

Zanskar and The Chadar – background information

Zanskar is the valley of the river Zanskar and its tributaries. Located south of the district of Ladakh and surrounded by high mountains, Zanskar is a region that remains cut off from the rest of India for large parts of the year. The only routes to Zanskar lead over high and mostly dangerous passes through the main Himalayan ranges, which remain open only during certain times of the year.

Passes leading to Zanskar include the Umasi La, the Poat La, the Kang La from the Miyar Nala near Udaipur and the Shingo La. Further to the east lies the Phirtse La from the Sarchu plains. One of the most popular routes in from Lahaul is over the Shingola Pass. It lies at an altitude of 17,200 ft on the crest of the actual Great Himalayan range. However, the Shingo La, like the other high passes, can only be crossed in late summer. To the northwest lies Kargil of Ladakh and the road leading to Kashmir.

In the winters, however, the Zanskar River is Zanskar's only access route. The ice freezes thick on the river and it becomes a highway known as **the Chadar Road**, going to Saspul in the Indus Valley.

Zanskar has always been the most inhabited area in the Ladakh- Zanskar region, with several small villages that maintain close contacts with the Kashmir and Lahaul areas. As a result, some of the recent claims of the 'discovery' of Zanskar remain wishful thinking. Zanskar has many gompas and trade routes crisscross the region -- routes that have been used since olden times.

Zanskar and Ladakh are the only regions of predominantly Tibetan culture which happened to belong politically to India.

Zanskar and Ladakh have a long proud history as independent West-Tibetan kingdoms, owing their worldly wealth to the southern branch of the Silk Road. The slow decline started after the 5th Dalai Lama aggression in 1680 and following Kashmiri involvement, when Ladakhis were forced to assume the political influence of both Tibet and India.

Due to the Indian conflicts with Pakistan and China over Kashmir and its boundaries, Ladakh and Zanskar were off-limits for foreigners until 1974. Not surprisingly, this long isolation caused that the Tibetan tradition there is well-preserved and still vibrant.

References

<http://library.thinkquest.org/10131/zanskar.html>

<http://www.zanskar.org/zanskar.html>

Zanskar and The Chadar – sources of information (student and teacher reference list)

Radio Zanskar

<http://radiozanskar.com/>

A website set up by Paul and Tanzin with news posts from their trip and posts after their trip, as well as background information on the Chadar and maps.

Project Himalaya

<http://www.project-himalaya.com/jladakhtrek-chadar-short.html>

Information on The Chadar: winter Zanskar

Trekking in India: Frozen River Trek (Chadar Trek)

<http://www.trekkinginindia.com/trekking-in-ladakh/frozen-river-trek.html>

Zanskar tourism – sources of information (student and teacher reference list)

Ladhak Tourism & India Adventure Tours

<http://www.ladakh-tourism.com/zanskar/index.html>

Zanskar Trekking

<http://www.zanskar-trekking.com/places-to-see-in-zanskar.html>

Zanskar Trekking - Places to see in Zanskar.

Hill Stations in India

<http://www.hill-stations-india.com/zanskar.html>

Tourism in Himachal Pradesh offers a unique flavour of numerous adventures and cultural diversity – information on Zanskar provided.

Holiday IQ - Zanskar Tourism - Jammu & Kashmir

<http://www.holidayiq.com/destinations/Zanskar-Overview.html>

Tourist information on Zanskar.

Must see India – Zanskar Tourism – Jammu & Kashmir

<http://www.mustseeindia.com/Zanskar>

Kashmir Tourism – Zanskar

<http://www.kashmir-tourism.net/excursions/zanskar.html>