

Ladakh's tourist footfall continues upward trend, exceeds entire 2025 tourist footfall in first eight months of 2026 itself

4.05 lakh tourists visit Ladakh till August 2026; compared to 3.35 lakh tourists in entire 2025

August records highest foreign tourist footfall of 2026

Leh: Ladakh's tourist footfall continues to see an upward trend, with 4,05,085 tourists visiting the Union Territory between January 1 and August 31, 2026, surpassing the total tourist footfall of 3,35,872 recorded during the entire year of 2025. In just 8 months of 2026, the total tourist footfall has exceeded by 20.61 per cent from the total tourist arrivals recorded in 2025, with four months of 2026 still remaining.

Compared to the corresponding eight-month period, Ladakh received 2,69,390 tourists between January and August 2025, while the figure has risen to 4,05,085 during the same period in 2026, recording a substantial increase of 50.37 per cent. Similarly, compared to the total tourist footfall of 45,201 in the month of August 2025, the number has increased to 74,753 in August 2026, marking a jump of 65.38 per cent.

The growth has been recorded across both domestic and foreign tourist segments. During the first eight months of 2026, Ladakh received 3,71,739 domestic tourists and 33,346 foreign tourists, compared to 2,44,308 domestic and 25,082 foreign tourists during the corresponding period in 2025.

August 2026 witnessed the highest foreign tourist footfall recorded in any month so far this year, with 10,075 foreign tourists visiting Ladakh. This is also considerably higher than the 8,148 foreign tourists recorded in August 2025.

Lieutenant Governor, Shri Vinai Kumar Saxena, attributed this significant tourism growth to the Centre's sustained push for infrastructure development in Ladakh as well as the appeal of the Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi to citizens to visit tourist places in India and promote domestic tourism.

"The fact that Ladakh has already crossed its entire 2025 tourist footfall, in just eight months of this year, is a very encouraging sign. Our focus, however, is not merely on increasing tourist numbers, but on building a sustainable, responsible and year-round tourism economy that benefits our people. Festivals, sporting events and cultural programmes are helping us expand the tourism calendar beyond the traditional summer season and bringing visitors to Ladakh during the shoulder and off-seasons. This creates more sustained livelihood opportunities for our youth, entrepreneurs, homestays, artisans, transporters and local communities. At the same time, visitors will also have the advantage in terms of cheaper air fares, hotels and less crowd," said L-G Saxena.

The sustained growth in tourist arrivals is also being supported by the Administration's efforts to promote events and festivals as instruments of tourism development, particularly beyond the traditional peak summer season. By developing a calendar of festivals, sporting events, cultural programmes, adventure activities and other experiences, the aim is to encourage visitors to travel to Ladakh during the shoulder and off-seasons as well.

In the month of August, major festivals like the Changthang Nomadic Festival, the first-ever Black-necked Crane Festival, the Suru Summer Festival and the Ladakh Book Festival added new attractions to Ladakh's tourism calendar, and attracted a large number of tourists. The first edition of the Black-necked Crane Festival alone saw the participation of more than 10,000 people from India and abroad.

These festivals showcase the Ladakh region's unique culture, nomadic traditions, wildlife, and natural heritage.

Ladakh's vibrant tourism calendar remains active in September as well, with a series of major events lined up, including Ladakh Bike Week, Ladakh Festival, Zaskar Festival, and the Ladakh Marathon. The marathon, in particular, attracts runners from across the country and beyond, with many participants travelling to Ladakh with their families, thereby generating wider benefits for hotels, homestays, restaurants, transport operators, guides, local businesses and other tourism-related services.

The tourism growth assumes greater significance and coincides with a major and rapid transformation in Ladakh's connectivity infrastructure since the formation of the Union Territory. Nearly 55% of the total tourists visiting Ladakh arrive by road. Out of this, nearly 36 enter Ladakh through the Kashmir route, while 19% arrive through the Manali route.

The total road network in Ladakh has increased from 1,799 km in 2019 to over 4,200 km in 2026, while the number of bridges has increased from 19 to 72.

The period of seasonal disruption on key routes has also reduced substantially. Zoji La, the gateway to Ladakh from Kashmir, which earlier remained closed for around 127 days annually, now remains closed for only 16 days. Similarly, the annual closure of the Kargil–Zaskar Road has declined from 154 days to 11 days, significantly improving near year-round connectivity for tourists. The number of homestays has increased from 128 in 2019 to 2,275 in 2026, creating new livelihood opportunities for local households.