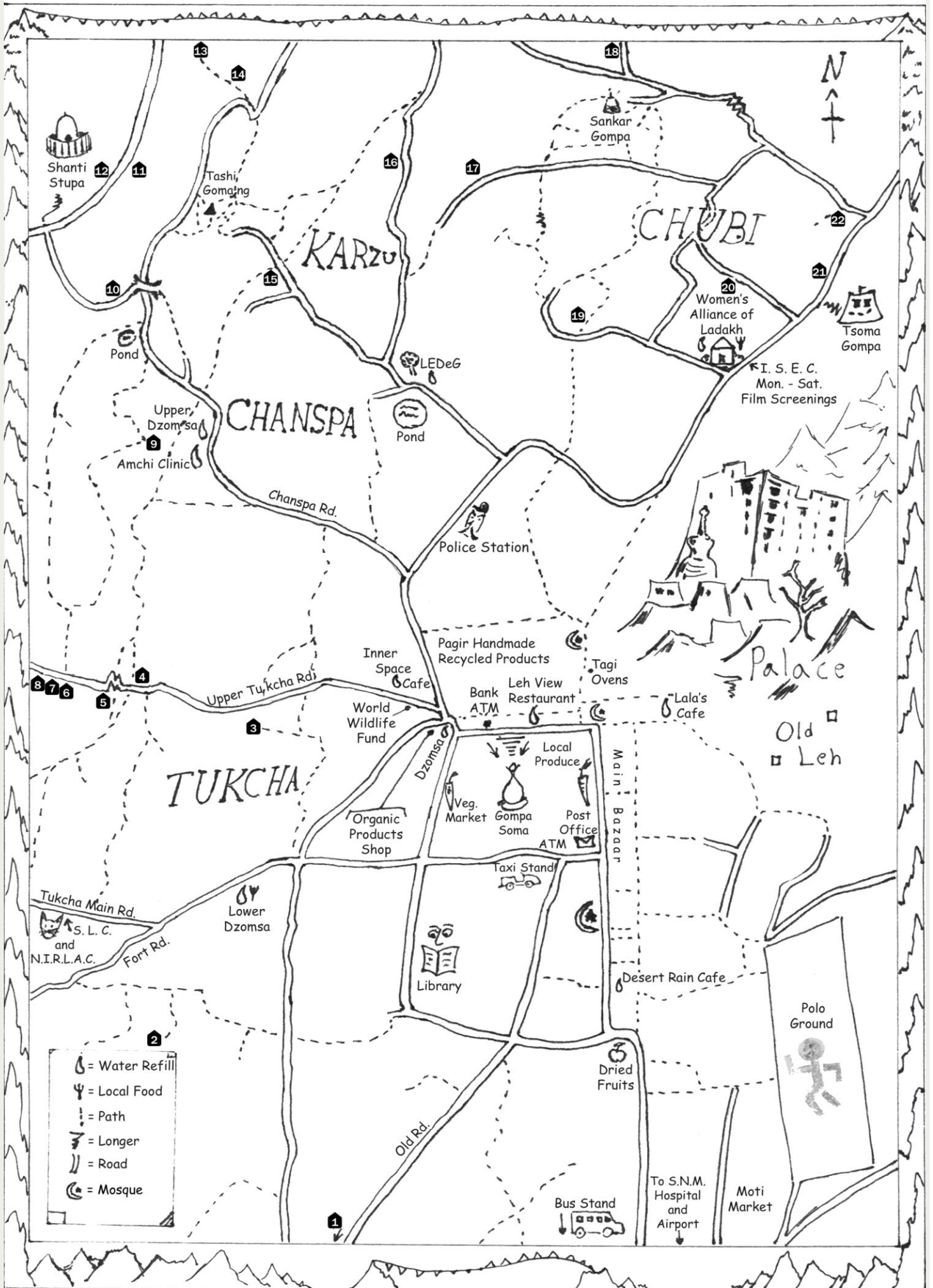
CONTACT INFORMATION:

No. on Map	GUEST HOUSES/HOTELS Name	Contact Details
9	Chandan GH	Tel: +91-1982-253169
5	Dorje GH	Web: www.dorjehouse.co.nr E-mail: dorje_guesthouse@hotmail.com Tel: +91-1982-253460
4	Glacier View GH	E-mail: tshnamgyal@yahoo.com Tel: +91-1982-253503 / +91-9419342757
10	Greenland GH	Tel: +91-1982-253156
20	Green Villa GH	E-mail: locomotiveyangdol@hotmail.com Tel: +91-1982-251252 / +91-9419843613
22	Katpapa GH	Tel: +91-1982-253050 / +91-9419179540
11	Lhari GH	Tel: +91-1982-250745 / +91-9906970038
18	Lakrook Garden GH	E-mail: agyal123@yahoo.com Tel: +91-1982-252987 / +91-9419177870
14	Lamo GH	Tel: +91-1982-255622
17	Magsoom GH	Tel: +91-1982-252852 / +91-9419346523
21	Norbulinga GH	E-mail: achuk1@rediffmail.com Tel: +91-1982-252941 / +91-9419218090
6	Norzin Holiday Home	Tel: +91-1982-252022
13	Nurboo GH	Tel: +91-9419340947
12	Oriental Hotel	Web: www.oriental-ladak.com E-mail: ladakoriental@yahoo.co.in Tel: +91-1982-253153 / +91-9419178774
2	Padma GH	Web: www.padmamadakh.net Email: padmaladkah@gmail.com Tel: +91-1982-252630 / +91-9419178171
19	Rahela GH	Tel: +91-1982-250969 / +91-9906997300
8	Raku GH	Tel: +91-1982-254897
1	Semnet GH	Tel: +91-1982-250494 / +91-9419177404
15	Ser-Thi Travellers Home	E-mail: serthi_ghleh@yahoo.co.in Tel: +91-1982-253476
16	Skit Tsal GH	Tel: +91-1982-251242 / +91-9419218064
3	Ti-Sei GH	E-mail: sonamdechen@rediffmail.com Tel: +91-1982-252404 / +91-9419243891 / +91-9419176734
7	Zal GH	Tel: +91-1982-253491 / +91-9622976679

OTHER ESTABLISHMENTS LOCATED ON THE MAP:

Establishments offering water refilling and/or some local food
Desert Rain Cafe
Dzomsa Stores
Inner Space Cafe
Lala's Cafe
Leh View Restaurant
Women's Alliance of Ladakh

Map of Leh City



LIST OF SOME ECO-FRIENDLY ORGANIZATIONS IN LADAKH

⊙ LACS (Ladakhi Animal Care Society)

Since 2006, LACS and Vets Beyond Borders are running the Leh Street Dog Sterilization (animal birth control) Program with the collaboration of the local authorities.

Phone: +91 9419344439 and +91 9906985271

⊙ LAS (Ladakh Amchi Sabha)

Registered in 1978, LAS is an association of Amchis and local Astrologers. Since then, more than 150 Amchis and Astrologers have joined the association making it the largest Amchi association in Ladakh.

Address: Sorig Kunfaling Amchi Complex, P.O. Box 171, Leh 194101, Ladakh

⊙ LEDEG (Ladakh Ecological Development Group)

Created in 1983 LEDeG is one of the elder Ladakhi NGO, recognized for its work on renewable energy, environment, organic agriculture, education, food processing and handicrafts. Based in Leh, and two sub offices, that work as proximity NGOs are situated in Kargil and Padum.

Address: Ladakh Ecological Dev. Group, Karzoo, Leh 194101, Ladakh

Phone: +91 1982 252284

E-mail: ledegleh@gmail.com

Website: www.ledeg.org

⊙ LEHO (Ladakh Environment and Health Organization)

LEHO has been working since 1991 on ecological agriculture, passive solar houses construction, handicraft (pashmina), health and environment.

Address: Passive Solar, Building, Skara Juk, Leh 194101, Ladakh

Phone: +91 1982 252944

E-mail: sultanaleho@yahoo.co.in , tashileho@yahoo.com

⊙ NIRLAC (Namgyal Institute for Research on Ladakhi Art and Culture)

One of the primary aims of NIRLAC is the conservation of Ladakh's rich cultural heritage through various programmes to be undertaken by the Institute.

Address: Shangara House, Tukcha Main Road, Leh 194101, Ladakh

Phone: +91 1982 254976

E-mail: nirlac@gmail.com

⊙ PAGIR (People's Action Group for Inclusions and Rights)

Founded in 2008, a group of disabled Ladakhis doing grassroots recycling by collecting discards and transforming them into new products.

Address: PAGIR, Skara Spon, Leh 194101, Ladakh

Phone: +91 9419340800 and +91 9419219312

E-mail: inclusionandrights@gmail.com

© SECMOL (Student's Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh)

SECMOL was founded in 1988 with the aim to promote educational reform in Ladakh. The students in the campus in Phey manage the hostel democratically under the guidance of hostel managers, teachers, and students. SECMOL campus is a clear example of sustainable architecture.

Address: c/o SECMOL, P.O. Box 4, Leh 194101, Ladakh

Phone: +91 1982 226120 / 226116

E-mail: saicampus@gmail.com

Website: www.secmol.org

© SLC (Snow Leopard Conservancy)

Since its foundation in 2000 the Snow Leopard Conservancy India Trust (SLC-IT) has been dedicated to promoting community based stewardship of the endangered snow leopard, its prey and habitat to the benefit of local people and the environment in the trans-Himalayan regions of Ladakh and Zaskar.

Address: P.O. Box 67, Shangara House, Tukcha Main Road, Leh 194101, Ladakh

Phone: +91 1982 250953

E-mail: slcindia@sancharnet.in

Website: www.snowleopardindia.org

© WAL (Women's Alliance of Ladakh)

Since 1994 the Women's Alliance of Ladakh (WAL) is working in Ladakh with the twin goals of raising the status of rural women and strengthening local culture and agriculture. Since then, WAL's membership has swelled to over 6,000 women from almost 100 different villages.

Address: Sankar Road, Chubi, Leh 194101, Ladakh

Phone: +91 1982 250293

E-mail: womenallianceleh@yahoo.co.in

© WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature)

Since 1999 World Wide Fund for Nature is working in Ladakh on the Conservation of High Altitude Wetlands Project. The project is expected to develop a special focus on biodiversity conservation in some high altitude lakes. Recently the organization released a documentary on climate change called "living with change, voices of Ladakh".

Address: Hemis Complex, Zangsti Road, Leh 194101, Ladakh

Phone: +91 1982 251896

E-mail: pankajchandan@wwfindia.net , pchandan@gmail.com

Website: www.wwfindia.org

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