

List of things to carry for a winter trip to Ladakh

Written by Yogesh Sarkar for BCMTouring.com

More info at <http://www.bcmtouring.com/forum/ladakh-zanskar-f24/all-you-wanted-know-about-traveling-leh-ladakh-t1211/>

Traveling to Ladakh in winter is a challenging affair, one which not only requires determination and strength to face temperatures as low as -25 Degree Celsius, but also fair amount of planning to ensure that you are not only able to survive near arctic conditions, but are also able to enjoy your trip.

Here I have compiled a list of essential things you should carry for your winter trip to Ladakh, to ensure that you are ready to face, what only a handful of travelers dare to face each year!

Clothing

Jacket: You should ideally have a down jacket or parka, which is warm enough to withstand temperature as low as -20 Degree Celsius and a similar styled lower to go with it. If you aren't able to find such a warm jacket or are unwilling to spend that much money, you can get a warm oversized jacket (make sure it is air proof) and wear a warm sweater, sweatshirt and warm inner underneath it to keep yourself warm. Carry at least couple of warm sweaters with you, so that you can add another layer if the need be or in case your sweater gets wet.

Lower: You can get your lower custom made for your requirement from any trekking equipment manufacturer eg. Carrabin Okhla (011-41611082, 9810002676, 9873780333, 9818889767) in Delhi (I got my lower made from there) or buy a good quality down feather one. Just make sure the material used to construct the lower is air and water resistant, and has enough filling to keep you reasonably warm. Below the warm lower, you should wear warm inner from the likes of Neva and a jeans or pajama, depending on how cold you feel.

Shoes: For shoes my recommendation would be for [Quechua Forclaz 500](#), which I had used for my winter trip to Ladakh and I had found them to be warm enough for winter in Ladakh and they are also perfect for walking over wet or icy surfaces. If you do not wish to spend that much money, then at the very least, get army shoes or any other leather shoes which are ankle high. Do not wear trainers or sandals to Ladakh, if you value your feet and fingers!

Gloves: Pair of warm airproof gloves is a must for a winter trip to Ladakh and you can find many quilted gloves made of leather and textile at majority of camping stores. In Delhi you can also visit Yashwant Palace for really warm gloves. Always make sure to carry a spare pair, just in case you lose your gloves or if they get wet.

Cap: Buy a warm monkey cap, since it can not only protect your head from cold winds, but also your ears and neck.

Muffler: Not really essential, but a good thing to have nonetheless.

Socks: While it is a good idea to carry warm woolen socks, if your shoes are warm enough, you can get away by wearing one or two normal socks.

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Apart from above, carry sufficient amount of inner wear and other cloths. Also you can buy cloths in Ladakh, since counterfeit Northface and similar jackets and lowers are available there easily, along with pashmina shawls.

Food

While food is easily available in Ladakh, most of it can be too bland for Indian travelers. Hence carrying something to spice up your food eg. your favorite ketchup, achar, namkeen etc. is a good idea. If you are a vegetarian, then carry cheese spread and make sure to eat it regularly to keep your protein and fat intake high, which will give you warmth and strength to survive. Alternatively you can think about carrying protein powder or protein bars to ensure that your strength does not diminish drastically, after a few days of exposure to winter in Ladakh.

Almonds, cashews, peanuts, chocolates etc. are also good snacks to carry and eat on regular basis to keep your energy high.

Special tip: Best food is at Neha Sweets in Leh Main Market and at the dhaba with large outdoor seating area in Karu.

Other essentials

Flasks: With temperature well below freezing, drinking cold water isn't really an option. Hence it is best to carry flasks to keep the water warm and drinkable. Make sure you are carrying at least one or two liter of water per person and drinking it on a regular basis to avoid getting dehydrated.

Medicines: Carry Diamox if you aren't allergic to sulfur drugs (helps reduce some of the symptoms of AMS) and medicines for headache, fever, stomach ache, cold and cough syrup. You can find more detailed list for medicines here, [First Aid Travel kit](#).

Sunscreen lotion: UV rays at high altitude can be quite damaging to the skin, even during the harshest of winter, so don't forget to carry a good quality sunscreen lotion eg. Lotus Herbal Sun Screen Lotion with rating of SPF30 or higher and apply it properly before going out in the sun.

UV sunglasses: As mentioned earlier, UV rays at high altitude can be quite damaging and this holds true for eyes as well. So having decent quality UV sunglasses (Fastrack ones are available for as little as Rs. 800) is quite essential, especially if you are traveling early in the season or during winter, when mountain passes have a lot of snow cover and sunlight reflecting from the snow can be even harsher!

Mustard oil: Mustard oil can be used for moisturizing skin, putting it in your hair and for lubricating insides of nostrils, which can become quite dry and painful due to dry and cold winds of Ladakh.

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Toilet Paper: A must have for winter trip to Ladakh

Documents and IDs: It is essential to carry at least one government issued identity card and couple of photocopies of it, since it is needed while applying for [inner line permit](#) and at certain places, to register at the check post. You should also carry your medical insurance card (if you have one), [Map of Ladakh](#), your printed itinerary, hotel reservation slips (if you have prebooked), couple of copies of your flight ticket and list of important contacts (useful in case your mobile phone stops working).

Chargers for all the gadgets, cameras and mobile: Need I explain this?

Spare camera batteries: Extreme cold temperature of Ladakh can be pretty harsh on camera batteries. So make sure to carry at least one or spare ones with you all the time and if you find them getting drained quite easily, then put them inside your jacket to keep them warm and increase their life.

Car charger or battery bank: If you are an avid smart phone user and planning to log your route on your favorite GPS App, then make sure you are carrying car charger or a power bank with at least 4000-5000mAH capacity to keep your mobile phone running throughout the day.

3 socket Belkin Surge Protector: While it is a little large in size, 3 socket Belkin Surge Protector will not only keep your gadgets protected from power surges, but will also allow you to charge multiple devices simultaneously and at the same time, provide the crucial cable length to safely place your gadgets in rooms with idiotic power socket locations (sadly enough, many hotels have this).

Enough memory cards to last you the entire trip: Doesn't matter if you are carrying a laptop or planning to burn CDs/DVDs at Leh, carry enough memory cards to cover your entire shooting duration in Ladakh. If needed, borrow from friends but don't depend on laptop HDDs or worse still, virus infested cyber café computers to copy and save your photographs!

Torch: Not really needed if your mobile phone has one, but if in case it doesn't, carry a small LED one.

Money: While my recommendation would be to carry enough cash you need, to avoid wasting time withdrawing cash, it may not be feasible for everyone. So please keep in mind that ATMs beyond Srinagar and Manali are only available in Kargil and Leh and they too are few with often long queues in front of them.

Mobile phone connectivity: Only post-paid mobile phone connections from other states work in Ladakh and even from these, only BSNL has presence beyond Leh. So unless you wish to be dependent upon STD booths, carry a BSNL/MTNL post-paid connection.