

Beat the heat this summer with a coolcation in India

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# City spotlight: Leh



## SOAK IN THE COOL VIBES & SPIRIT OF ADVENTURE

The beautiful town of Leh is full of surprises, where every turn reveals something breathtaking and otherworldly. It offers a laid-back atmosphere that permeates through its cozy cafes, bustling bazaars, and quiet streets. At the same time, Leh offers many thrilling activities, paragliding over the panoramic views, and the Indus river is perfect for rafting. Leh is also the gateway to the cultural richness of Ladakh, with deep-rooted ancient traditions and colourful festivals. The Leh and Stok Palaces display Ladakh's royal past. Standing on rocky cliffs overlooking the valley, Thiksey Monastery with its 12-storey structure, has an exquisite collection of Tibetan art and scriptures. Hemis Monastery nearby is known for its beauty and traditions, and for the Hemis Festival.

□ Changthang and Hemis wildlife sanctuaries must be visited to see Ladakh's wilderness. Trekking enthusiasts can undertake challenging trails across valleys and mountains, walking along rivers, traversing several high mountain passes and villages along the way. □ Explore the mystical Nubra Valley, home to the world's highest motorable pass, Khardung La, and surreal sand dunes, where you can ride the unique double-humped Bactrian camels. Beyond Leh's immediate reaches, another world unfolds, from the spellbinding Pangong Lake to the cultural richness of Alchi, home to some of the oldest and most well-preserved Buddhist murals in the region. All this is further enriched by the warm hospitality of the Ladakhi people and their traditional cuisine. □



## TOP 5 EXPERIENCES IN LEH



### Circumambulate the Shanti Stupa, Leh's sanctuary for world peace

Going up to the top of the hill to the Vishwa Shanti Stupa is an experience in itself, with the breathtaking expanse of Leh and its rugged landscape below you. The intricately carved statues of Buddha, and its pagoda-style architecture with engraved Buddhist teachings, serves as a symbol of world peace. It was built by Japanese monks in collaboration with the Ladakhi community, and funded by Nichidatsu Fujii, a Japanese Buddhist leader, who donated his entire Jawaharlal Nehru Award money for this project. It was inaugurated in November 1997 by the Dalai Lama.

□

### Experience the beauty and richness of Buddhism at the Thiksey Monastery

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Thiksey Gomba (Monastery), one of the oldest in Ladakh, founded in the 15th Century, commands breathtaking views of the surrounding Indus Valley. Its architecture includes a 12-storey complex that houses numerous stupas, statues, scriptures, and art, reflecting the artistic heritage of Tibetan Buddhism, centre for learning and meditation. Inside its ornate gates lies a world of spiritual resonance with monks in crimson robes performing ceremonies that have been passed down generations. Discover the secrets of this centuries-old monastery, where every corner tells a story of devotion and wisdom. □



### Witness the miracle of Gurudwara Pathar Sahib and experience the famed magnetic hill

Gurudwara Pathar Sahib is a sacred Sikh shrine, built in honour of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the founder of Sikhism. Legend has it that he rested in Leh on his return to Punjab from Sikkim, Nepal, and Tibet in 1515-18. He miraculously vanquished a demon at this very site, who tried to crush him with a huge boulder, but the boulder turned soft and took Guru Nanak's shape. In 1970, the same boulder was discovered, and the Indian Army, along with help of the local people, constructed this gurudwara to pay homage. Just a short distance away lies the Magnetic Hill, where vehicles appear to defy gravity and roll uphill, mystifying visitors.



## Discover the beauty and antiquity in the palatial marvels of Leh Palace and Stok Palace

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Also referred to as the Lhachen Palkhar, Leh Palace stands on a hill overlooking the town of Leh. Built in the 17th century by King Sengge Namgyal to resemble the Potala Palace in Lhasa, it has served as the residence of the Ladakhi monarchs for centuries, facing the Stok Kangri mountain range. With nine storeys, it is one of the tallest buildings of its time in the region, with exquisite murals, woodwork, and artifacts. A short distance away lies Stok Palace, the current residence of the Ladakhi royal family. Built in the 19th century by King Tsepal Namgyal, it has a remarkable collection of thangkas, and other royal objects.



## Unlocking inspiration with Leh's dynamic MICE scene amidst Himalayan grandeur

From small gatherings to large-scale conferences, Leh has a range of venues that are a blend of modern amenities and the region's simple charm. Host your event at venues like the Sindhu Sanskriti Kendra, offering state-of-the-art facilities. After productive sessions, build your teams with activities like trekking, exploring monasteries, or driving to the enchanting Pangong Lake. Organise events during Ladakhi festivals, sample local cuisine, and shop for exquisite handicrafts. With flights and good highways connecting Leh, and the combination of modern infrastructure, natural beauty, and a plethora of activities Leh promises great MICE events.

[Read more on Leh](#)

# India Celebrates

India comes alive with religious celebrations, fragrant flower festivals, and the much anticipated mango season in the months of May and June, offering a sensory feast like no other. Lose yourself in the spirituality, delight in the colours at flower festivals, and indulge your taste buds at the many mango festivals, a gastronomic delight of juicy sweetness of India's beloved fruit. Enjoy Indian culture and traditions during these festive months, where every sight, scent, and taste will be an experience of joy and celebration.

## TOP FESTIVALS TO EXPERIENCE IN MAY-JUNE





## Rabindranath Tagore Jayanti

Celebrate the legacy of Rabindranath Tagore, the Nobel laureate and literary icon on Rabindranath Jayanti, a homage to his vast contributions to literature, music, and art. It is a festival filled with mesmerising performances of Tagore's songs and dances, literary discussions exploring his profound philosophies, and exhibitions showing his eminent works. The day is spent honouring Tagore's indelible mark on Indian culture and global literature, and remembering his enduring spirit of creativity and humanism.

### When and where to celebrate:

08 May 2024

Celebrate in Shantiniketan, where Tagore's legacy thrives at Visva-Bharati University. Or, experience Kolkata's festivities, or Tripura's cultural programs.



## Akshay Tiritiya

Akshaya Tiritiya is believed to be the day when both the sun and the moon are at their brightest, signifying unending luck and fortune. It is believed that worshipping Goddess Lakshmi and Lord Vishnu on this day brings good fortune and prosperity.

The word Akshaya literally means infinite – something that is never over. People pray for good fortune and luck forever. Join in the spirit of abundance as you learn about buying gold ornaments, or beginning new business ventures, or relocating to a new home on this day. □

### When and where to celebrate:

10 May 2024

Celebrate Akshaya Tiritiya in Varanasi. Witness ancient rituals and enjoy traditional food and shopping delights. You can experience this festival across India, where temples, bazaars and homes celebrate this occasion.



## Ooty Flower Festival

As the summer sun warms the hillsides, the botanical gardens of Ooty come alive, with the Ooty Flower Festival. It is a riot of colours and fragrances amidst the picturesque Nilgiri Hills. With approximately 15,000 potted plants and 250 exhibitors displaying over 150 varieties of flowers, it turns into a wonderland. Wander through meticulously kept gardens with exotic orchids, delicate roses, and rare blossoms, while the air is filled with the sweet scent of jasmine and lavender. Cultural performances also add to the festive ambiance.

### When and where to celebrate:

17 – 21 May 2024

It is organised in the charming town of Ooty, in the Western Ghats of Tamil Nadu. Plan your visit to coincide with this festival and enjoy the beauty of the tea gardens and beautiful lakes.



## Ganga Dussehra

It is soul-stirring to witness the sacred spectacle of Ganga Dussehra, a celebration on the day the holy Ganges River is believed to have descended to earth. The ghats of Varanasi and Haridwar illuminate with the glow of countless diyas (lamps), symbolising the divine purity of the Ganga. Devotees take a holy dip in the river, believing it will wash away their sins. Experience the ancient rituals of the arti and singing of fervent prayers along the riverbanks. □

### When and where to celebrate:

16 June 2024

While Varanasi offers a quintessential experience, this sacred festival is celebrated



fervently across other holy towns along the Ganges, including Rishikesh, Haridwar, and Allahabad.



## The Hemis Festival

Hemis Tsechu is a Buddhist festival that celebrates the birth anniversary of Guru Padmasambhava – the founder of Nyingma, the oldest order of Tibetan Buddhism. Colourful Cham dances are performed by masked monks dressed in silk brocade, with drums, cymbals and longhorns invoking ancient tales of triumph and enlightenment. On display is the 22 ft high thangka of Guru Padmasambhava. Join the local community in their prayers and rituals, as the air is filled with the resonant chants of Buddhist mantras.

### When and where to celebrate:

16 – 17 June 2024

Plan your trip during the festival at the Hemis Monastery, located about 45 kilometers southeast of Leh, and witness the fervour of Hemis Tsechu amidst the devotees.

# Explore India in May-June

This summer, take a soul-soothing journey to the quaint small towns in the mountains of India. They come alive with the sweet fragrance of wildflowers, and retreats and homestays offer comfortable accommodation to suit every pocket. Wander through narrow streets lined with cottages, where friendly locals greet you with warm smiles and tales of ancient traditions. Throw yourself in the beauty of mountain life as you explore thick forests, gurgling streams and rivers, lush farms and green meadows amidst towering snow-capped peaks.



## Kaza - Gateway to the raw and untouched beauty of Spiti Valley

Kaza lies amidst towering mountains and barren deserts, with ancient monasteries balancing on rocky cliffs. Kaza is the gateway to the Spiti Valley, perfect for trekking, camping, and enjoying the peace and ruggedness of the Himalayas, with charming cafes, guesthouses, and markets spread across the town. Kaza is a comfortable base for your travels, with Himachali and Tibetan culinary experiences. Attractions like the Key Monastery offers an insight into Tibetan Buddhism, while nearby villages like Langza, Hikkim, and Kibber display the lifestyles of local inhabitants.



## Kalpa – A hill town hidden by its wide expanse of apple orchards

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Located on the Shimla-Kaza highway, on the banks of the Sutlej river, the town of Kalpa in Kinnaur district is surrounded by several kilometers of apple orchards, with gorgeous views of Kinner Kailash and Raldang Kailash peaks. It has a laid-back atmosphere, □ with quaint lanes, tall trees, and the scent of pine. Its traditional Himachali architecture can be seen in temples and monasteries like Narayan-Nagini Temple, Hu Ba Lan Kar Monastery, and Sapni Fort, with traditional Himachali wood carvings. Adventure lovers can enjoy the stunning Chakka trek.



## Dras – known as one of the coldest inhabited places on earth

Dras, in the Kargil district of Ladakh, is surrounded by snow-capped peaks and ruggedly beautiful landscapes. This town is famous for its strategic significance for the Battle of Kargil fought in 1999, in Dras, Tololing, Tiger Hill and Mushko. Today, visitors can pay homage at the Kargil War Memorial, an emotional reminder of the brave Indian soldiers. You can go trekking and mountaineering in the Dras and Suru valleys. Stagsboo Drass, 2 kms before Drass has stone carvings of Maitreya and Avalokiteshvare. Bhembat, 5 km beyond Drass, is where a rock sculpture is believed to be the solidified body of Bhim.



## Mechuka – One of the lesser explored valleys of the Himalayan region

### Mechuka – One of the lesser explored valleys of the Himalayan region

The main attraction of Mechuka, also known as Menchukha, in Arunachal Pradesh is the 400-year-old Samten Yongcha Monastery of the Mahayana Buddhist sect, which has ancient statues of Guru Padmasambhava, and costumes and masks used in traditional cham dances that can be seen during the Losar festival. The Siang River in Mechuka originates from Tibet's Mansarovar Lake and is ideal for river rafting, and kayaking. Experience the thrill of crossing bamboo bridges swaying above the gushing river. Terraced rice fields and small farms, reflect the agrarian lifestyle of the local Memba, Ramo, Bokar, and Libo tribes. □



## Dzuleke – Enjoy wildlife, local cuisine, and scenic adventures in Nagaland

The charming hill town of Dzuleke is known for its natural beauty and the unique wildlife it shelters, including the bison and the rare rainbow trout found in its streams. Home to around 200 families of the Angami tribe, Dzuleke offers an authentic glimpse into their village life. Organic farms along the hills are heavenly for birdwatchers and nature lovers. Befriend the locals and they may invite you to taste local delicacies, such as fresh crabs and aromatic Binni rice, and even challenge you to try Bhoot Jalokia, one of the hottest chillies in the world. Pretty trails, traditional folk music and dance, and welcoming homestays will add to your visit.



# Beyond Incredible



## INDIA'S COOL & LUXURIOUS SUMMER ESCAPES

Forget everything you thought you knew about summer in India. We're throwing out the hot stereotype and inviting you to experience cool summers in India. Imagine yourself in the the Himalayas, where crisp mountain air invigorates your senses, or wandering through the misty hills of the Western Ghats with its cool breezes! Kerala has peaceful hill towns like Munnar and Wayanad with lush tea gardens and hills, while Mizoram's cascading waterfalls are a soothing backdrop to your summer adventure. Other charming hill stations, such as Shimla, Manali, and Darjeeling, are perfect for leisurely strolls, scenic train rides, and enjoying local delicacies. Trek beyond the hill towns to discover hidden trails, camp under the stars, and shop in markets filled with local handicrafts. Innumerable small towns across India's hills and mountains promise to provide the perfect antidote to the summer heat.

Join us as we unveil the most refreshing destinations across the country where you can beat the heat and chill out in style. The Ministry of Tourism has launched a social media campaign highlighting these 'cool summer' spots, making it easier than ever to plan your summer vacation here. Whether you're trekking in the Western Ghats, or exploring the tea estates of Munnar, India offers an array of summer getaways that are nothing short of incredible. Indulge in activities like river rafting in Rishikesh, Manali, or Mechuka, paragliding in Bir-Billing, or enjoying the serene charm of beautiful resorts and meditation centres in places like Rishikesh and Auroville. Luxury hotels, modern resorts, and homestays provide all the amenities you need, ensuring comfort and world-class service. So pack your bags and get ready to discover a summer experience in India like no other. Learn more: <https://www.incredibleindia.org/content/incredible-india-v2/en/cool-summer.html>

#CoolSummersOfIndia

## ENJOY A COOL SUMMER GETAWAY & ADVENTURE IN INDIA'S LESSER KNOWN HILL TOWNS ENJOY THE COOL BREEZES & SUMMER ADVENTURES IN INDIA'S ENCHANTING HILL TOWNS



### GUREZ VALLEY KASHMIR

Waterfalls tumble down slopes with emerald grasses, snowy summits tower in the background, and wooden villages dot the landscape. Fields of potatoes and maize are fringed with wildflowers.



### AULI UTTARAKHAND

Visit Auli in summer for cool refreshing air and views of peaks like Nanda Devi. It is ideal for trekking and camping on green meadows full of wildflowers. A perfect



### Wayanad KERALA

Wayanad is a pleasant escape in summer. Located in the Western Ghats, it has lush tea plantations, misty hills, and cascading waterfalls. Trek through dense



### KURSEONG WEST BENGAL

Take a train ride on the Darjeeling Himalayan Train to Kurseong to enjoy its tea gardens, misty hills, charming cottages, winding trails, viewpoints, flowers, shops, and cafes.

setting for strolls and  
photography.

forests, or enjoy the  
beautiful lakes.

# Truly Indian

Rural tourism in India offers a unique opportunity to experience the country's rich cultural heritage and traditional lifestyles. Visitors can engage in authentic village life, participate in local festivals, and enjoy rustic homestays. Rural tourism supports sustainable development by empowering local communities and preserving age-old traditions, allowing travellers to connect with nature and simplicity. Acknowledging its potential, the government of India is prioritising rural tourism as a crucial sector for socio-economic progress.

## PARTICIPATE IN THE ECO-TOURISM EFFORTS & ENJOY ITS AUTHENTIC CHARM AND NATURAL BEAUTY



### Sarmoli

At first glance, the small village of Sarmoli in the Pithorgarh district of the Munsiyari region in Uttarakhand might seem unremarkable, but dig a little deeper and you'll discover its actual charm. Sarmoli is renowned for its proximity to the majestic Himalayan ranges, green valleys, and gushing rivers. Its unspoiled natural beauty provides an ideal setting for trekking, bird-watching, and photography. The nearby Milam Glacier is a must-visit for avid trekkers, providing a challenging yet rewarding journey through some of the most scenic landscapes in the region. The village's commitment to genuine eco-tourism ensures that visitors can enjoy these stunning surroundings sustainably, while preserving their original state for future generations.



Beyond its natural appeal, Sarmoli is a model village for eco-tourism and cultural experiences. The community, led by Malika Viridi, an avid mountaineer and social activist, launched the Himalayan Ark Homestay programme, run solely by village women to keep their traditions and culture alive. The village is known for its active community initiatives, such as the annual Sarmoli Jhapali festival, which exhibits local crafts, music, and dance. Visitors can participate in village activities like planting seeds, weaving baskets, and other local crafts, truly experiencing life like a local. This involvement supports responsible tourism and conservation efforts. Sarmoli's focus on women empowerment and community-led sustainable practices makes it a unique destination for eco-conscious travellers.



### Things to do:

#### ► Trekking and Hiking:

- a. One of the popular and easier treks to go on from Sarmoli is the Khaliya Top Trek. It lies at an altitude of 3,500 m and abounds in wild flora and fauna.



- b. The nearby Milam Glacier trek offers a challenging yet breathtaking journey through scenic landscapes, dense forests, and quaint mountain villages.
  - c. Mesar Kund or Maheswari Kund is a stunning lake about 1.5 km from Sarmoli. You can have a picnic, explore the area, and make a day out of it.
- **Birdwatching:** The village and its surrounding areas are home to a variety of bird species. Early morning bird-watching tours are a must for nature lovers.
- **Homestay Experience:** Stay in a homestay and immerse yourself in the Kumaoni culture. Enjoy pahadi cuisine, learn about local customs, and participate in daily village activities.
- **Cultural Activities:**
- a. Participate in village activities to get a taste of local life. Help plant seeds and learn to weave baskets.
  - b. Attend traditional music and dance performances. The annual Sarmoli Jhapali festival showcases local crafts, music, and dance.
  - c. The local Himal Kalasutra festival is celebrated by the villagers in the middle of May. This week-long festival attracts a lot of tourists.
  - d. There is also a 20 km long marathon at an 8000 feet altitude that everyone takes part in.
- **Eco-Tourism activities:** You can support local businesses and participate in conservation projects, which includes everything from organic farming to waste management initiatives.
- **Nature Walks and Photography:** Guided tours can help you explore the scenic spots and capture the natural beauty for both landscape and wildlife photography.
- **Yoga and Meditation:** Several homestays offer yoga and meditation sessions, providing a rejuvenating experience for body and mind.
- **Local Food Tours:** Many homestays and eateries offer Kumaoni dishes made from local ingredients. Do not miss mandua ki roti (millet bread), timur ka saag (mix of greens) and bhang ki chutney (wild hemp dip).
- **Village Tours:** Take guided tours to local farms, temples, and community centres to learn about the history, culture, and traditions of village life.
- **Shopping:** It is a delightful experience in Sasrmoli with shops and kiosks offering many local handicrafts.

# Incredible India!

## Quiz on Discover Leh

Leh, the capital of the Ladakh region, is renowned for its rugged landscapes, rich culture, and historical significance. This quiz will test your knowledge about Leh's unique attractions and culture and give you a chance to win a prize. Select the correct answer for each question and discover how much you know about this incredible destination. Good luck! Let's see how well you know the fascinating city of Leh.

**Q1.** What is the primary feature of the Leh Palace?

- a. Its extensive gardens
- b. Its waterfront location
- c. Its nine-storey structure
- d. Its modern architecture

**Q2.** Which high-altitude mountain pass is one of the highest motorable roads in the world?

- a. Rohtang Pass
- b. Khardung La Pass
- c. Nathu La Pass
- d. Jalori Pass

**Q3.** Which festival, celebrated in Leh, is known for its masked dances and colourful performances?

- a. Hemis Festival
- b. Losar Festival
- c. Spituk Gustor
- d. Dosmoche Festival

**Q4.** Which river is Leh situated near, providing opportunities for river rafting?

- a. Ganges River
- b. Indus River

c. Yamuna River

d. Sutlej River

Mail your answers to us at [incredible-india@gov.in](mailto:incredible-india@gov.in) with your Name, Age, Country for a chance to win prizes.

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