

# **4th International Conference on Multidisciplinary Research**

Osmania University Centre for International Program, Osmania University Campus, Hyderabad (India) (ICMR-2019)



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## **ISSUES OF ADVENTURE TOURISM IN LADAKH**

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### **Abstract:**

Adventure tourism is a niche tourism involving exploration or travel to remote areas, where the traveler should expect the unexpected. Adventure tourism is gaining its popularity all over the world. Ladakh basically is an adventure tourism destination having huge potential for adventure tourists. Footfall of tourists in Ladakh is increasing year after year and most of tourists visiting are adventurers. However mass and unplanned tourism has raised many issues which if remain unaddressed will certainly effect the image of the destination. This paper is an attempt to identify the issues relating to adventure tourism in Ladakh so that timely intervention by the govt. and other concerned authorities is initiated.

**Key words:-** Adventure, Trekking, Safari, Forex, Planning, Rafting, Hard Adventure, Soft Adventure.

### **INTRODUCTION:-**

Adventure tourism is a type of niche tourism involving exploration or travel to remote areas, where the traveler should expect the unexpected. Adventure tourism is rapidly growing in popularity as tourists seek unusual holidays, different from the typical beach vacation. Mountaineering expeditions, trekking, bungee jumping, rafting and rock climbing are frequently cited as examples of adventure tourism.

World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has not defined adventure tourism yet. However, global association of the traders Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) has defined the term.

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## **Definition by ATTA**

According to ATTA, adventure tourism is a trip that contains at least two of the following three elements:

1. Physical activity,
2. Natural environment, and
3. Cultural immersion

All three elements are necessary for a complete adventure trip.

This definition does not explicitly mention the organic feature of the tourism.

## **Definition by Indian Ministry of Tourism**

According to the ministry, Adventure tourism is active tourism that combines experiences, local interactions, and physical activities to explore and connect with self, nature, and communities.

This definition has all three elements mentioned in the ATTA definition and an extra element-self exploration and connecting with self.

This definition also does not explicitly mention the organic feature of the tourism:

## **Adventure tourism can be mainly broken into two types:**

Although adventure tourism means different things to many people, it is generally defined as a type of tourism that engages a person in physical, natural or cultural excursions that bring the individual outside his comfort zone, generally through an established tour company. This broad idea is broken into two major subcategories of adventure tourism: hard adventure and soft adventure. Hard adventure tourism generally involves an element of physical danger or risk, whereas soft adventure tourism simply seeks to explore areas that are not typical for travelers, such as visiting relatively undeveloped destinations.

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Activity	Type of Adventure
Archeological expeditions	Soft
Attending local festivals/fairs	Non-adventure
Backpacking	Soft
Birdwatching	Soft
Camping	Soft
Canoeing	Soft
Caving	Hard
Climbing (mountain/rock/ice)	Hard
Cruise	Non-adventure
Cultural activities	Non-adventure
Cycling	Soft
Eco-tourism	Soft
Educational programs	Non-adventure
Environmentally sustainable activities	Soft
Fishing/fly-fishing	Soft
Getting to know the locals	Non-adventure
Hell-skiling	Hard
Hiking	Soft
Horseback riding	Soft
Hunting	Soft
Kayaking/sea/whitewater	Soft
Kite surfing	Hard
Learning a new language	Non-adventure
Motorized sports	Soft
Orienteering	Soft
Paragliding	Hard
Rafting	Soft
Research expeditions	Soft
Safaris	Soft
Sand boarding	Soft
Sailing	Soft
Scuba diving	Soft
Snorkeling	Soft
Skiing/snowboarding	Soft
Stand-up paddle boarding	Soft
Surfing	Soft
Trekking	Hard
Walking tours	Non-adventure
Visiting friends/family	Non-adventure
Visiting historical sites	Non-adventure
Volunteer tourism	Soft

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For many people, Ladakh reminds a region of High Mountain, a valley where the stormy streams flow, a region with nomads with tanned skin by the harshness of climate. We think of passes, paths, which lost in the immensity of the landscape, a desert of stones and glaciers. Ladakh is more than an adventure destination because of the refuge of the religion, a region Tibetan where Buddhism was introduced 12 century before. The valleys are at an altitude of 3,500 mt., the summits are only 3,000 mt. higher. As Ladakh is desert there is little snow on them and they look like big brown hills. They are dry and dusty, with clusters of willows and desert roses along the streams, yet Ladakh is a completely magical palace, remote with delightful, gentle, ungrasping people. Finally, Ladakh could well be a last Shangri La. Only in the mid 70s was it opened to outside visitors.

## **Land :**

There are mainly four mountain ranges across Ladakh viz- Greater Himalaya, Zanskar, Ladakh and Karakoram . Ladakh also has the world's largest glaciers outside the Polar Regions, and the large and beautiful lake Pangong Tso, 150 kms long and 4 kms wide at a height of 4,000 meter. The Indus river flows through Ladakh.

## **People :**

In Ladakh region, there are four main groups viz the Mons, nomads of Aryan stock, who are usually professional entertainers, often musician; the Dards are mainly found along the Indus valley, most of the Dards were converted into Islam but some of them still remain Buddhists; Tibetan from the bulk of the population in Central and Eastern Ladakh, though they have assumed the Ladakhi identity over generations; the Balti's group who have Central Asian Saka origins are mostly fond in Kargil region.

## **Ladakh Fact :**

**Area :** 97,000 Km<sup>2</sup>.

**Population :** 2,70,126 (Approximately).

**Language :** Ladakhi, Balti, Shina, Broksat, Changskat, Tibetan, Urdu, English.

**Ethic Race :** Tibet - Mangol, Balti, Dard, Aryan.

**Altitude :** Av. 3500 meters.

**Rainfall :** 530 mm. (Average)

**Temperature :**

**Summer :** 8°C to 30°C.

**Winter :** -35°C to -5°C.

**Best Time to Visit :** June mid to September

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Ladakh, the cold desert of Jammu and Kashmir, has been awarded as the 'Best Adventure Tourism Destination' in Outlook Traveller Awards 2018 held in New Delhi.

Adventure tourism in Ladakh has gained much popularity in the recent times. Some of the most popular sports that form a part of the adventure tourism in Ladakh are as under:-

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## **Trekking:-**

Ladakh is quite famous and popular for the numerous trekking options it offers. Trekking possibilities in Ladakh include short, daylong walks to the mountain slopes, isolated villages, simple settlements, or across a ridge. You can also take long trans-mountain treks, spanning weeks. While trekking, you may come across some rare animal species like gazelles, ibex, ammon, shapo etc. Trekking in Ladakh is one of the most exciting adventure sport in Ladakh. The rugged landscape offers abundant options. There are many routes for trekkers, ranging from beginners to experienced outdoor enthusiasts. Scenic, unexplored and challenging, trekking in Ladakh is nothing less than an adventure of a lifetime. From walking on the frozen Zanskar River to passing through high altitude mountains passes and scenic spots of lush greenery, you will certainly have cherished memories that last a lifetime. An experienced guide and good camping gear are essential for a trek. The isolated villages and ancient monasteries add to the thrill.

### **The following are the best routes for trekkers:-**

- The Chadar trek on the frozen Zanskar River:-** With the plummeting of temperatures during winters, the Zanskar River turns into a sheet of snow. This is when the famous Chadar Trek is undertaken. One of the most popular treks in Ladakh, it takes you to a world of icy wonders. At times, you will also have the feeling of sliding over icy ground. Be careful though, the trek can get quite challenging at times! What the Chadar Trek will leave you with are lovely memories and an appreciation of nature.

Altitude: 12,361ft, 3,850 m

Best Season: Mid-Jan to end-Feb

Difficulty Level: Difficult

- Snow Leopard Track:-** Snow Leopard Trek is one of the best treks in Ladakh because not only does it give you plenty of adventure, but also lets you admire its fascinating wildlife. Snow Leopard Trek covers the Hemis National park which stretches to almost 600sq. km in the valleys of Markha and Rumbak. While the other treks show you the natural beauty of Ladakh, this trek gives you the chance of spotting rare and endangered species that live exclusively in the cold desert. Some of these are ibex, snow leopard, Ladakhi Urial, marmot, Tibetan Hare and antelope, besides others.

Altitude: 3,000m, 9,842ft

Best Season: January-February

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Difficulty Level: Moderate

- **Markha valley track:-** Markha Valley Trek is one of the best treks for beginners in Ladakh. It's also known as the "tea-house trek" because the trekker can expect accommodations in parachute tents at the villages along the way. It's just the right trek for you if you are new to trekking. During the course of this trek, the spectacular beauty of Ladakh greets your eyes. The highlight of this trek is the Kongmaru La Pass, an incredibly scenic place located at an altitude of almost 5,000m. Besides this, you are treated to the gorgeous views of the Ladakh and Zanskar Ranges, Kang Yatze and Stok Kangri peaks.

Altitude: 3,700m, 12,139ft

Best Season: June to September

Difficulty Level: Moderate

- **Lamayuru to Chilling track:-** The reason you should go for the Lamayuru to Chilling Trek is that it offers a little bit of everything that Ladakh is famous for. Opting for this trek lets you enjoy not only the spectacular natural beauty of Ladakh but also get a glimpse of its spiritual and cultural side through the monasteries, villages and the locals whom you meet along the way. The Lamayuru to Chilling Trek also offers you the magnificent views of the Stok and Karakoram ranges as well as the Dungdung Chan La, Prinkti La and Kongskil La Passes. The best part about this trek is that anyone can go for it without requiring any experience in trekking.

Altitude: 4,950m, 16,240ft

Best Season: the best time is from june to september.

The other treks include the following:-

- Spituk to Markha Valley Trek
- Hemis Gompa via Kongmaru La
- Henaskut to Wanla
- Lamayuru to Padum
- Tsomoriri to Kibber
- Hemis to Zangla by Junglam
- Sham Trek (Liker to Khaltse)

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- Lamayuru to Darcha trek
- Rumbtse to Tsomoriri
- Saboo to Khaltsar
- Hemis to Takh
- Spituk to Stok.
- Hemis to Tsomoriri
- Liker to Khaltse Trek
- Lamayuru to Hemis

**Best time for trekking:** the best time for trekking on this trek is from june to october.

## **Mountaineering**

The mountain climbing season in Ladakh extends from mid-May to mid-October. However, the best time for mountain climbing is from June to September, when Ladakh remains unaffected by the monsoon. Permission from the Indian Mountaineering Federation in Delhi is required before ascending a peak in Ladakh

When you are on the ‘top of the world’ how can you miss out to ascend some of the peaks that touch the very sky! Ladakh offers many mountaineering challenges. To embark on climbing any peak in Ladakh, permission is needed from the Indian Mountaineering Federation in Delhi.

Mountaineering in Ladakh is not just a sport, it is truly the ultimate challenge of fitness. Embark to ascend the mountains after you are clear of altitude motion sickness (AMS). Gear up with an experienced guide, crampons, ropes and ice axe and undertake the exhilarating adventure in Ladakh.

### **Best sites for mountaineering:**

**Stok Kangri (6121 m):** The Stok Kangri Trek is one of the most challenging treks in Ladakh. During the course of the trek, you come across various sceneries, each of which show a different picture of Ladakh’s beauty. You are also treated to spectacular views of Zanskar and Indus Valley during the course of the trek. It should be noted though, that this trek is certainly not for the faint of heart due to its incredible altitude and difficulty. Prepare yourself both physically and mentally before setting off. Once you reach the summit though, you can enjoy breathtaking views of K2, or Mt. Godwen-Austen.

Altitude: 6,000m, 19,685ft

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Best Season: Mid-July to mid-September

- Difficulty Level: Difficult-
- Nun and Kun Peak (7135 m)
- Dzo Jongo (6280 m)
- Kang Yatse (6400 m)
- Golep Kangri (5950 m)
- Kantaka (5275 m)
- Saser kanagri (I) (7415 m)
- Mentok kangri (6150 m)
- Konglacha peak (6700 m)
- Matho Kangri (5950 m)

**Best time for mountaineering:** the best time for mountaineering is from june to september.

## **White Water Rafting**

Indus and Zanskar Rivers are the main venues for river rafting in Ladakh. The main season for Rafting expeditions is from July to September. For the professionals, the best stretch is on the Indus River, between Spituk and Saspal. For basic training, you should undertake the stretch upward of Spituk up to Karu. The swift-flowing Indus and Zanskar Rivers offer excellent opportunities for white-water rafting in Ladakh. Mostly frozen in winter, the rivers' flow gains speed in summers, which is the best time for rafting expeditions. In fact July to September is the only time period for the exciting adventure sport. With rapids ranging from Grade 1 to Grade 4, the expedition on the rivers is truly exhilarating. Whether a newbie or a pro, river rafting is a must thing to do in Ladakh.

## **Some of the Best routes for white river rafting:**

- Hemis – Choglagsar
- Nimmu – Phey
- Phey – Saspal
- Upshi – Kharu route
- Saspal – Khaltsey
- Kharu – Spituk
- Phey – Nimmo route

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**Best time for white river rafting:** the best time for rafting is from july to september.

## **Motor biking**

Endowed with some of the highest roads in the world, motor biking in Ladakh is the greatest thrill! Only a true motor bike rider can dare to try the rugged terrain of Ladakh. It is not without cause that it is counted among the most exciting experience of a lifetime.

Every year when the roads open up, riders from all over the world come to explore this magnificent land on motor bike road trip. The journey is certainly not easy, as you ride on a bike 18,000 feet but is truly rewarding. The joy of riding through the highest passes of the world, breathtaking views, stops at ancient villages, monasteries and away from the civilization is amazing!

Best routes for motor biking:

- Leh – Nubra Valley – Leh – Pangong Lake – Hemis
- Leh – Pangong Lake – Hemis – Shey – Nubra Valley – Alchi / Ule – Kargil – Sonmarg – Srinagar
- Leh – Pangong Lake – Leh – Khardung La
- Manali – Jispa – Pang – Leh – Pangong Lake – Nubra Valley – Leh

**Best time for motor biking:** June to October

## **Jeep Safari**

- Ladakh's enchanting landscape calls for jeep safari. Blessed with high passes, ancient monasteries, fairytale lakes, remote villages, and spectacular scenery and more, it's a wonderland. **Jeep safaris in Ladakh** offer exciting adventure in a

convenient and affordable way of exploring in a large group. You can plan smaller trips for a day or a whole tour in an open jeep, basking in the beauty and bliss.

Best places for jeep safari:

- Pangong Lake
- Manali to Leh
- Tsomoriri Lake

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- Zanskar and Suru Valley
- Nubra Valley

**Best time for jeep safari:** the best time for jeep safari is from june to september.

## **Camping**

Imagine staying in a camp in the mountains under open skies with only stars for company; sounds amazing! You too can experience the amazing with camping in Ladakh. The favorite adventure sport in Ladakh, camping is an ideal way to get close with nature. The rugged terrain of Ladakh possess a challenge, therefore is quite an exhilarating experience.

Escape the cities, crowds and let the majestic beauty of Ladakh enamor your senses. Camping in Ladakh is a way meditation, exploring and an experience that you cherish a lifetime. Camping sites in Ladakh are found in abundance. You can go for pre-arranged camps sites by the famous Pangong Lake, Tso Moriri and the monasteries or you can pitch your tents with permission from villagers and local authorities.

Best places for camping in Ladakh:

- Pangong Tso
- Tso Moriri
- Thiksey Monastery
- Nubra Valley

**Best time for camping:** the best time for camping is from June to September.

## **Quad Biking**

Coming on to the next exciting adventure sport in Ladakh, we have Quad biking. A favorite for thrill seekers, the quad bikes also known as ATVs are a fun way to explore the beauty of Ladakh. Riding the 4X4 beast with chilly wind in your face, navigating through rugged terrain is amazing. You can try out the sport in the Nubra Valley, the home of the dunes of the cold desert. It is the exciting way to enjoy the scenic desert landscape by yourself.

Best places for quad biking:

- Nubra Valley
- Magnetic Hill

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**Best time for quad biking:** the best time for quad biking is from May to October.

## **Mountain Biking**

Mountain biking in Ladakh is perfect for some hard core adventure. If you are a biking enthusiast you will be enamored by the meandering roads, the chilly wind, the level of effort and concentration. It is a must try in the 'Land of High Passes'.

Think of passing through spectacular scenery of rugged mountains, bluish alpine lakes, monasteries with colorful flags fluttering in the wind on your cycle. You could not have asked for a better way to enjoy the scenery in such an adventure-filled sport.

Though quite a big challenge of fitness, stamina and will power, mountain biking in Ladakh is one of the most popular sports that brings visitors from all over the world.

Some of the best routes for mountain biking:

- Khardung La
- Pangong Lake
- Along the banks of Zanskar or Indus River
- Nubra Valley
- Thiksey Monastery
- Spituk Monastery

**Best time for mountain biking:** the best time for mountain biking is from May to October.

## **Cycling:-**

Cycling is also one of the popular adventure sports in Ladakh, India. A visit to the spectacular Buddhist Gompas, through the fascinating local villages, with the Himalayas forming the background, is enjoyed best with a cycle. However, one needs to be a technically perfect biker to cycle on the zigzag roads in Ladakh. The best time for cycling is from mid June to end of September. Some famous cycling routes in Ladakh are the 64 km Leh-Alchi Road, 45 km Leh-Hemis road, Jispa-Gondla, Marhi-Manali, etc.

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## **Camel Safaris**

Camel safaris in Ladakh have the specialty of Bactrian camels, having 2 humps. These safaris are one of its kind in India and are organized across the sand dunes around Hunder in Ladakh. Amid the high mountain passes, there lies a cold desert complete with sand dunes and camels. Other incredible fact about Ladakh's camels are that these Bactrian Camels have two humps and it is the only place in India where you can enjoy a camel safari on a camel that has 2 humps not one! Camel safaris across the sand dunes around Hunder in Ladakh is one of the must try adventure sports.

Best places for camel safari are Nubra Valley, Hunder Sand Dunes

## **Polo**

Polo is a very popular sport in Ladakh. It is usually played in summers at the Leh polo ground . The Ladakh Festival, held in the first half of September, includes a number of Polo tournaments. Polo is a popular sport in Ladakh. The sport is anyway high on adventure and when played in Ladakh, the thrill amplifies. Challenge yourself for a game of polo. Riding the sturdy Zanskar ponies need tactful mastery while you also need to hit the ball with mallet. There are usually 6 men in a team while the exulted cheer of crowds gives life to the game. Ladakh also dedicatedly celebrates the Polo Festival usually in the summer (July- September).

**Best places for polo:** Polo Ground, Leh City, however due to the negligence of authorities, the polo ground of Leh has been converted into parking slot now.

**Best time for polo:** the best time for polo is from May to October.

## **Archery**

Archery is a traditional sport of Ladakh. Villages and the National Archery stadium in Leh regularly serve as venues for Archery contests in Ladakh Archery is a traditional sport of Ladakh and one must not miss to try the sport. There are frequent archery contests held regularly in villages and also in the Leh City. The Nawang Dorje Stobdan Memorial Park Archery is also known the National Archery stadium in Leh. Archery contests are accompanied by festivity including drinking singing, dancing and betting on the result. Watching an archery contests is sure to offer an interesting adventure into the cultural life of the Ladakhi people.

## **Methodology used:-**

1. Questionnaire was prepared and circulated among the tourists to get the response from them.

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2. Face to face interviews with the tourists was also used.
3. Questionnaire method was also used to get feedback from the tour operators besides face to face interview with them.

## **Research and analysis:-**

Ladakh region has an immense potential for adventure tourism. The tourist who came to visit Ladakh is mainly for adventure purpose. However some tourists who are not interested in adventure tourism are intentionally or unintentionally involved in one or the other kind of adventure tourism activity also. Besides sightseeing, the tourists are very much interested in adventure tourism. During my research on adventure tourism in Ladakh, it was found that about 90% of the foreign tourists are mainly interested in the adventure activities. While rest 10% are interested in other activities. Some of them are also Buddhist pilgrimage tourists. While as in case of domestic tourists, I find that 60% of the tourists are interested in sightseeing and other leisure activities, while remaining 40% are interested in adventure activities besides some non adventure activities. These 60% tourists mainly travel with their families. During my further research on adventure tourism in Ladakh, I get the following findings:-

1. There is paucity of the modern adventure equipments in the region. To overcome this problem, the govt. should exempt duty and taxes on the import of these equipments.
2. There is also shortage of the trained guides in the region.
3. There are only 2 to 3 local registered guides who can speak 2 to 3 international languages besides English.
4. Without any proper planning, the adventure tourism has dented the ecology and environment of the area to a great extent. There should be a good regulative mechanism for these tourists.
5. In case of any eventuality, there is no robust mechanism for rescue and recovery by the state or by any other local agency. However such type of rescues is mainly dependent on the army and other paramilitary forces based there.
6. There is lack of facilities for toilets and potable water at the base camps and en route.
7. There is no proper mechanism for disposal of garbage left behind by adventure tourists, and is of a great concern as far as ecology and environment of the region is concerned.
8. The medical facilities available are also very poor.

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9. The poor internet and mobile facility is a cause of worry in the region. However Airtel has recently launched 4G mobile internet services, but that is also not up to the mark.
10. There is no availability of modern communication gadgets like satellite phones and GPS system.
11. Some of the areas in Ladakh region are restricted areas, and needs Inner Line Permits (ILP) to go to these areas, which is a very hectic process.
12. The high air fare to the region during peak season is also a cause of worry.
13. There is no tracking system for the adventure tourists. e.g some accidents took place while mountain bike riding in the region and dead bodies were recovered after 20 or 30 days due to lack of information about the incident.
14. Adventure tourism is one of the main sources of revenue and forex for the state of J&k and country respectively.
15. The weather forecast for adventure tourists is also not up to the mark as we are witnessing cloud bursts in the region.
16. The adventure tourism in some areas disturbs the wild life of the area, which results in the migration of these wild animals.
17. Main adventure activities are from June to September and the rest period is lean period.
18. There is dearth of mountaineering and trekking institutes in the region.
19. There are some adventure sports in Ladakh which are on verge of extinction and are played rarely on some occasions like Polo.
20. There should be no restrictions on night stay on some of the trekking routes.
21. Increase in validity of permit on trekking routes will boost the economy.
22. Insurance cover for such tourists will definitely boost the footfall of the tourists in the region.

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## **CONCLUSION:-**

Ladakh is mainly meant for adventure tourism. Its topography and other activities makes it paradise for adventure tourists. However the unplanned and mass tourism has effected its ecology and environment. Further the infra for adventure tourism is not fully established. For reaping the maximum benefits, proper planning, marketing and strategy is needed to make adventure tourism sustainable. Further the logistics neeeded in the adventure tourism needs to be improved and modernised.

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