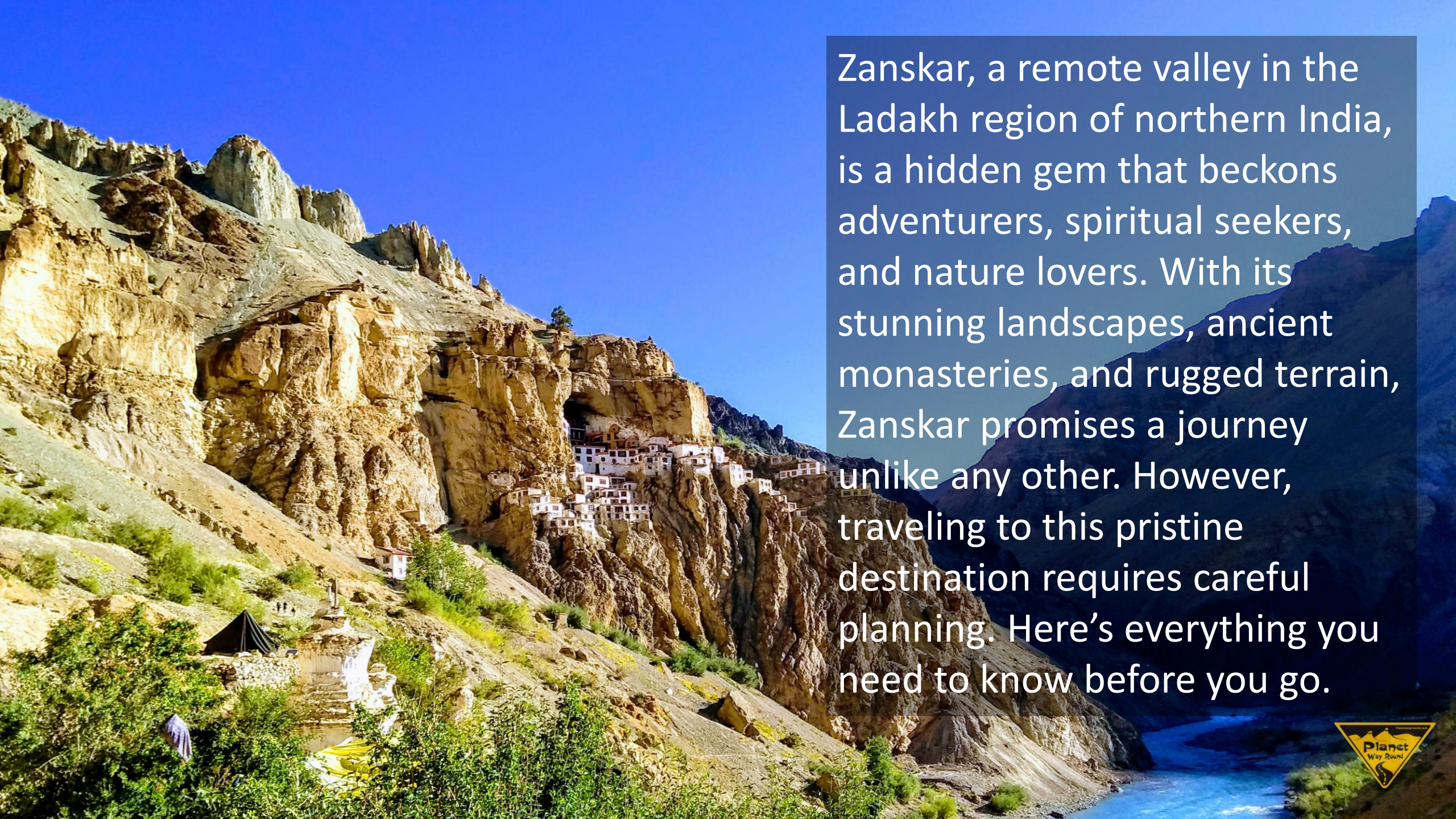


# Zanskar

The Hidden Gem of the Himalayas



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Zaskar, a remote valley in the Ladakh region of northern India, is a hidden gem that beckons adventurers, spiritual seekers, and nature lovers. With its stunning landscapes, ancient monasteries, and rugged terrain, Zaskar promises a journey unlike any other. However, traveling to this pristine destination requires careful planning. Here's everything you need to know before you go.



## Best Time to Visit:

- **Summer (June to October ):** The roads to Zaskar are open, offering lush valleys, clear skies, and accessible trekking routes.
- **Winter (January to March ):** Ideal for the famous **Chadar Trek**, where you walk on the frozen Zaskar River. Winter travel is for the adventurous only, as conditions are extreme.



## Reaching Zanskar & Permits

### •By Road:

- The primary route is from **Kargil to Padum** (Zanskar's administrative centre), a 230 km journey that takes 8-10 hours on rugged roads.
- A newer route via **Shingo La Pass** connects Zanskar with Himachal Pradesh, reducing travel time significantly.

•**By Air:** The nearest airport is **Leh**, followed by a long drive to Zanskar.

### Permits:

No special permits are required for Zanskar, but foreign nationals should register at checkpoints while traveling through Ladakh.

## Weather and Altitude

### 1. Extreme Climate:

Temperatures in winter can drop to  $-30^{\circ}\text{C}$  or lower. Summers are pleasant, with daytime temperatures ranging between  $15^{\circ}\text{C}$  and  $20^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Nights remain cold year-round.

### 2. Altitude Considerations:

Zaskar's elevation (3,500-7,000 meters) makes it important to **acclimatize** properly. Spend at least a day or two in Leh or Kargil to adjust to the altitude and avoid Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS).



## Accommodation and Facilities

### 1. Stay Options:

Zaskar offers basic guesthouses, homestays, and campsites in villages like Padum, Zangla, and Purne. Options are limited, so book early during the tourist season.

### 2. Connectivity:

Mobile networks are limited. Only BSNL/MTNL has partial coverage. Carry a satellite phone for emergencies if traveling in remote areas.

### 3. Cash and ATMs:

ATMs are sparse, with the nearest facilities in Kargil. Carry sufficient cash.

## Top Places to Visit in Zaskar Valley

### 1. Padum

• **Highlights:** The administrative center of Zaskar Valley and a base for exploring the region.

• **Attractions:**

- **Stongdey Monastery:** The second-largest monastery in Zaskar, offering panoramic views.
- **Pibiting Monastery:** A small but picturesque, monastery near Padum.

### 2. Phugtal Monastery

• **Description:** One of the most iconic monasteries in the Himalayas, built into a cliffside cave.

• **Significance:** A spiritual haven, accessible only by a trek through scenic terrain.

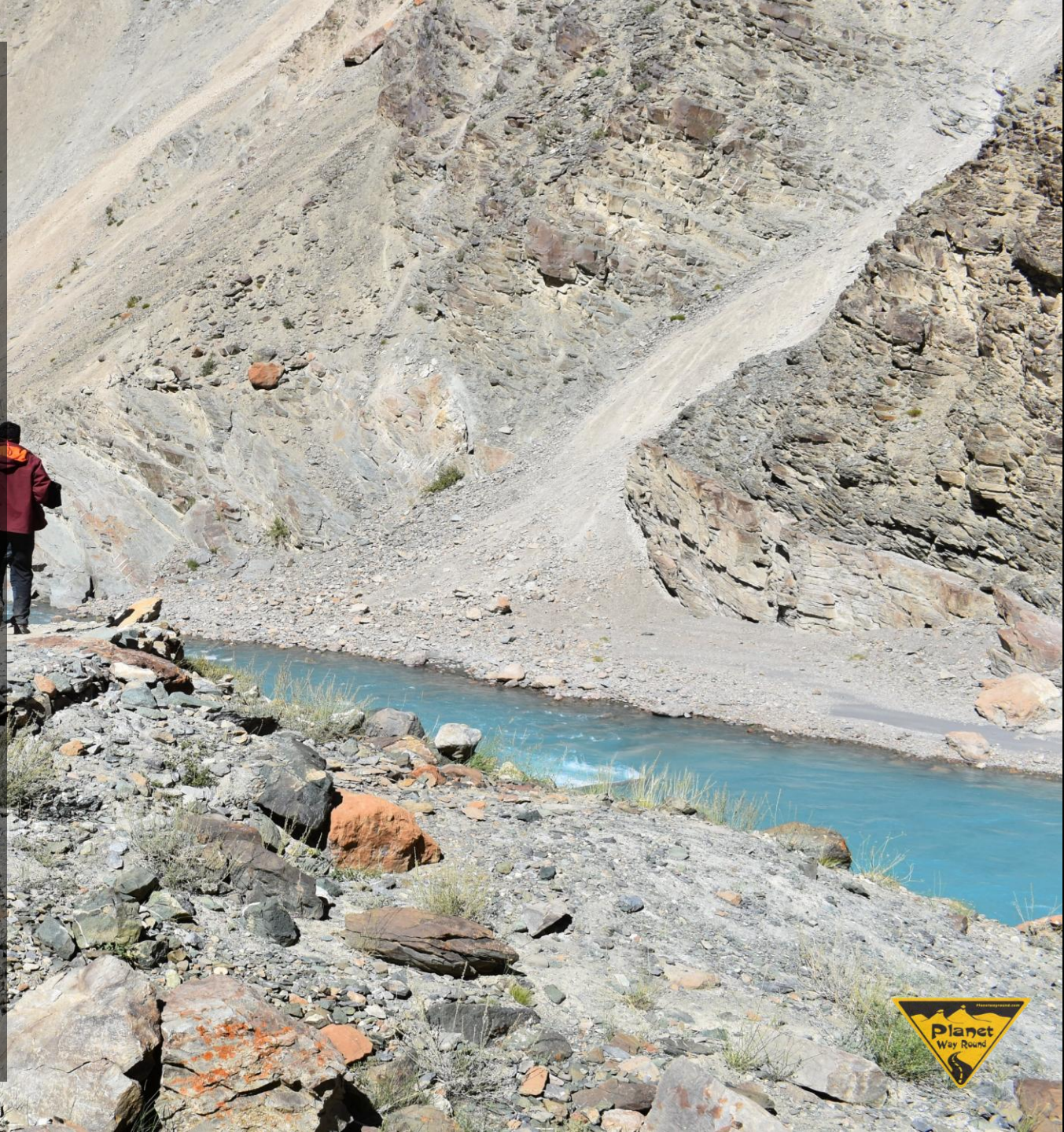
• **Activities:** Visit the monastery to experience its tranquil ambiance and unique architecture.

### 3. Zangla

• **Highlights:** A serene village and an important cultural hub.

• **Attractions:**

- **Zangla Palace:** A historic fort-palace with stunning views of the valley.
- **Stupa-lined trails:** Perfect for peaceful walks.



## Top Places to Visit in Zaskar Valley

### 4. Karsha Monastery

- **Description:** The largest monastery in Zaskar, perched on a hill overlooking the valley.
- **Significance:** Home to many monks and an impressive collection of murals and artifacts.
- **Activities:** Attend morning prayers or explore the monastery's ancient relics.

### 5. Lingshed Monastery

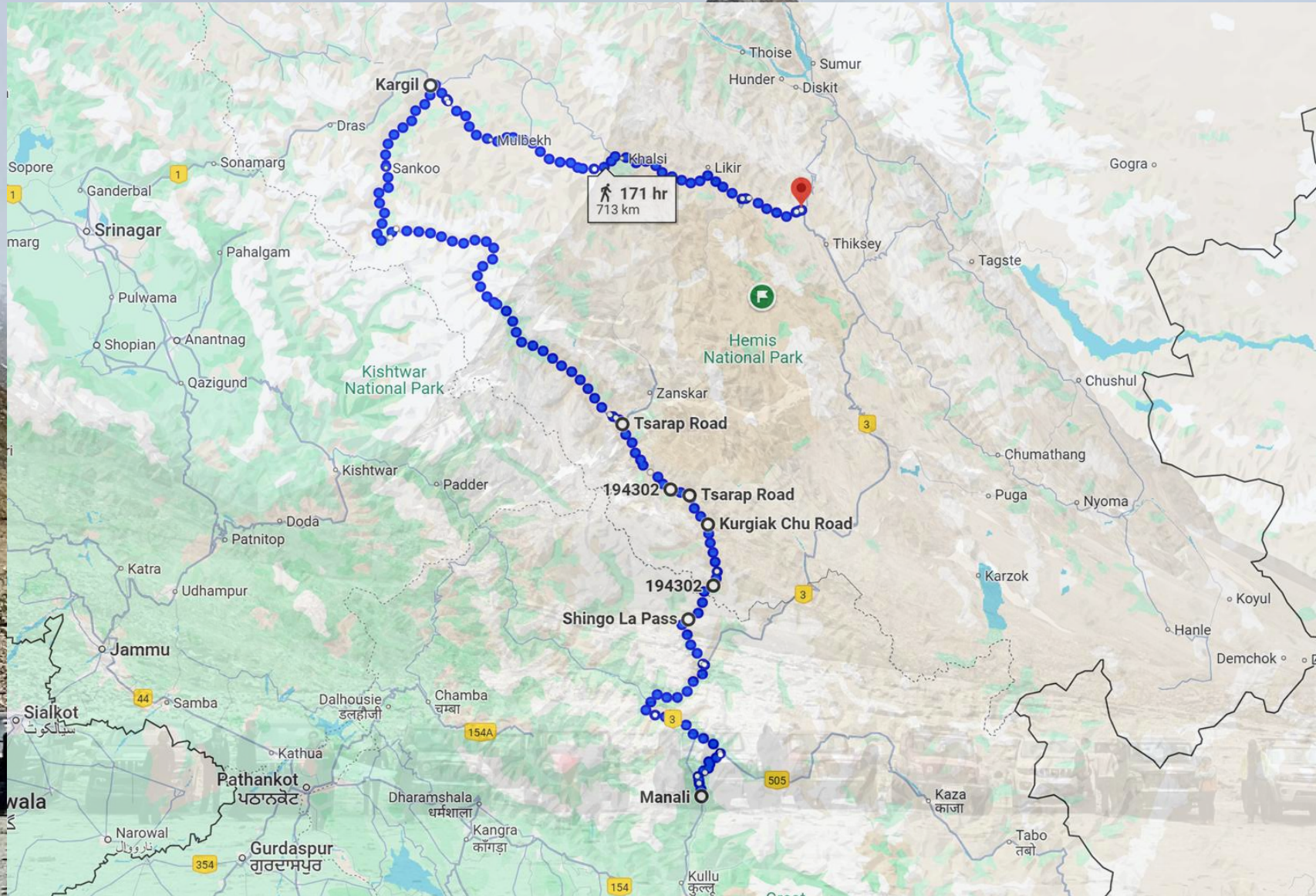
- **Description:** A remote and lesser-visited monastery, offering solitude and spectacular vistas.
- **Activities:** Trek to Lingshed for a glimpse of traditional monastic life.

### 6. Rangdum Monastery

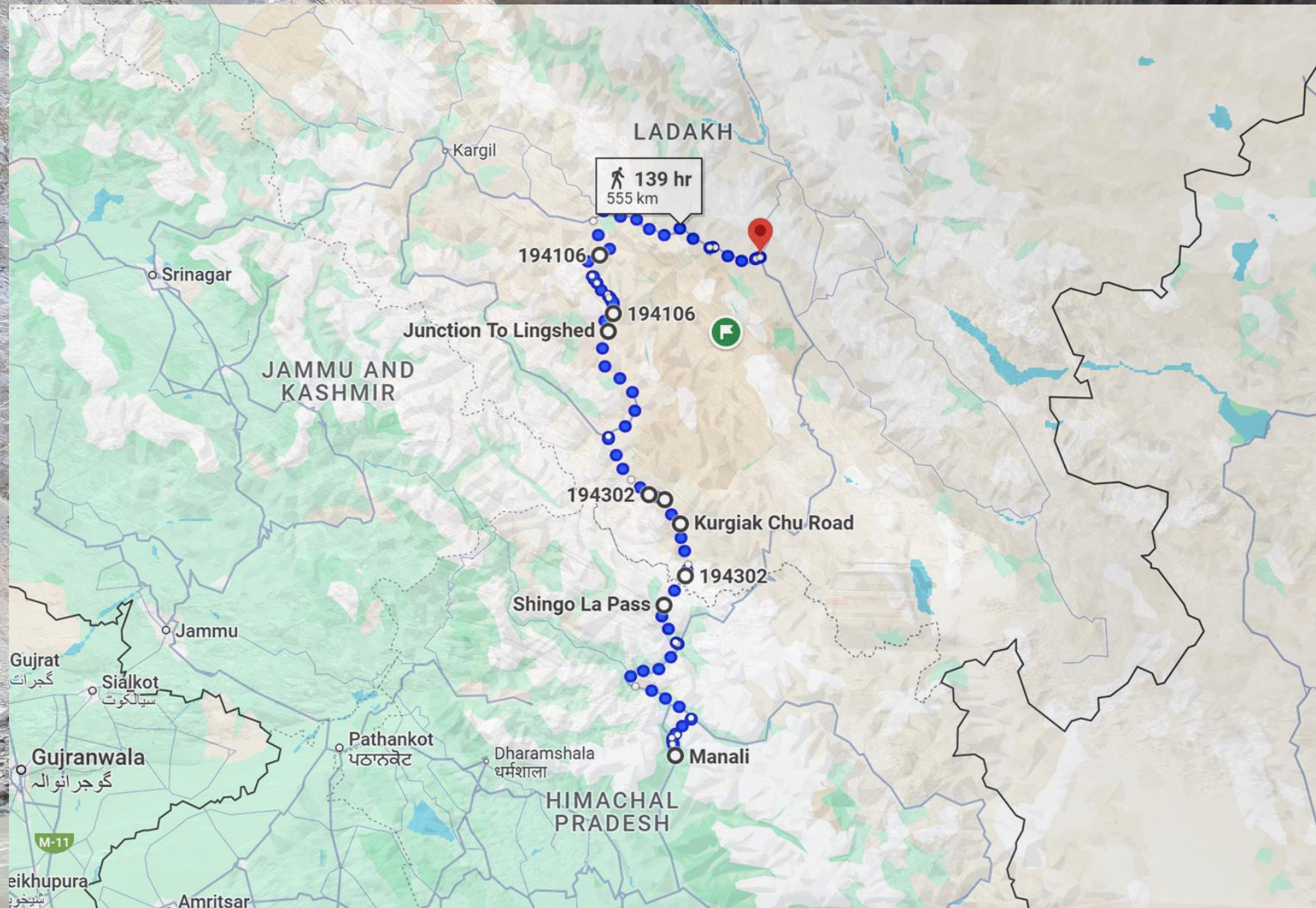
- **Location:** Between Kargil and Padum.
- **Highlights:**
  - A scenic monastery surrounded by rugged peaks.
  - Perfect for photography enthusiasts.



# Route From Manali – Padum – Leh



# Route From Manali – Padum – Singe La – Leh



## What to Pack

### 1. Clothing:

Layered clothing is essential. Include thermals, fleece, a down jacket, and waterproof gear, especially if traveling in winter.

**2. Footwear:** Sturdy, waterproof hiking boots for treks and snow-resistant shoes for winter visits.

### 3. Essentials:

1. Sunscreen, sunglasses, and a wide-brimmed hat (to protect against UV rays).
2. Lip balm and moisturizers (to combat dry air).
3. Reusable water bottles with purification tablets or a filter.

**4. Medical Kit:** Include AMS medication, basic first aid, and personal prescriptions.



## Top Experiences

### 1. Monastery Visits:

Explore **Phugtal Monastery**, carved into a cliff, and the sprawling **Karsha Monastery**.

**2. Chadar Trek:** A once-in-a-lifetime experience on the frozen Zaskar River in winter.

### 3. Trekking Routes:

Popular summer treks include the **Lamayuru to Padum Trek** and routes across **Shingo La Pass**.

### 4. Cultural Immersion:

Witness traditional festivals, interact with locals, and experience the serene Buddhist way of life.

## Health and Safety Tips

**1. Stay Hydrated:** Drink plenty of water to combat the effects of high altitude.

**2. Pace Yourself:** Avoid strenuous activity on your first day.

**3. Local Etiquette:** Respect Buddhist customs, avoid touching religious objects, and always seek permission before photographing locals.

**4. Eco-Conscious Travel:** Zanskar is a fragile ecosystem. Avoid plastic waste, stick to designated trails, and support local businesses.



## Final Thoughts

Zanskar offers a rare blend of adventure, spirituality, and unspoiled natural beauty. While it demands patience and preparation, the rewards are unparalleled. By planning thoughtfully and traveling responsibly, you'll not only enjoy the journey but also preserve Zanskar's unique charm for future generations.

Pack your sense of wonder and get ready for an unforgettable adventure in the heart of the Himalayas!



# Zanskar





**Zanskar**



# WHAT TO EXPECT

## FOOD



You may not get your kind of food at remote locations and logistics play a big part in this. Getting fresh food hundred's of kms up in the Himalayas is a herculean task and costs a lot, besides cooking at these altitudes mostly above 10000 Feet consumes a lot of fuel which is very precious at such places. Please accept your hosts hospitality and believe us they have gone out of their way to make the best food with their limited resources. Always try local food it is organic and more fresh than organic vegetables that you consume back at home.

## VEHICLE BREAK DOWN



Your vehicle can have a break down - a flat tyre or engine troubles can happen to even a new car just out of the show room and such problems are more common in the mountains where the sharp rocks can cut your vehicles tyres or your vehicle may

overheat while on a sharp climb up the mountain, your driver will have to stop for some time in such cases. We recommend you make the best use of such time and explore the surroundings you wont get many chances to see such beautiful places.

## COLD



It can get cold any time in the mountains, in the higher mountains if you don't like the weather just wait a few hours it may change and it can get freezingly cold even in the peak of summers. So always be ready for cold weather and carry you woollens with you.

## STAY



Accommodation in offbeat places is at best basic, neat & clean and hygienic. Do not expect urban luxuries like lifts 24x7 hotel water, central heating / cooling, lavish buffets for Breakfast & Dinner etc. The best hotels are comparable to 3\* hotels from cities, but their service levels are not at par. However what these places lack in amenities and services they more than make it up with their authentic local experience, closeness to nature, locally sourced organic food, their sustainable way of work and heart warming hospitality.

## DRIVING TIME



Vehicles move at a lower speed in the hills due to narrow zig-zag roads. So always start early if you want to reach your destination on time as it may take you twice the time to cover the same distance in the mountains as compared to the plains. Ans also remember roads in the Mounatins can get blocked due to a small land slide / road widening work so always keep some extra time for such un-expected events.

## ALCOHOL DOES NOT HELP



There is a perception that alcohol helps in coping with cold, believe us it does not! Alcohol just lowers you body's ability to feel the cold and not the cold it self which may cause a false sense of felling better and actually cause more harm. remember Alcohol always dehydrates your body!!

## HOT WATER



If you want hot water for bath you will have to switch on the geyser and wait for some time ( 30 to 40 mins ) depending on how cold the places is, and don't expect more then one bucket of hot water at a time. After you have used a bucket you will have to wait again for water to heat up. Cursing the hotels staff will not help!!! At some places they may not have a geyser so just be patient

and ask the staff for hot water they will get it but it will take some time again.

## WATER



Drink lots of water - you can easily get dehydrated in the cold weather as we don't feel the urge to drink water due to the pleasant / cold weather. Consume twice the water that you normally do,



# OFFBEAT HOLIDAYS WHAT TO EXPECT

We all love watching people enjoying their holidays in offbeat destinations in far corners of the world high in the mountains, in tropical jungles or in the little known places tucked far away from our urban centres. Ladakh & Spiti are two such remote high altitude and offbeat places in the Himalayas.

As beautiful as these places are they are also remote and far away from major cities and have very basis facilities as compared to the places which we call our home. So if you are planning to go on a offbeat holiday be ready for some basic things.

