LADAKH

LADAKH, THE LAND OF HIGH PASSES

A Visual Journey Through
Culture · Landscape · Heritage · Spirit

Coffee Table Book : 2026
Published by :
Department of Tourism
Administration of the Union Territory of Ladakh
Leh – 194101 | Kargil – 194103
Union Territory of Ladakh, India

© 2026 Directorate of Tourism
Administration of the Union Territory of Ladakh

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Message from the Hon'ble Governor 06
Message from the Secretary 08
Foreword 10
Introduction 14
Map of Ladakh 18

The Land
Landscapes & High Passes 22
Rivers & Lakes 32
Wildlife & Natural Heritage 42

The People
Communities & Lifestyle 54
Traditional Architecture 64

Culture & Heritage
Monasteries & Spiritual Traditions 76
Festivals & Celebrations 88
Arts, Crafts & Handlooms 102

Experiences
Adventure & Outdoor Tourism 124
Winter & Seasonal Experiences 138
Cuisine & Local Flavours 150

Responsible Tourism 162
Acknowledgements 170
Photo Credits 174

Explore Ladakh Through Its Eight Sacred Stupas

TOURIST MAP OF LADAKH

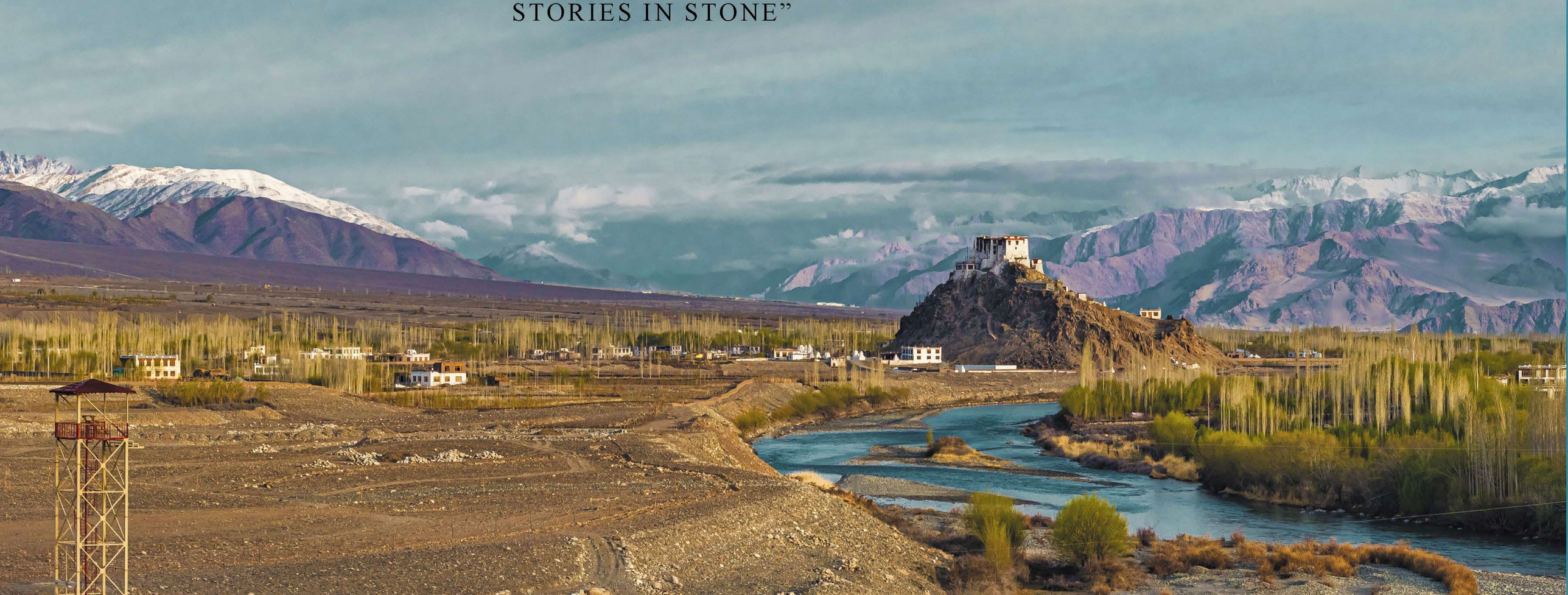
LADAKH TOURIST MAP LEGENDS

	CITY	LEGEND HAS IT " ONLY YOUR BEST FRIENDS AND YOUR WORST ENEMIES WILL COME TO VISIT YOU IN LADAKH."	
	TOWN		
	HIGHWAY		SNOW LEOPARD
	MONASTERY		BLACK NECKED CRANE
	LAKES		DOUBLE HUMP BACTARIAN CAMEL
	PASSES		HIMALAYAN BROWN BEAR

Nubra Valley
SIACHAN BASECAMP
WARSI
SHAYOK RIVER
THANG
SASOMA
TURTUK
SHAYOK RIVER
BURTSE GONGMA
GARKONE
PANAMIK
SAMSTANLING MONASTERY
BATALIK
HUNDAR
SUMUR
BEMA
Depsang Plains
CHIKTAN
DISKIT
KHALSAR
DISKIT MONASTERY
DOMKHAR
LAMAYURU MONASTERY
MULBEK
LIKIR MONASTERY
KHARDUNG LA
5,359 m (17,582 ft)
NAMKI LA
3,718 m (12,198 ft)
FOTU LA
5,360 m (17,585 ft)
NIMOO
DIGER
NH1
KHALTSE
THIKSAY MONASTERY
LEH
CHEMREY MONASTERY
MIG LA
5,582 m (18,314 ft)
RANGDUM MONASTERY
ALCHI MONASTERY
KHARU
PHOBRANG
Changthang
NH301
PENSI LA
4,400 m (14,436 ft)
KARSHA MONASTERY
CHILING
STOK MONASTERY
CHANG LA
5,360 m (17,585 ft)
DURBUK
SINGGE LA
5,091 m (16,703 ft)
PANGONG LAKE
SANI
SPANGMIK
PADUM
HEMIS MONASTERY
UPSHI
YAYA TSO
ZANGLA
NH3
CHUSHUL
MAHE
DUNGTI
UMLING LA
5,799 m (19,024 ft)
DEMCHOK
MONE MONASTERY
TAGLANG LA
5,328 m (17,480 ft)
TSOKAR
NYOMA
Zanskar
BARDAN MONASTERY
PANG
HANLE
RARU
NH3
KARGYAK
TSOMO RIRI
PHUGTAL MONASTERY
SERCHU
KORZOK MONASTERY
NORBU LA
4,108 m (13,478 ft)
SHINKU LA
4,800 m (15,748 ft)
CHUMUR
BARALACHA LA
4,890 m (16,043 ft)
DARCHA
MANALI
NH3
N
NE
E
SE
S
SW
W
NW
NOT TO SCALE

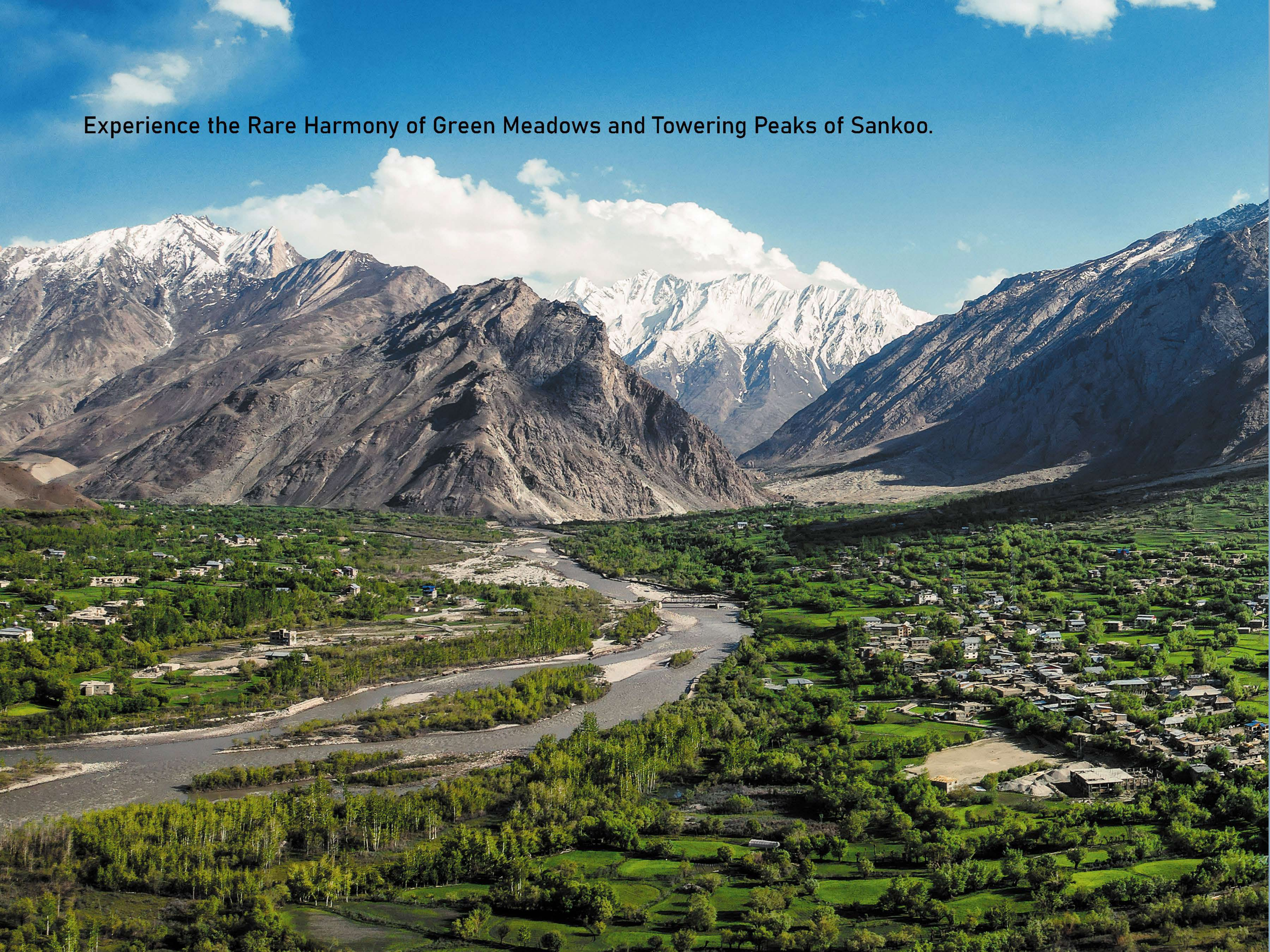
Diverse Landscape

"LADAKH WHERE THE INDUS CARVES
STORIES IN STONE"



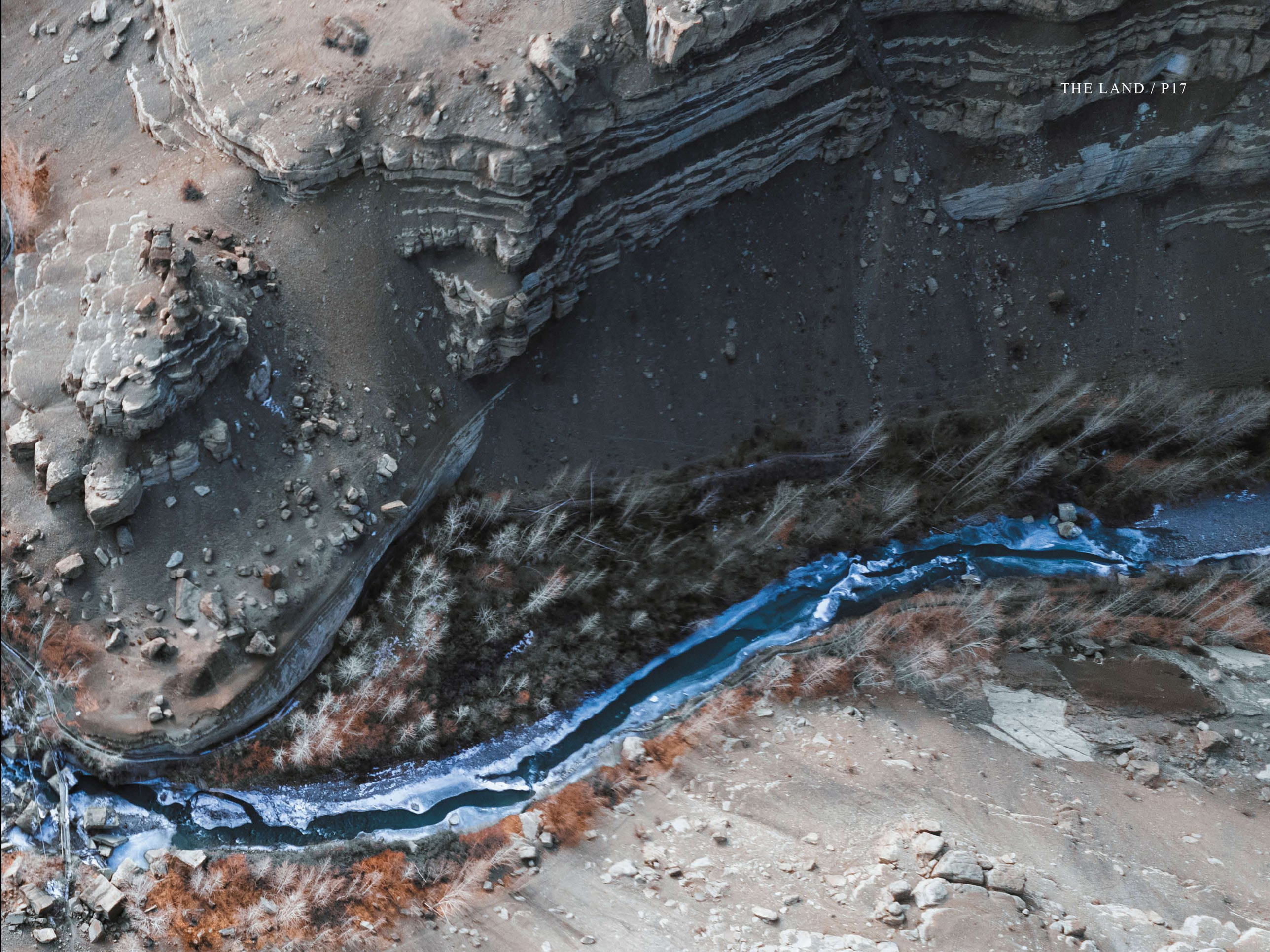
Ladakh is a breathtaking high-altitude region in northern India, known for its unique landscapes, crystal-clear skies, and blend of culture and spirituality. Situated between the Himalaya and Karakoram Range, it offers pristine snow-capped peaks, winding rivers, and vast deserts. Often called the “Land of High Passes,” Ladakh is home to ancient monasteries, vibrant festivals, and the warm hospitality of its people, making it a truly unforgettable destination for travelers seeking both adventure and serenity.

Pangong Lake – A Mesmerising Canvas Where Mountains, Sky, and Water Blend in Perfect Harmony.


Experience the Rare Harmony of Green Meadows and Towering Peaks of Sankoo.

In the Monasteries of Ladakh, silence becomes sacred, prayers ride the wind, and every moment leads to inner peace.

In the heart of Kargil, a tranquil brook flows softly, transforming the rugged terrain into a haven of calm and natural harmony



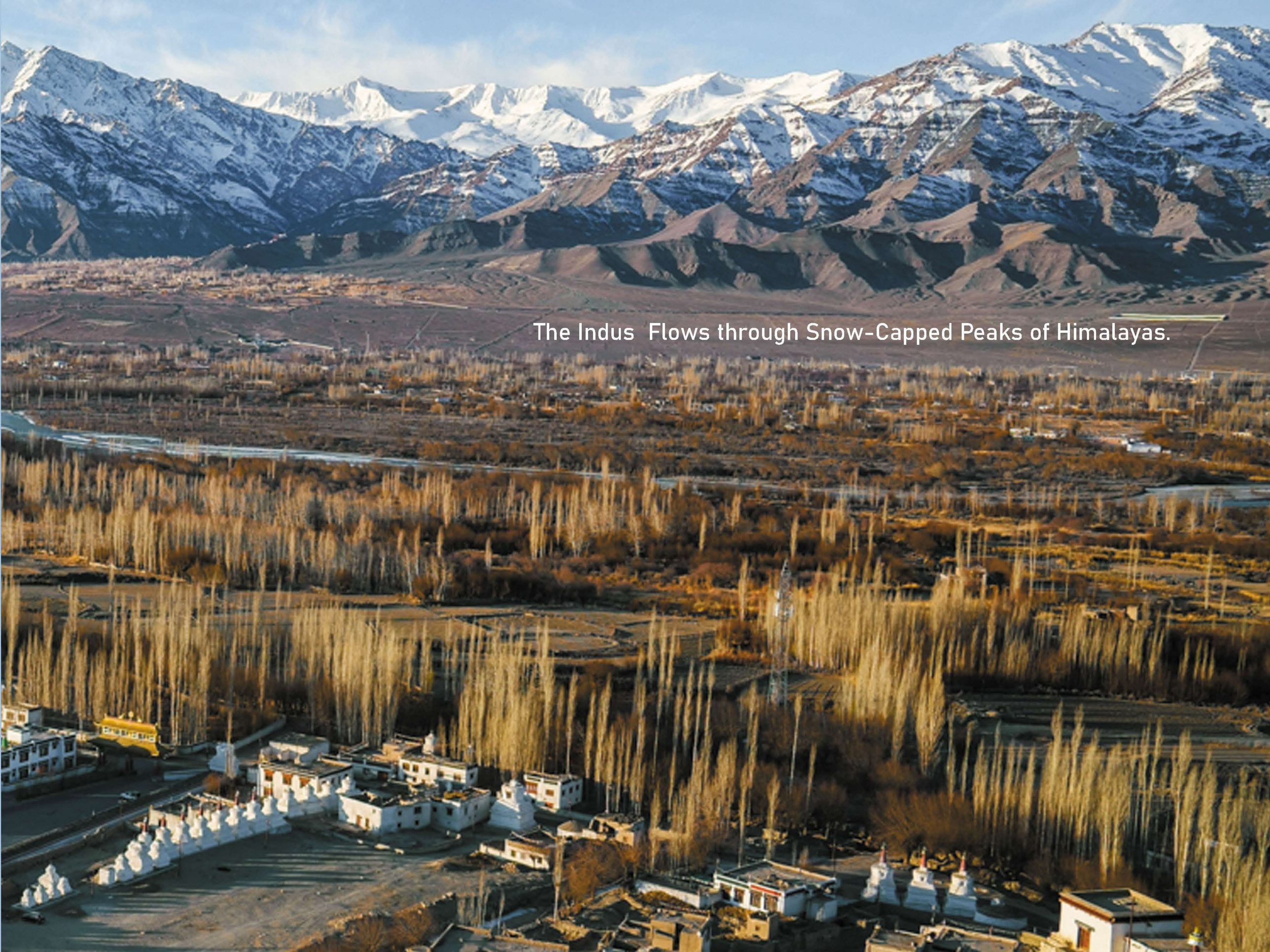
Hanle Wetlands – A serene high-altitude haven where the untouched beauty of Ladakh reveals itself in reflections of sky, water, and wilderness

A breathtaking high-altitude desert where towering mountains rise from vast, windswept plains, creating a landscape of raw power, silence, and timeless beauty.

Lush Valleys Framed by Rugged Mountains.

The Changthang Plateau is a place of wonder and breathtaking landscapes, home to many lakes and stunning natural beauty.

Journey Through Kargil Town – Suru's Calm, Mountains' Grandeur.



The Indus Flows through Snow-Capped Peaks of Himalayas.

Green Vistas, Endless Views – Maanmaan Top, Lamochan.

Mushko Valley – Wild Tulips Amid Peaks and Clouds.

Suru Valley Featured in Nat Geo's 2025 "Best of the World" list as one of the top 25 destinations.

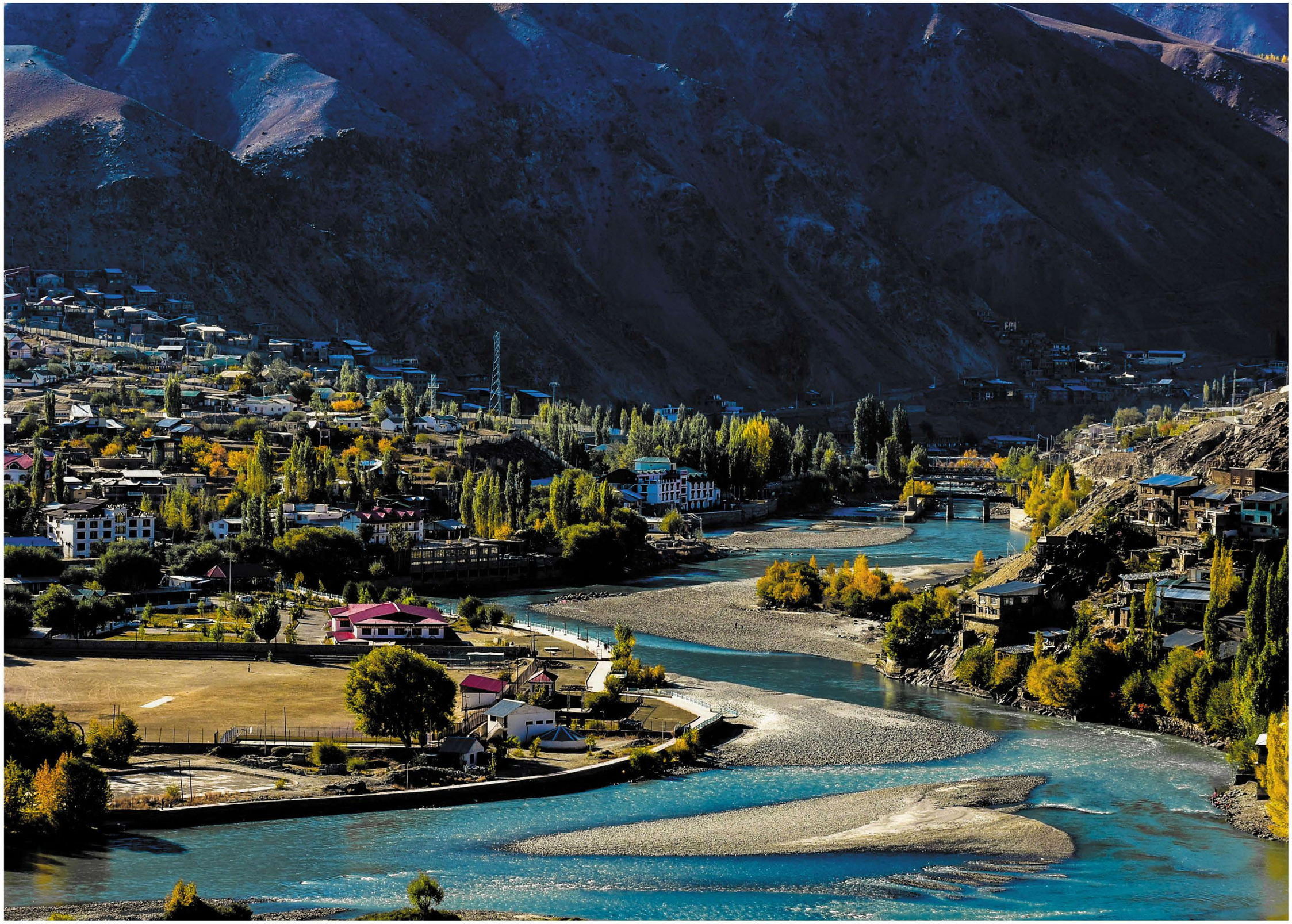
Hunder – Explore the sand dunes on Bactrian Camel.

Lamayuru – The Moonland of Ladakh.

Gonbo Rangjon – Zanskar's Sacred Monolith, Standing Tall Near Shingkula Pass.

Drang-Drung Glacier, Ladakh's largest accessible glacier after Siachen, stretches 23 km near Pensi La Pass, offering a stunning roadside view of a flowing ice river amid the Zanskar peaks.

In the east, vast high-altitude plateaus, shimmering lakes and open horizons create a stark, otherworldly beauty.



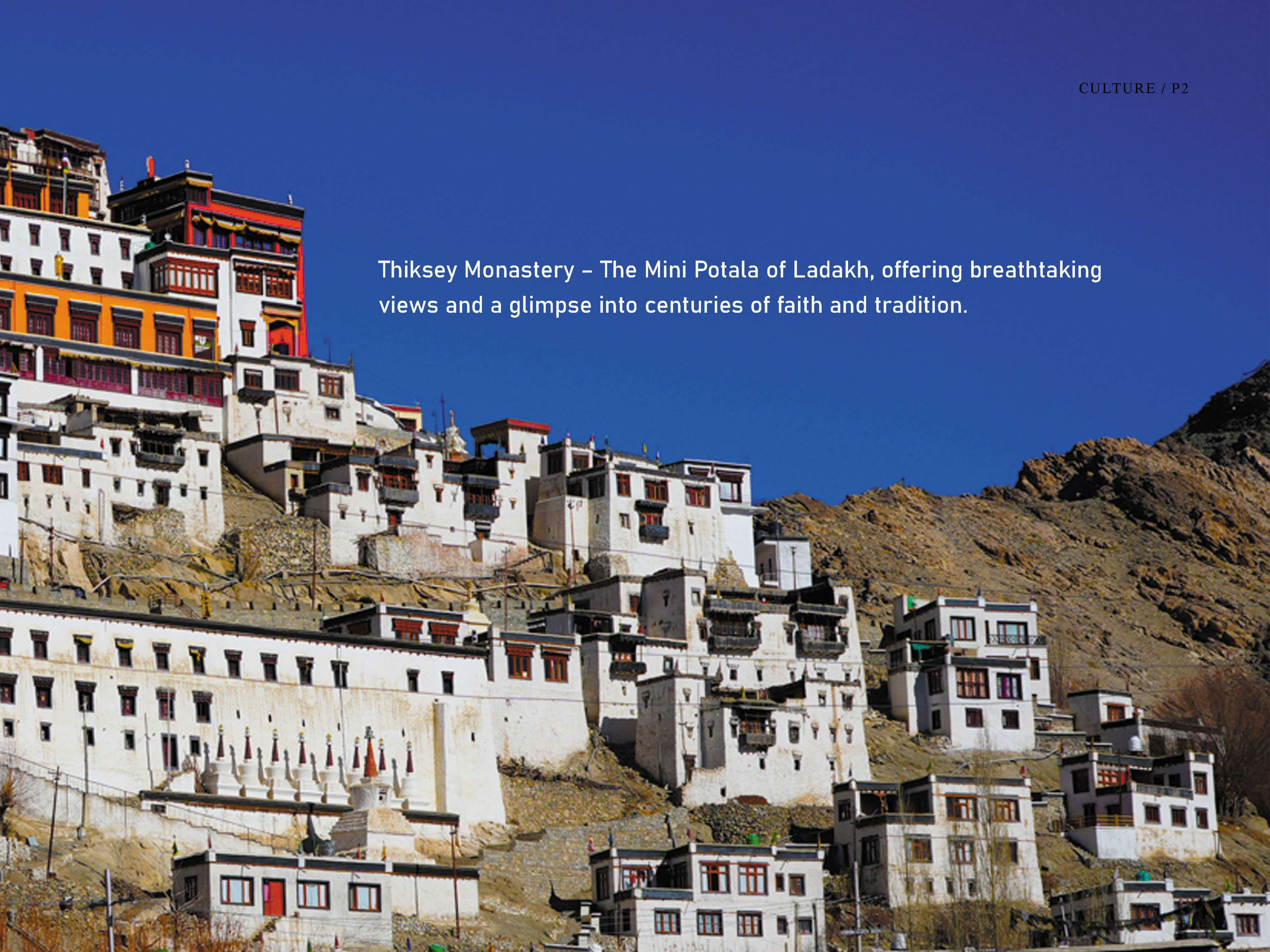
Western Ladakh is defined by rugged valleys, dramatic gorges, and fertile riverbanks along the Suru River.

Spiritual & Culture Tourism

"ECHOES OF PRAYER, COLORS OF CULTURE"

Ladakh stands as a unique center of spiritual and cultural tourism, where Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Christianity coexist in harmony. Monasteries, mosques, temples, and living traditions reflect a shared heritage, attracting visitors in search of peace, cultural depth, and diverse religious experiences.

LEAVE INDIA
FREE TIBET



Thiksey Monastery – The Mini Potala of Ladakh, offering breathtaking views and a glimpse into centuries of faith and tradition.

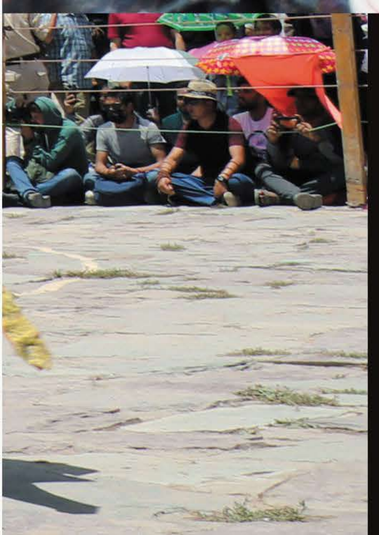
Mask Dance of Ladakh – An enchanting expression of faith, culture, and timeless Himalayan heritage.

Matho Monastery is renowned for its unique oracle and masked dances, performed during the annual winter Matho Nagrang Festival.

Alchi Monastery is one of Ladakh's oldest Buddhist complexes, famed for its exquisite 10th–12th century wall paintings and tranquil temple architecture nestled in the Indus valley near Leh.

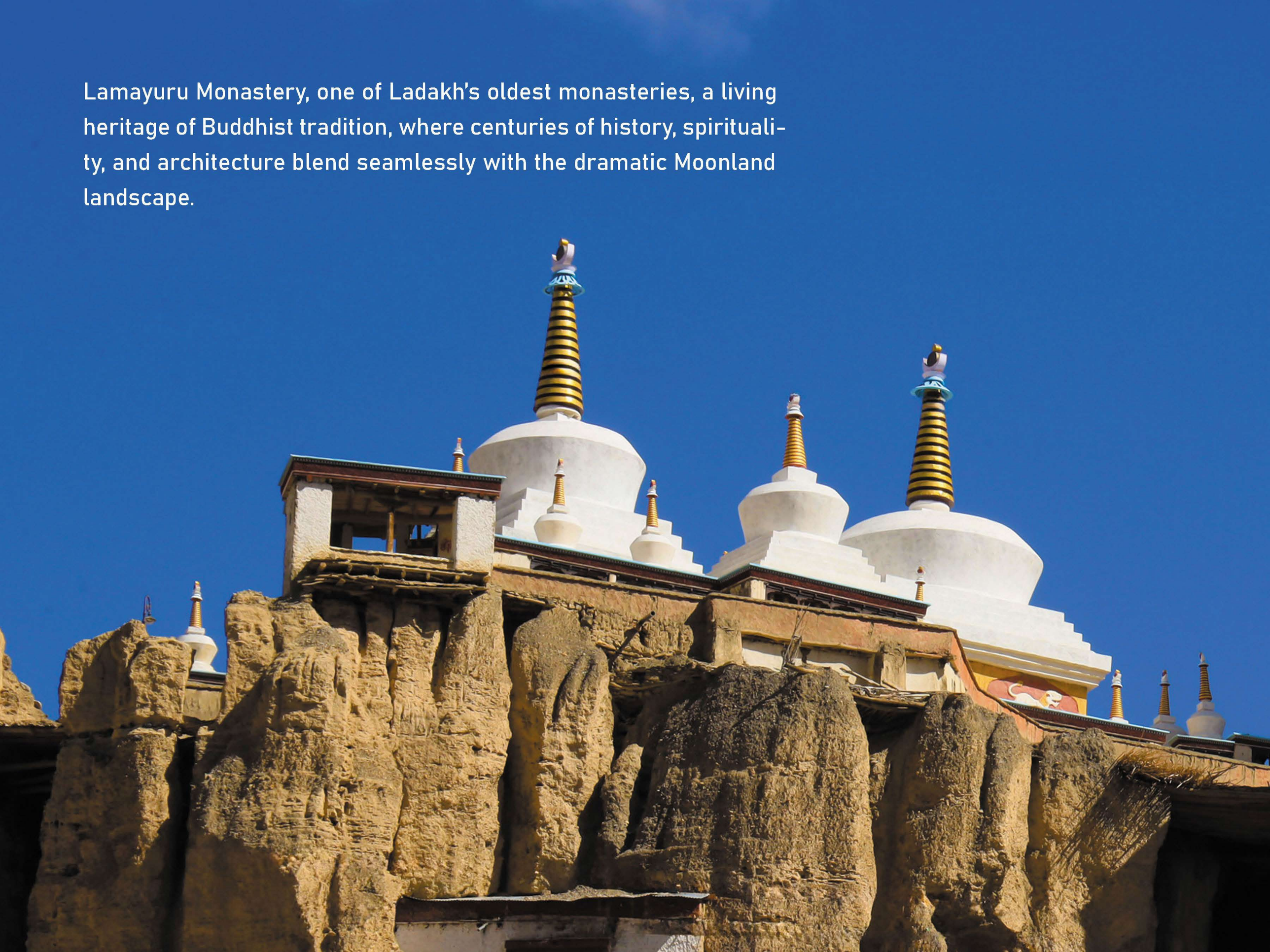
Karkicho Village is known for its serene setting and historic mosque, reflecting the region's rich Islamic heritage and traditional Ladakhi architecture.

HEMIS MUSEUM



Hemis Tsechu is the largest and most famous monastic festival in Ladakh, celebrated annually at the Hemis Monastery.

Lamayuru Monastery, one of Ladakh's oldest monasteries, a living heritage of Buddhist tradition, where centuries of history, spirituality, and architecture blend seamlessly with the dramatic Moonland landscape.



Akchamal Mosque stands as a timeless beacon of peace, faith, and spiritual harmony.

Draupadi Kund and Bhim Stone at Drass echo tales of the Mahabharata.

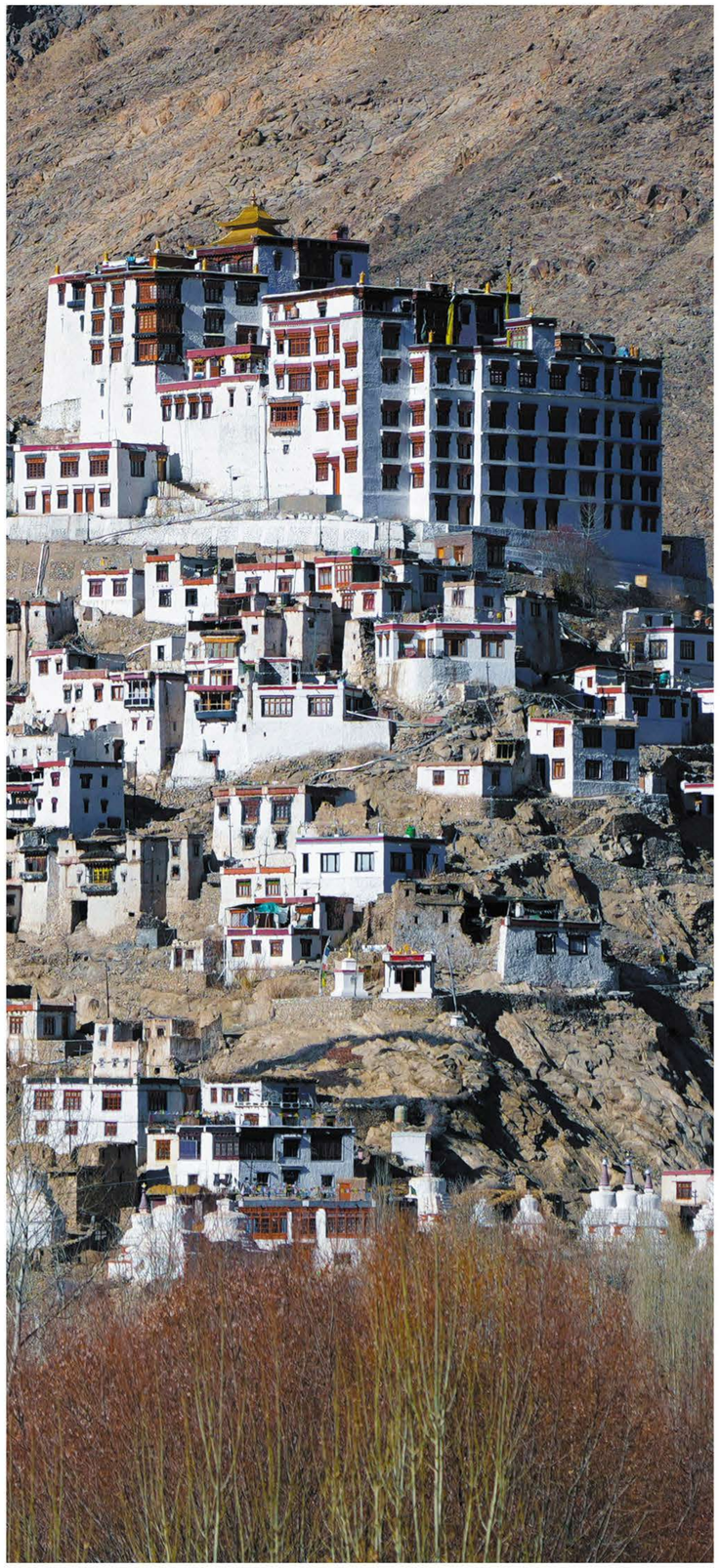
MORAVIAN CHURCH
LEH LADAKH

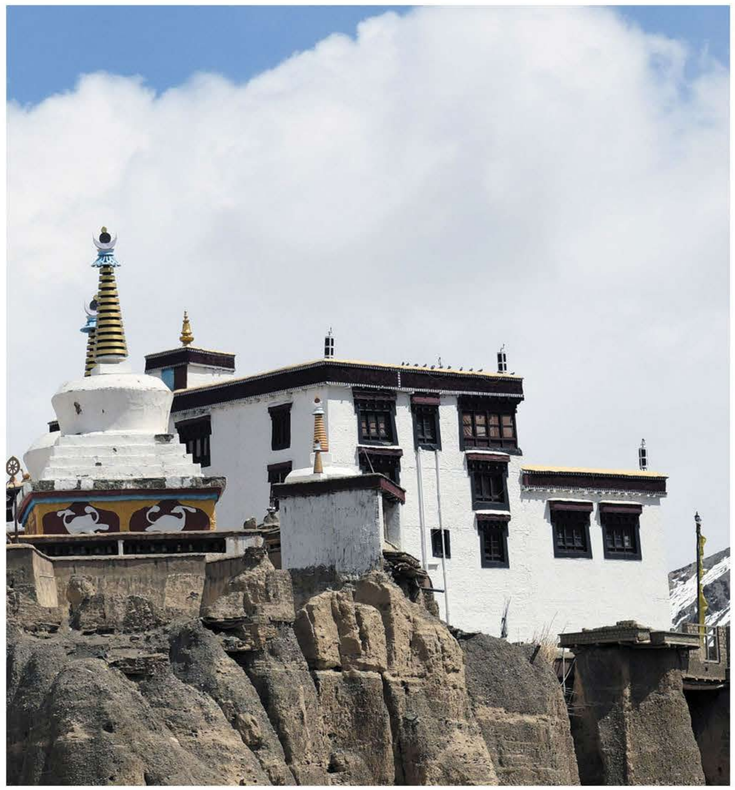
Ladakh's Christian community—centered around Leh—has a legacy dating back to the 19th century

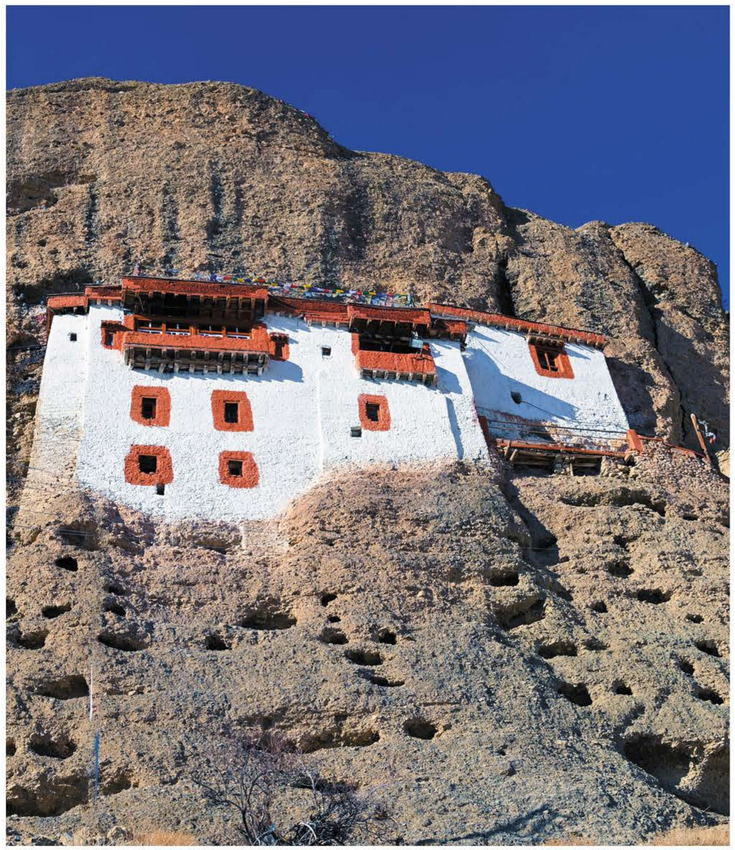
Hidden in Zanskar's rugged cliffs, Phugtal Monastery endures as a sacred retreat shaped by history and belief.

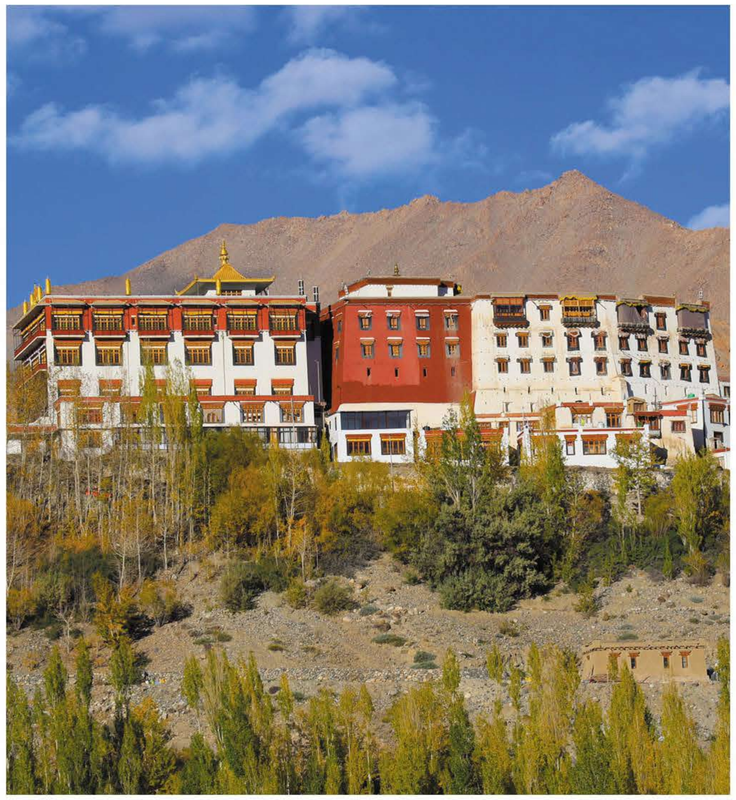
السلام المؤمن المهيمن العزيز الجبار المتكبر
العظيم الغفور الشكور العلي الكبير الحفيظ المقيت

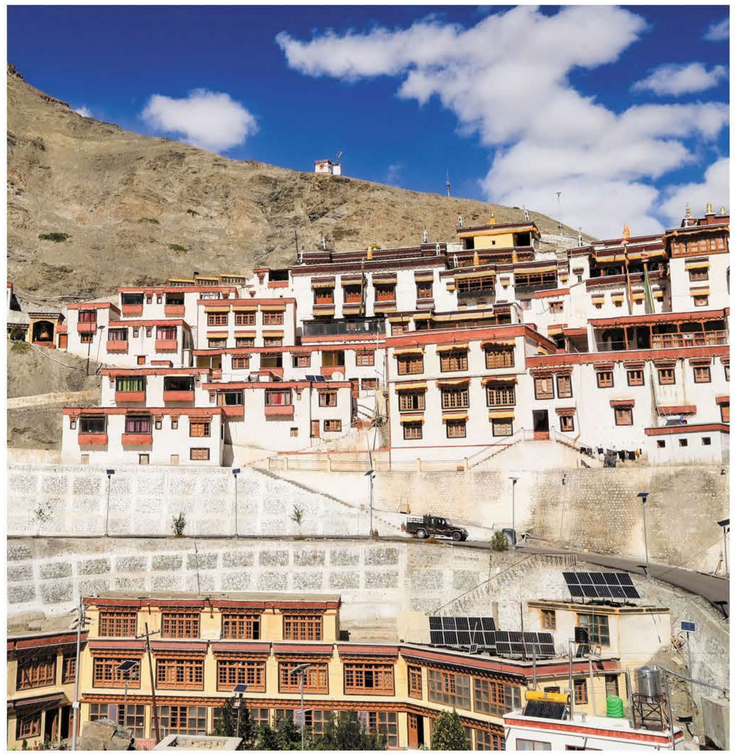
In Leh's bustling main market stands Jama Masjid, one of the largest mosque in Ladakh, built in 1666–67 A.D., symbolizing faith and peace.











GO CLOCKWISE
NO SMOKING
SILENCE PLEASE

Shanti Stupa built in 1991 by Japanese monk Gyomyo Nakamura, for promotion of world peace.

Horse riding in Ladakh is an important cultural tradition, especially during Losar, symbolizing celebration, heritage, and community life.

A living tradition of Kargil where music, movement, and community unite to create a vibrant celebration of cultural identity.

SWEEP AWARENESS PROG
#Vote for Ladakh
SWEEP
Benefits of Voting
1 Shape Your Future Vote!
2 Your Voice Counts Register Now!
3 Empower Your Generation Vote Today!
4 Make a Difference Cast Your Vote!
5 Speak Out Vote Now!
ELECTION OFFICER / DEPUTY

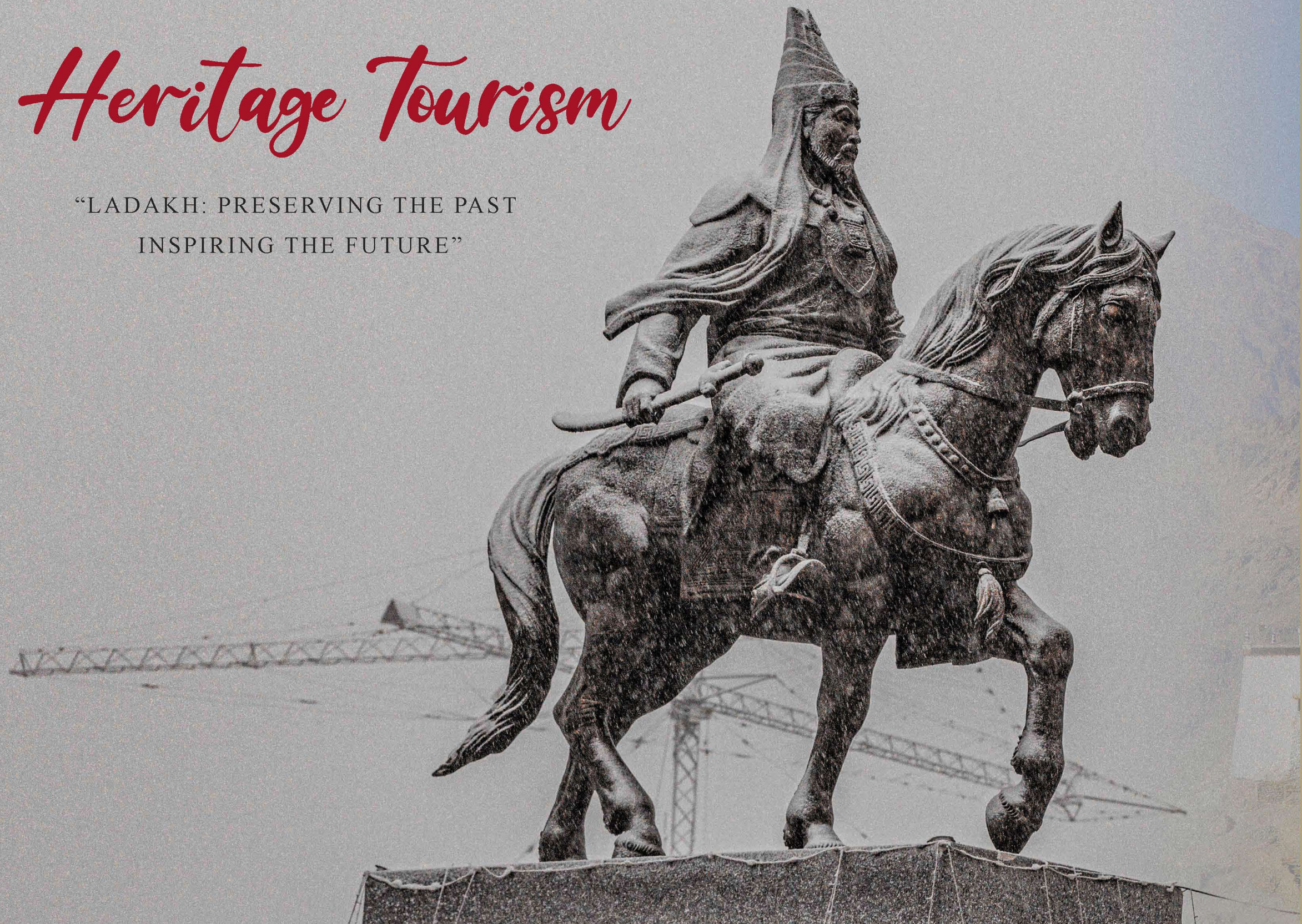
Experience the Aryan Villages of Ladakh – A journey into one of the world's most distinctive and enduring cultural traditions.

The Apo-Api celebration
masked figures represe
cleansing to mark the N

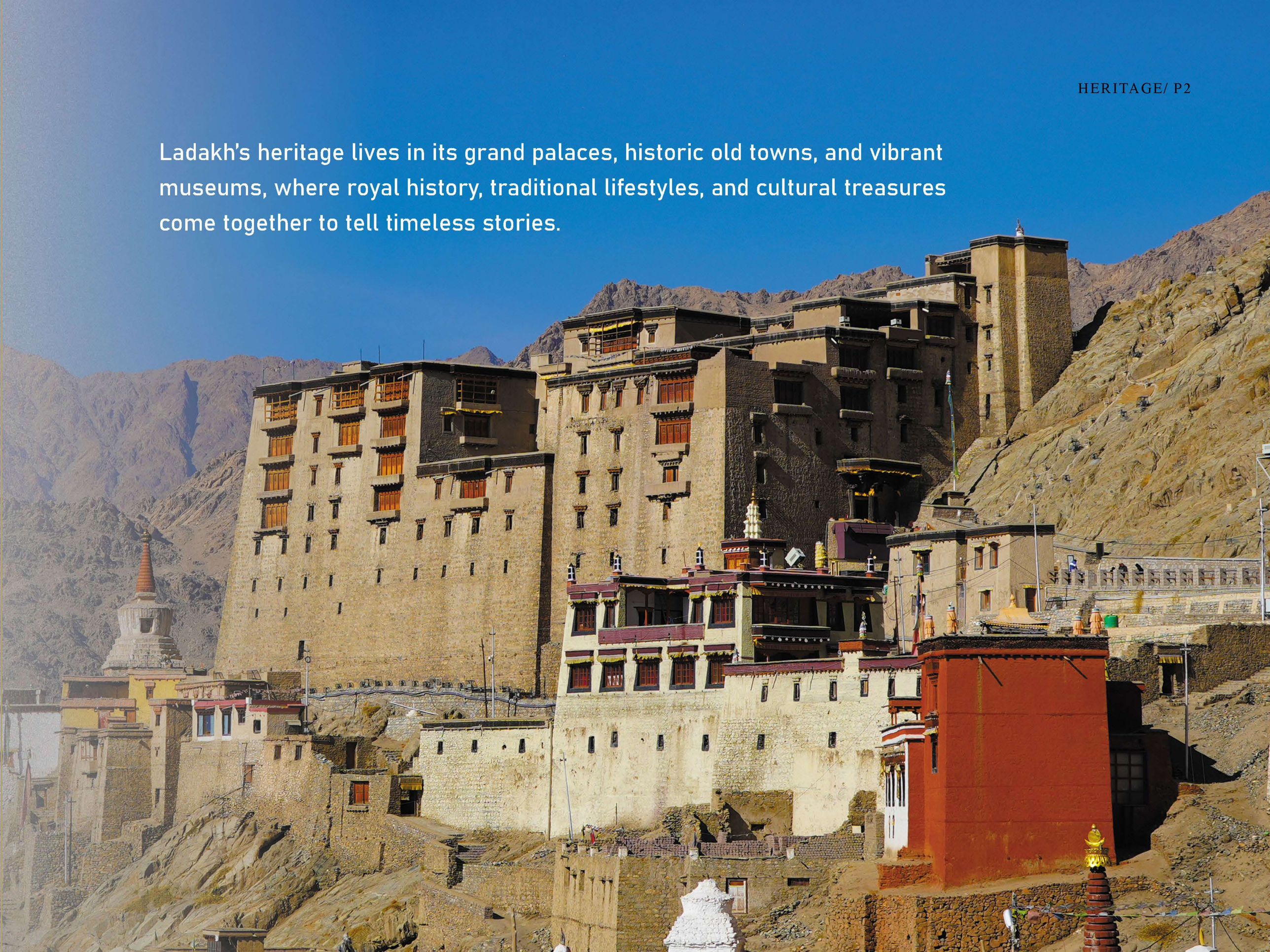
during Losar (Ladakhi New Year) features symbolic
nting ancestral spirits, bringing humor, blessings, and ritual
ew Year.

Heritage Tourism

"LADAKH: PRESERVING THE PAST
INSPIRING THE FUTURE"



Ladakh's heritage lives in its grand palaces, historic old towns, and vibrant museums, where royal history, traditional lifestyles, and cultural treasures come together to tell timeless stories.



Stok Palace is the 19th-century royal residence of Ladakh's Namgyal dynasty.

Basgo Palace stands as a historic citadel of the Namgyal dynasty, famed for its mud-brick architecture

Revered Sufi shrine and mausoleum, deeply significant to Ladakh's unique local Muslim heritage.

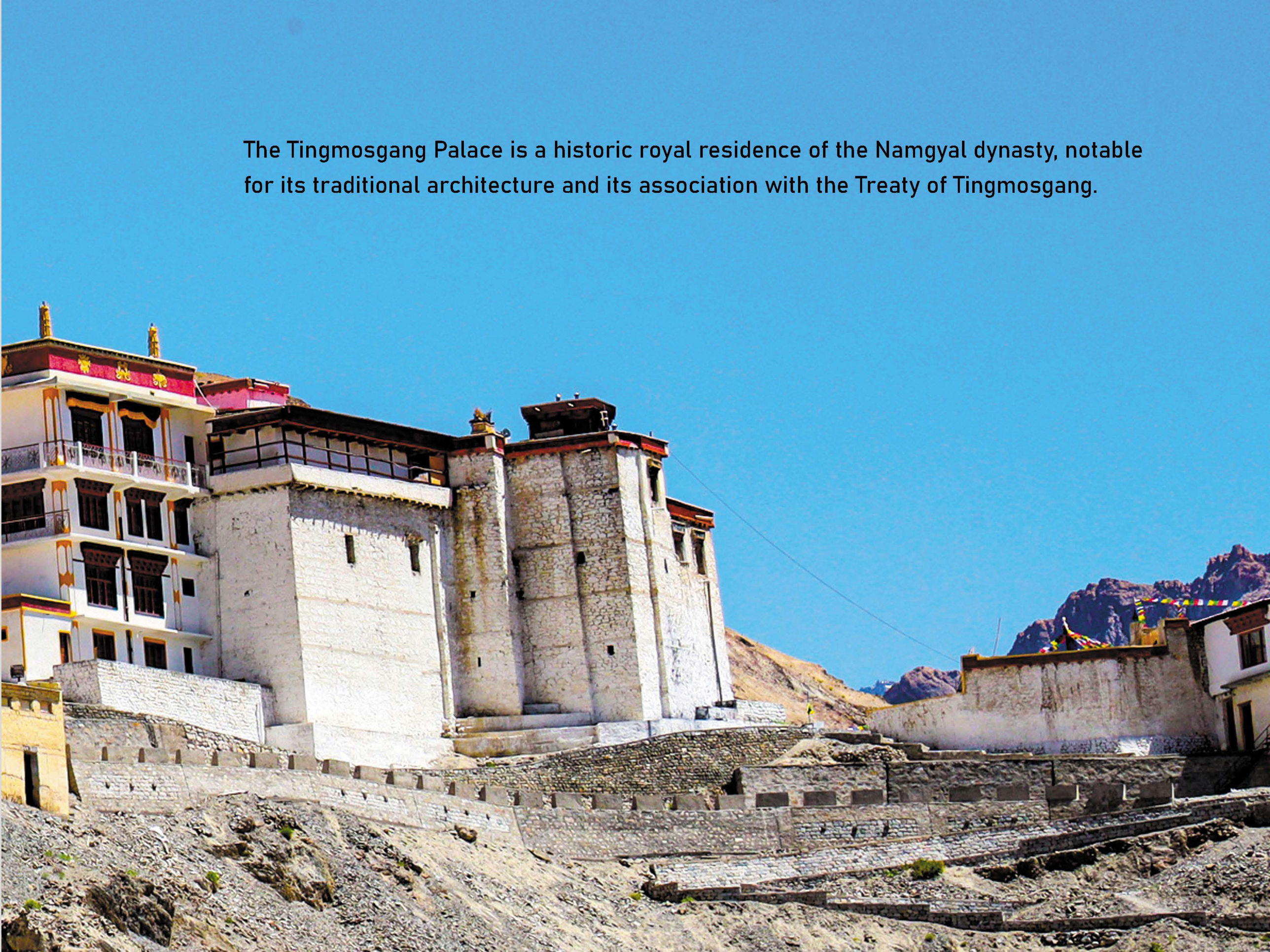
Razi Chiktan Khar is the evocative ruin of a 16th-century Balti fort crowning the hill above Chiktan village in Kargil's picturesque Valley.

Shey Palace built in 1655 by King Deldan Namgyal to honor his father Sengge Namgyal.

Zangla Palace is the 17th-century royal residence of the kings of Zanskar.

The modern heritage of Ladakh is reflected in Hunderman in Kargil, a border village shaped by its past and reclaimed during the Indo-Pak War of 1971.

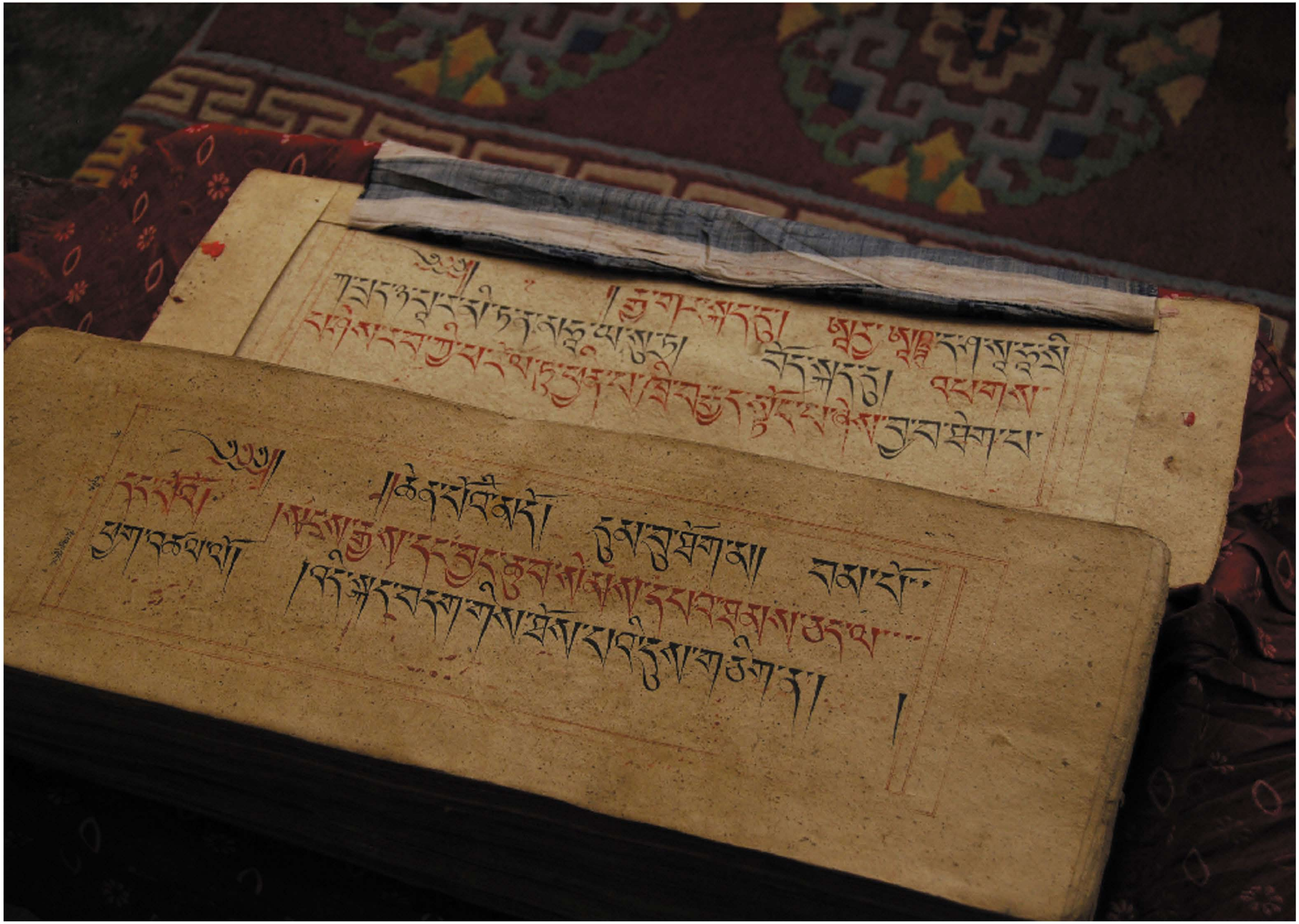
The Tingmosgang Palace is a historic royal residence of the Namgyal dynasty, notable for its traditional architecture and its association with the Treaty of Tingmosgang.



The Hemis Monastery Museum showcases rare Buddhist artifacts, ancient manuscripts, and sacred thangkas

ARCHIVES / PI

HEMIS MUSEUM
KINDLY REMOVE YOUR SHOES
REMOVE YOUR SHOES
DRINKING WATER
ASEEM FOUNDATION
NAAM FOUNDATION



The Heritage Buddhist Manuscripts in monasteries of Ladakh.

Leh Palace, now an archaeological museum, proudly displays artifacts from the era of Leh's former rulers,

CENTRAL ASIAN MUSEUM

Leh used to be one of the most important trading hubs between India, Tibet, and Central Asia until borders closed in the mid-20th century. The Central Asian Museum itself is interesting architecturally. It is built around a restored 17th-century caravan sarai (traders' inn) that once hosted merchants traveling through Leh.

A place of remembrance that reflects bravery, resilience, and the spirit of service.

OP VIJAY
OPERATION VIJAY
Please Maintain Silence and Decorum in the War Memorial.
कृपया युद्ध स्मारक में शांति और शिष्टाचार बनायें रखें।

Tribes of Ladakh

PEOPLE OF LADAKH: SHAPING
CULTURE THROUGH GENERATIONS”

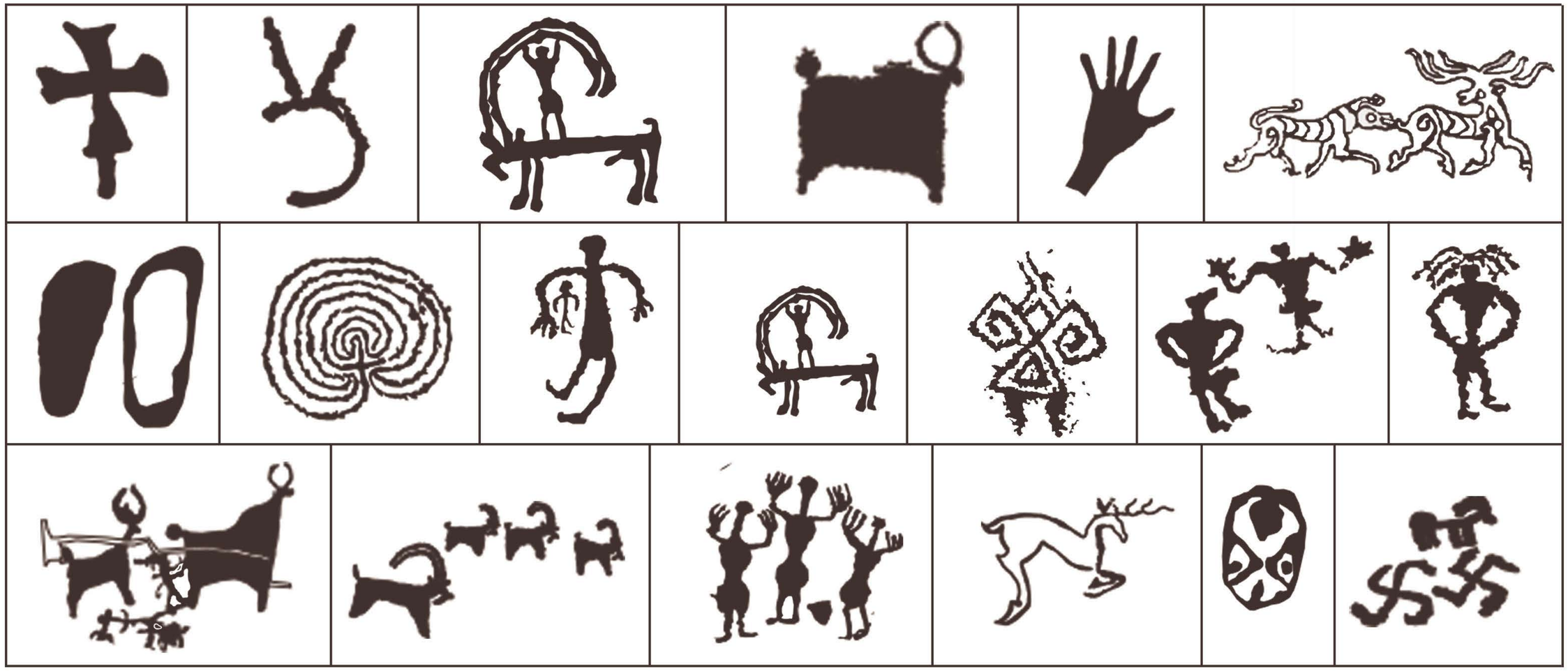
The tribes of Ladakh, spanning Leh and Kargil, represent a rich cultural continuum. Brokpa, Changpa, Mon, and Bodh communities in Leh, alongside Balti and Purig groups in Kargil, sustain diverse traditions, attire, and beliefs, preserving a timeless heritage shaped by nature, faith, and generations of resilience.

HAN

Petroglyphs & Rockarts of Ladakh

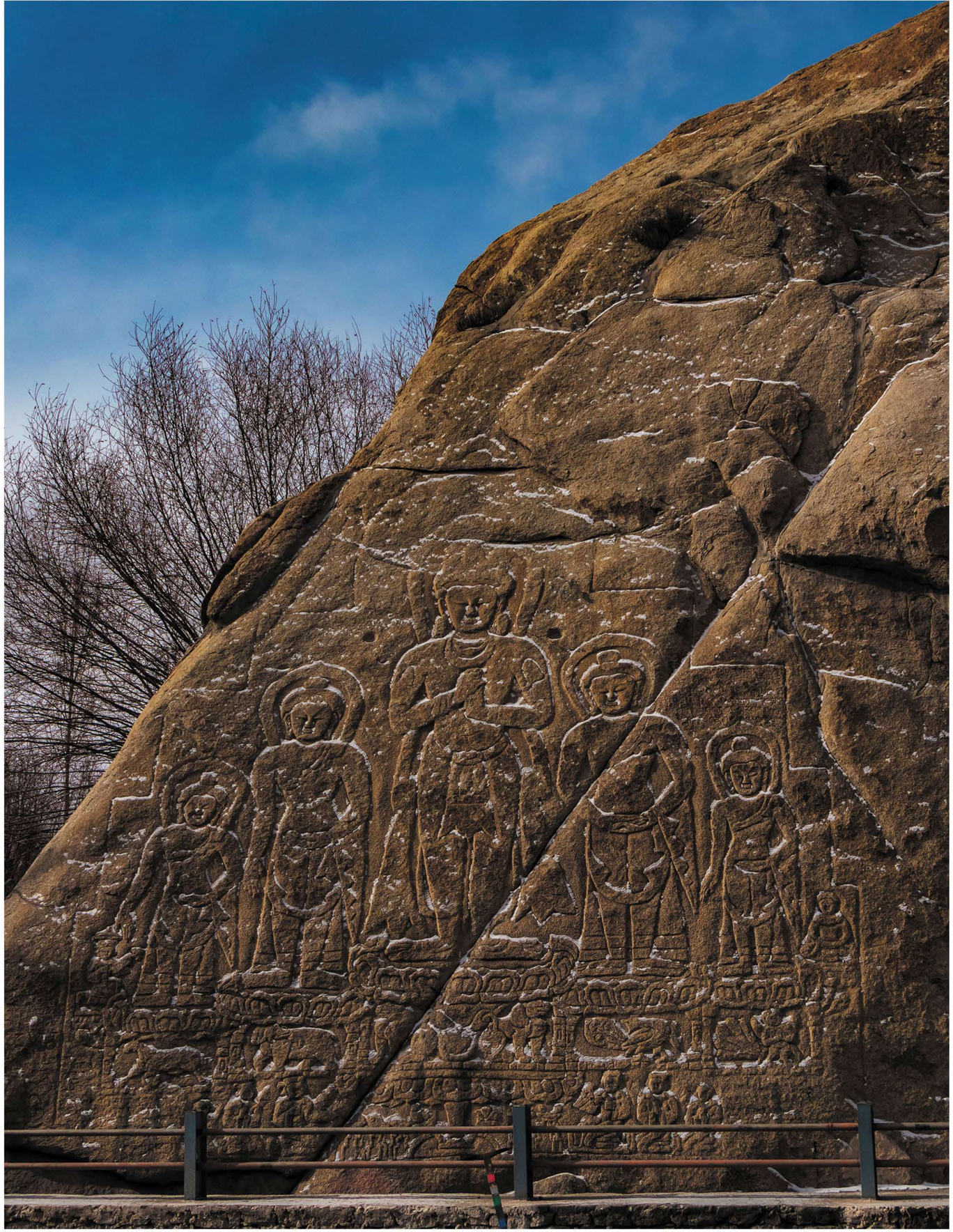
STORIES CARVED IN STONE

Ladakh's rock art and petroglyphs, dating from the Neolithic period to the early historic era, are etched along ancient routes and river valleys. Later rock reliefs, emerging around the 7th–12th centuries, reflect evolving religious influences. Together, they depict stories of survival, movement, and belief, revealing early artistic expression and the region's deep cultural roots.



These rock carvings invite contemplation, allowing you to connect deeply with the profound history and spirituality of Ladakh. Along riverbanks and windswept flats, ancient artisans etched scenes into stone depicting animals in motion, hunters with bows, and geometric motifs that resonate with meaning across millennia.

Skilmarchey village is known for its ancient rock-carved Buddha



The Five Dhyani Buddhas near Shey Palace, dating to the 9th–10th centuries, mark the early spread of Tibetan Buddhism in Ladakh.

BUDDHA ROCK RELIEFS.

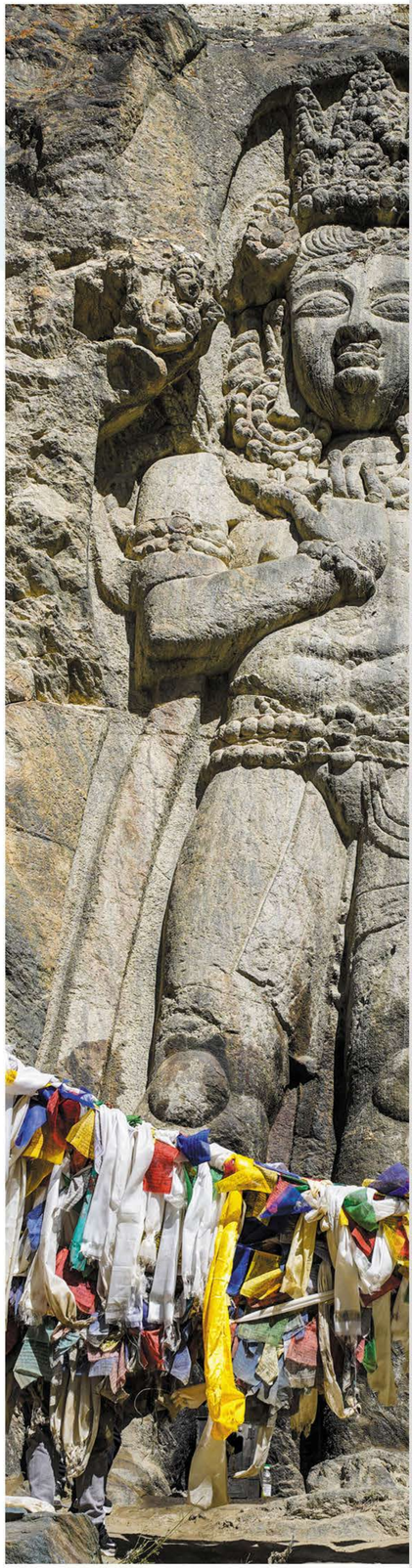
MULBEKH : A grand statue of Maitreya carved on a huge wayside boulder, situated at the beginning of Mulbekh village

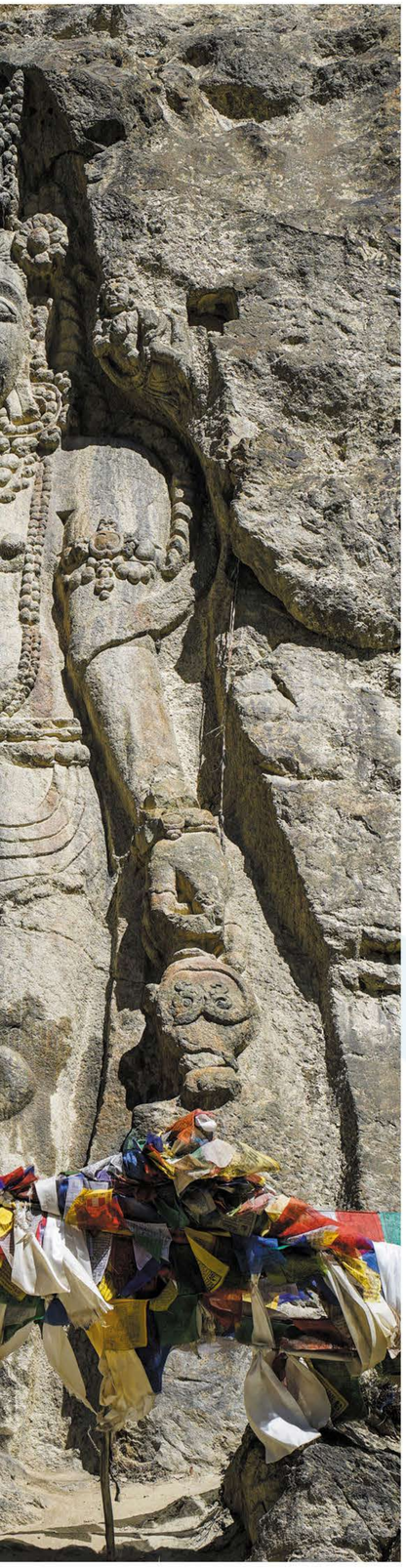
APATI : A weathered ancient Maitreya relief near Apati village in Kargil district, possibly dating as early as 1st century BCE–6th century CE.

KARTSE : A large cliff-carved Maitreya in the Suru Valley (Kartse Khar near Sankoo), one of Ladakh's prominent rock-cut Buddha figures.

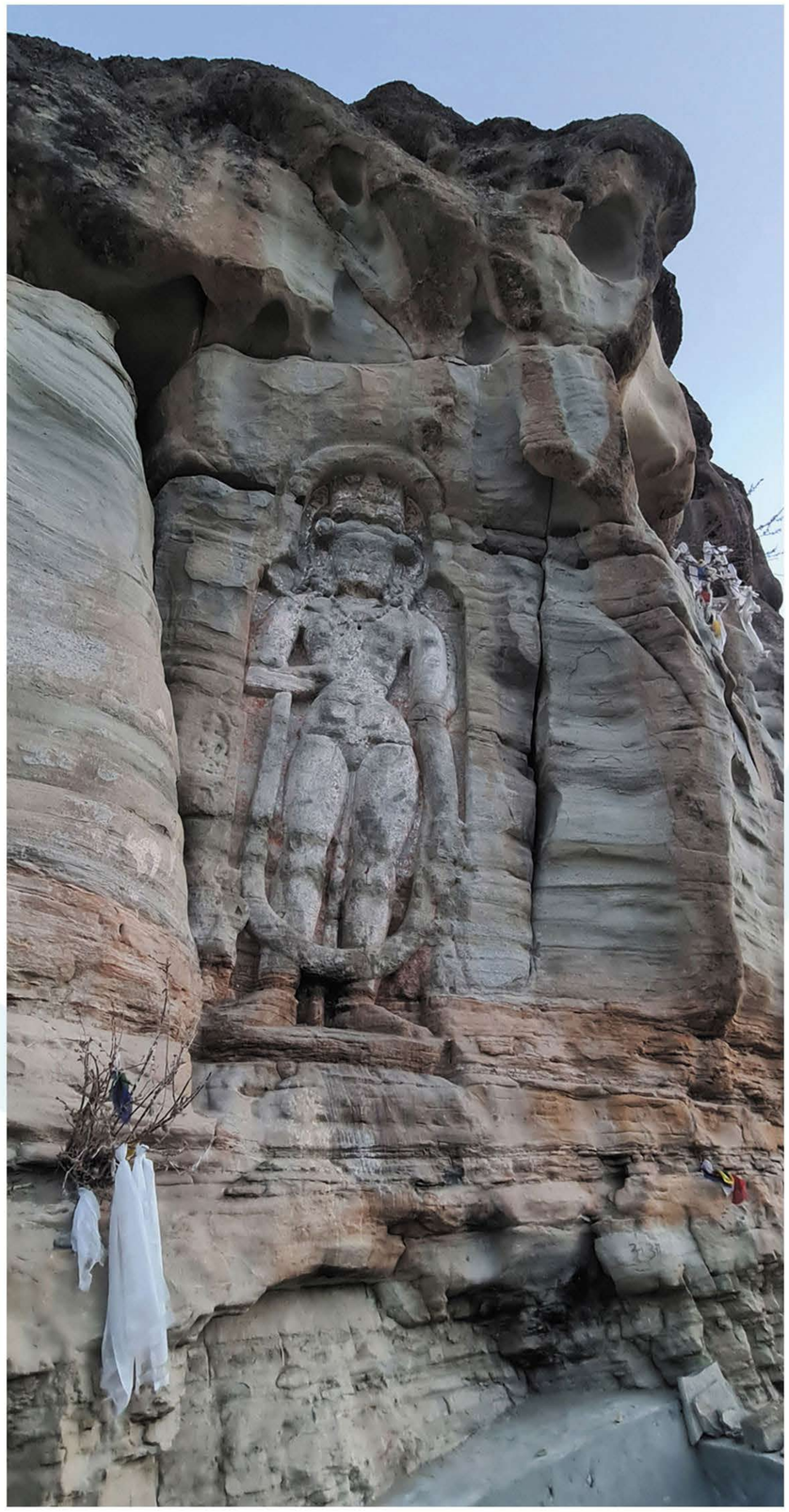
DIGER : Kharpochey, features a 4m tall monolith from 950–1000CE intricately carved Buddha on four faces of the rock.

Mulbekh





Kartse



Apati

Diger

Mani stones, carved with Buddhist mantras like “Om Mani Padme Hum,” are often stacked into long sacred walls throughout Ladakh.

Adventure Tourism

LADAKH: THE ULTIMATE HIGH-ALTITUDE ADVENTURE

Ladakh is a premier destination for adventure tourism, offering experiences across every season. From thrilling winter sports on frozen landscapes to challenging rock climbing routes, high-altitude trekking, and demanding peak expeditions, the region is a haven for explorers.

Adventure in Ladakh spans land, water, and sky—from trekking rugged passes and rafting the Zanskar and Indus to paragliding over Suru.

The Chilung La trek is a six-day high-altitude route in Ladakh, crossing the 5,112m pass on an ancient trade path between Zanskar and the Kishtwar Himalayas.

Ladakh offers adrenaline-pumping ice climbing on frozen waterfalls and glacial cliffs, thrilling boulder climbing on its rugged rock formations and its high-altitude landscapes make every ascent a breathtaking adventure.

The Chadar Trek is a legendary 6–9 day winter adventure on Ladakh's frozen Zanskar River, challenging trekkers with -25°C nights, icy gorges, and surreal Himalayan landscapes.

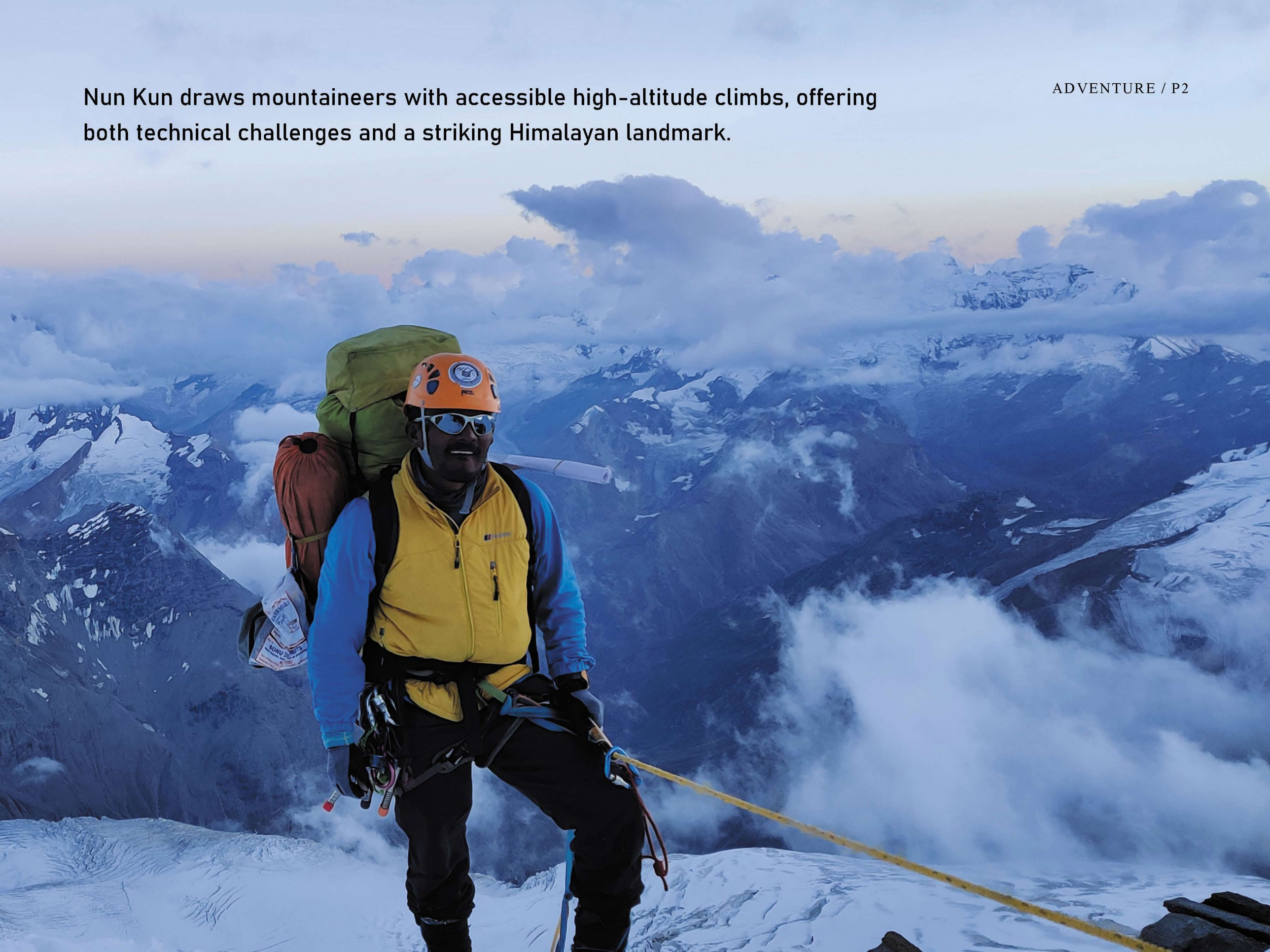
The Ladakh Marathon, one of the world's highest races, offers 5km to full and ultra runs like Khardung La amid Leh's dramatic high-altitude terrain.

Cyclists navigate winding mountain roads and remote trails through dramatic valleys, ancient villages, and some of the world's highest passes.

catlike
catlike
BOMBER 36

The Nun Kun massif in Ladakh rises above Suru Valley, featuring two towering peaks—Nun (7,135 m) and Kun (7,077 m)—among the region's highest.

Nun Kun draws mountaineers with accessible high-altitude climbs, offering both technical challenges and a striking Himalayan landmark.



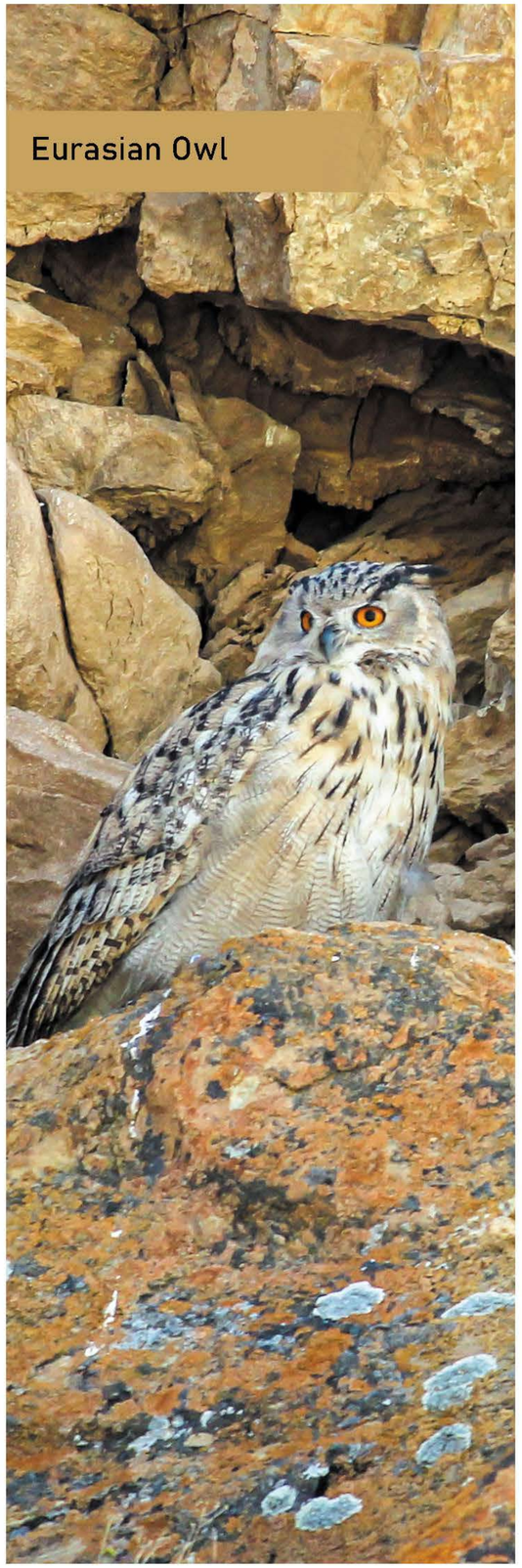
Wildlife Tourism

LADAKH: HOME TO RARE AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

Ladakh offers a rare glimpse into a world of iconic species like the Black-necked Crane, Snow Leopard, and Himalayan Brown Bear, along with other endangered wildlife, thriving across its vast and pristine high-altitude landscapes.

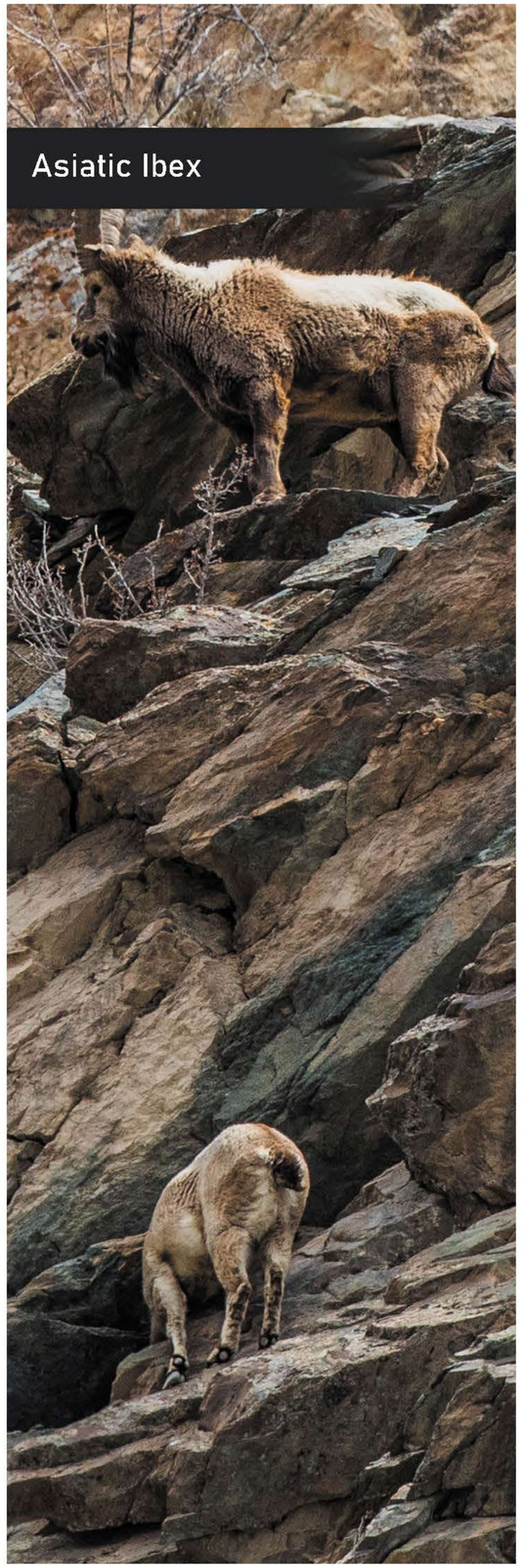
The Snow Leopard is Ladakh's most iconic and elusive predator, perfectly adapted to its rugged high-altitude terrain.

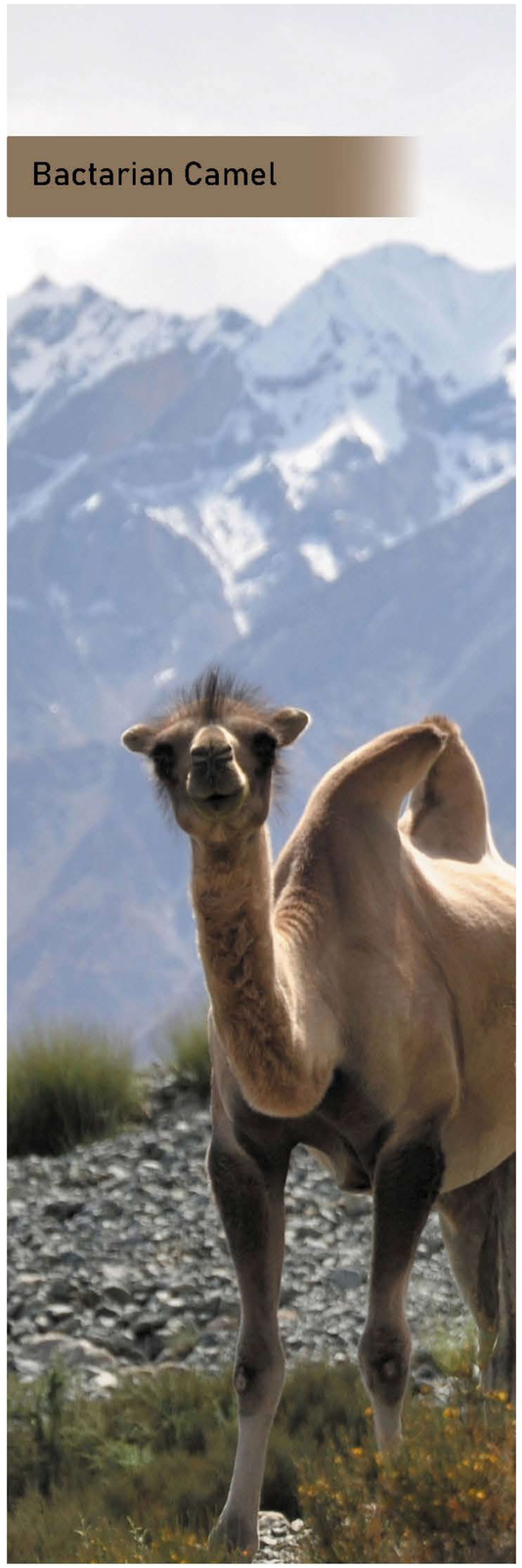
The Himalayan Brown Bear is a rare wildlife species of Ladakh, roams high-altitude valleys and alpine meadows of Kargil.

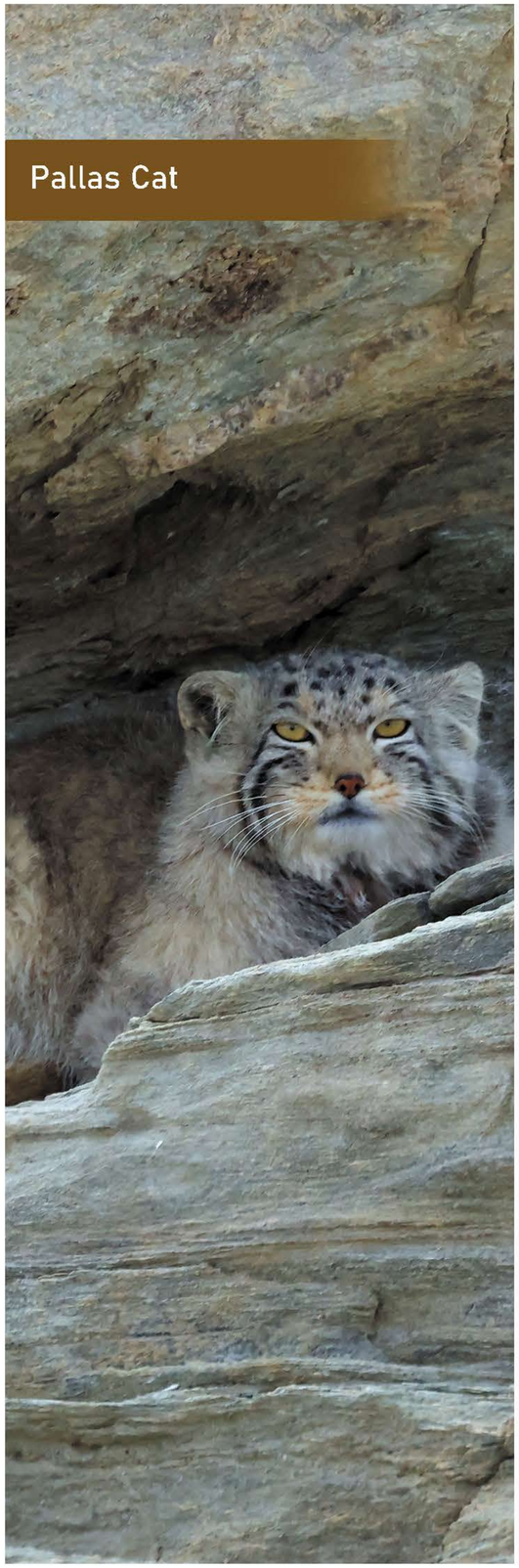

Eurasian Owl

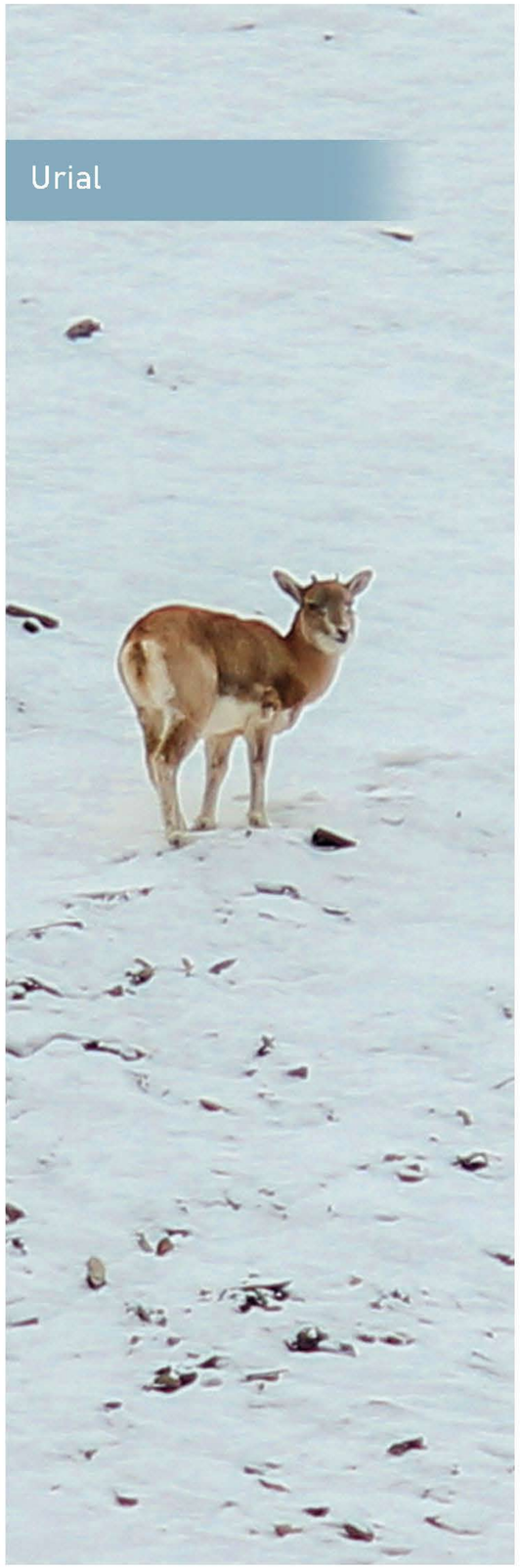
Kingfisher

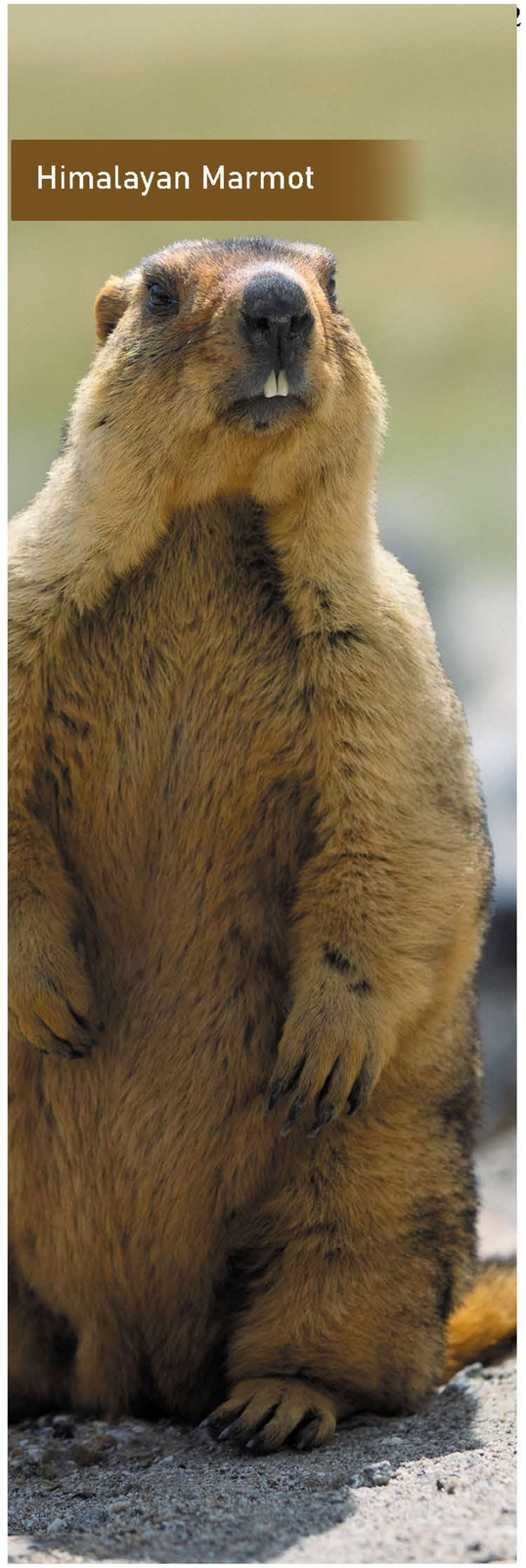
Rosefinch


Asiatic Ibex

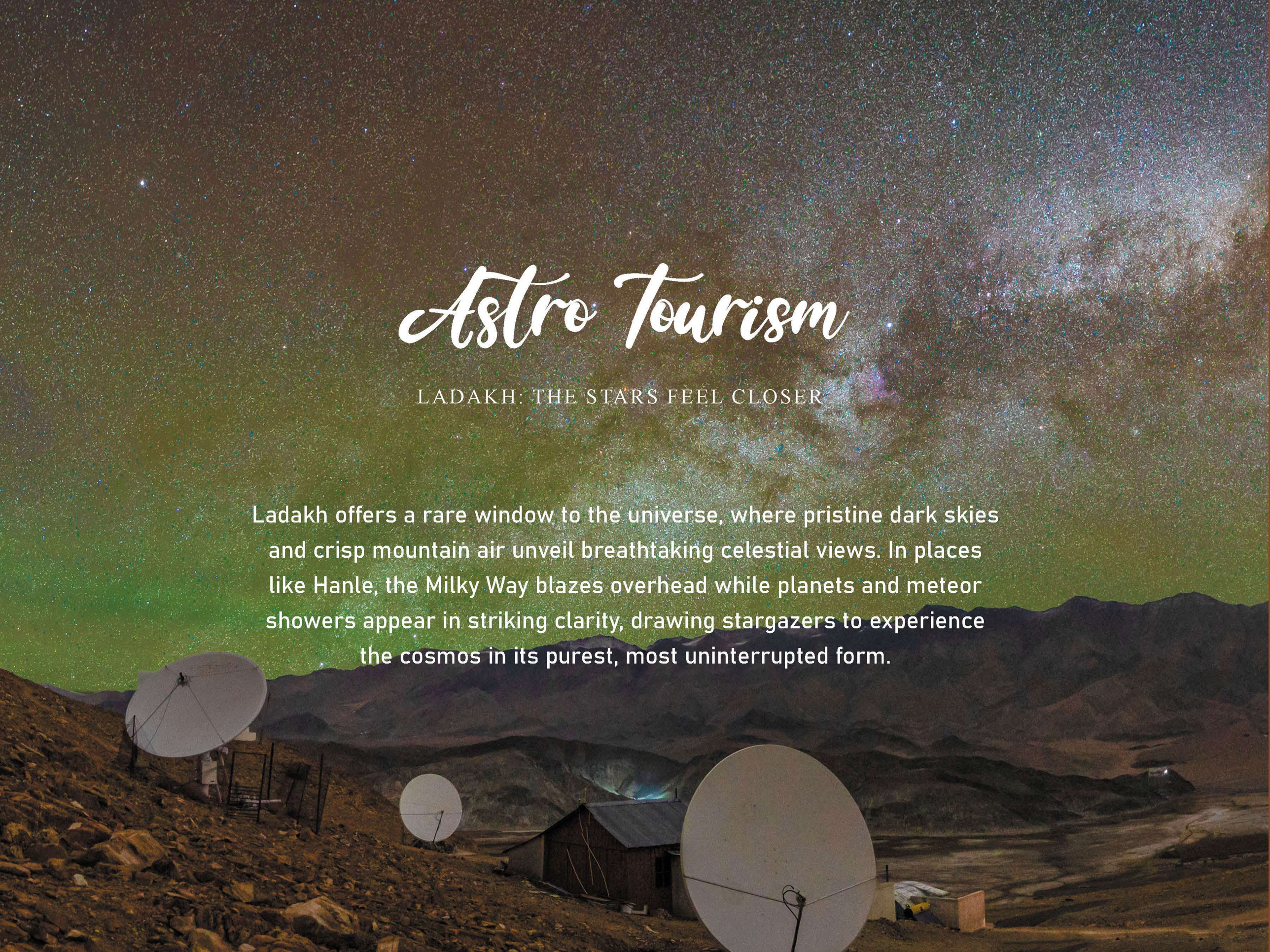

Bactarian Camel


Pallas Cat


Urial


Himalayan Marmot

Wandering Ladakh's high plateaus above 4,000 m, the Wild Ass (Kiang) grazes in reddish-brown herds across the wild steppe.



Astro Tourism

LADAKH: THE STARS FEEL CLOSER

Ladakh offers a rare window to the universe, where pristine dark skies and crisp mountain air unveil breathtaking celestial views. In places like Hanle, the Milky Way blazes overhead while planets and meteor showers appear in striking clarity, drawing stargazers to experience the cosmos in its purest, most uninterrupted form.

Ladakh's clear skies and high altitude make it a top astro-tourism spot, with Hanle as the stargazing hub.

With its vast night skies revealing the Milky Way in stunning clarity.

Stargaze in Nubra Valley's sand dunes, where desert nights unveil a sky full of stars..

Eco-Rural Tourism

DISCOVER LADAKH THE SUSTAINABLE WAY

Eco tourism in Ladakh blends adventure with responsibility. Visitors engage with untouched landscapes through sustainable practices, minimizing impact while supporting conservation and local livelihoods in this delicate Himalayan ecosystem.

In Ladakh, homestays offer travelers an intimate glimpse into local life.

Conserves natural environments, supports local communities, and ensures that fragile ecosystems remain undisturbed

By practicing sustainable tourism, visitors can enjoy the stunning landscapes and unique culture of Ladakh while helping to protect its environment, wildlife, and traditions for future generations.

Wellness Toursim

SOWA RIGPA: HEALING IN HARMONY WITH NATURE

With its natural hot springs, tranquil yoga experiences, and the deeply rooted Sowa Rigpa healing system, Ladakh offers a holistic retreat. Mineral-rich waters, mindful practices, and ancient therapies together restore physical vitality while nurturing deep inner calm and balance.

Experience yoga in Ladakh, where high-altitude serenity and Himalayan landscapes deepen mindfulness and meditation.

Flavours Forged in Fire and Frost

CUISINE

Ladakhi cuisine is a blend of simple ingredients, mild flavors, and hearty dishes designed to nourish the body and sustain life in the high-altitude Himalayan environment.

Skyu and Chhutagi are traditional Ladakhi pasta dishes, transforming simple ingredients into hearty, warming meals for the high-altitude climate.

Hearty breads like Khambir and Paba form the core of Ladakhi cuisine, ranging from humble barley dishes to nutritious buckwheat momos and sweet apricot desserts, blending simplicity, health, and local ingredients into unique flavors.

Sports in Ladakh

EXTREME LAND. ENDLESS ACTION.

Sports in Ladakh reflect both its rugged terrain and rich cultural heritage. From the fast-paced excitement of ice hockey played on frozen lakes in winter to the traditional sport of polo, one of the oldest in the world, and the precision of archery practiced during local festivals, Ladakh offers a unique blend of adventure and tradition.

CCM
CCM

From ancient Baltistan to Drass and Turtuk, Himalayan horses and fearless riders carry Ladakh's high-altitude polo legacy forward.

Lammer

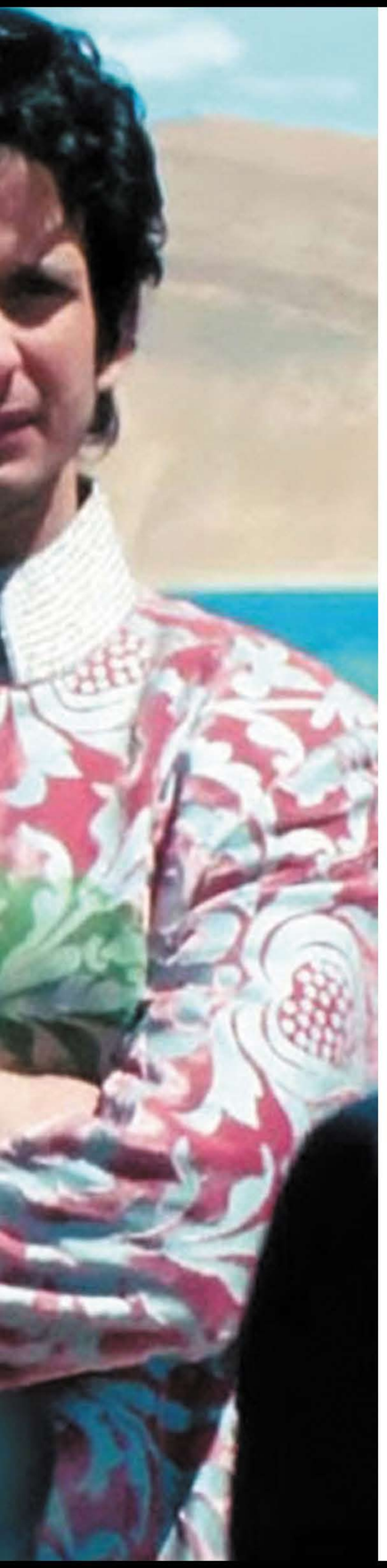
In Ladakh, archery is more than sport—it's a celebration of heritage, skill, and warrior spirit.

Film Destination

EVERY FRAME FEELS CINEMATIC

Ladakh's breathtaking landscapes provide a perfect canvas for cinema. From towering peaks to tranquil lakes, its raw and diverse scenery brings depth, scale, and authenticity to visual storytelling.

Tso Moriri Lake: a living set where every ripple, reflection, and peak whispers a story waiting to unfold on film.



A cinematic paradise of rugged, sunlit landscapes, turquoise lakes, and high-altitude deserts, showcased in films like 3 Idiots, Dhurandhar, Shershaah, Jab Tak Hai Jaan, and the Hollywood epic Seven Years in Tibet.

Winter Wonderland

EXPERIENCE WINTER AMID SNOW, ICE, AND FROZEN LAKES

Frozen lakes turn into arenas for ice hockey and marathons, while snow-covered slopes welcome skiers. Monastic festivals add warmth and color, blending sport with culture in a stunning setting.

Snowflakes and smiles: experience Ladakh's desert transformed into a winter wonderland.

Pangong Lake: The world's highest frozen lake marathon, where every stride is record-breaking adventure.

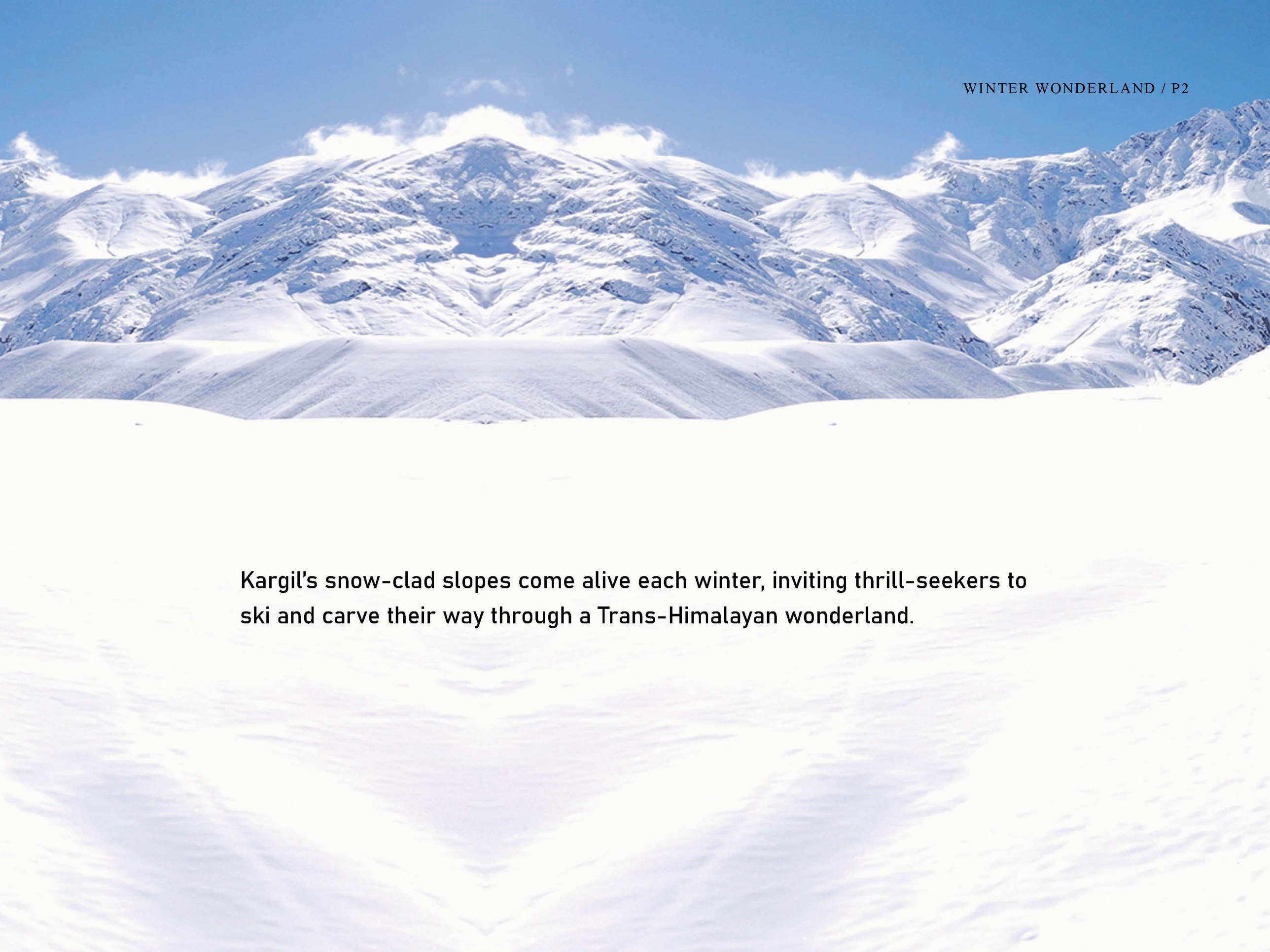
KHELO INDIA WINTER GAMES

Feel the pulse of winter—Ladakh's Wint
promise action, energy, and unforgettal

ter Games
ble moments.

In Ladakh, winter monastic festivals transform the cold months into sacred celebrations, where monks perform masked Cham dances.

SECURITY NOTICE
NO PHOTOS OR VIDEO ALLOWED



Kargil's snow-clad slopes come alive each winter, inviting thrill-seekers to ski and carve their way through a Trans-Himalayan wonderland.

Ladakh's ice stupas rise like frozen towers from the desert, a surreal winter spectacle you have to see to believe.

Celebrate Ladakh

FESTIVALS OF LADAKH

A journey shaped by seasons, stories, and evolving experiences. Where ancient traditions meet contemporary celebrations amid Ladakh's dramatic landscapes.

APRICOT BLOSSOM FESTIVAL

Ladakh's Apricot Blossom Festival: a living postcard of blossoms, tradition, and memories you'll never forget.

LADAKH ASTRO WEEK

A stargazer's dream with expert-guided tours under infinite Himalayan skies.

CHANGTHANG NOMADIC FESTIVAL

A breathtaking Himalayan spectacle of culture, color, and nomadic heritage waiting to be explored.

Bringing together artists from across India with local Zanskari traditions, this vibrant festival showcases handicrafts, folk music, archery, cuisine, and storytelling.

BBB

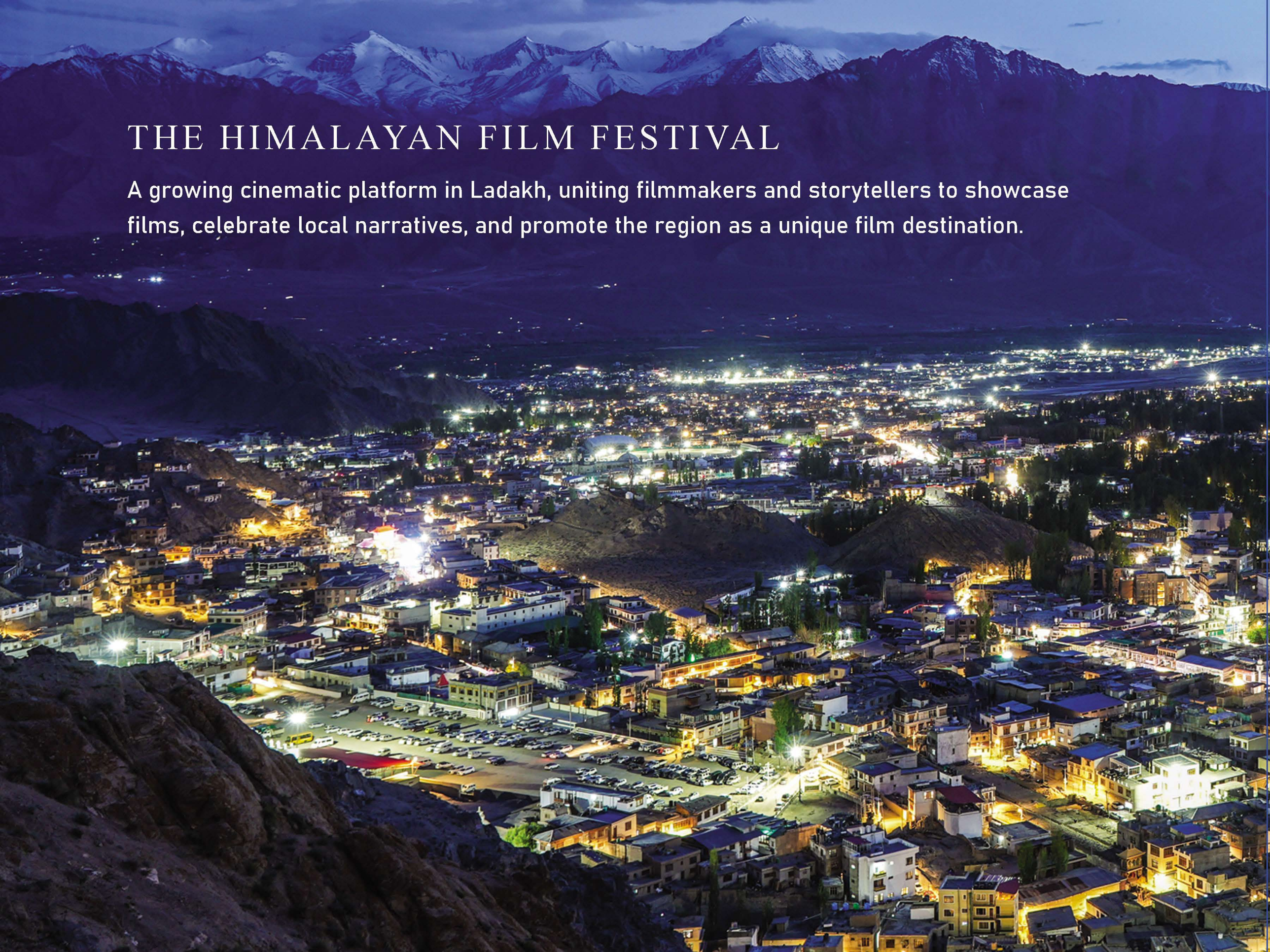
SURU SUMMER FESTIVAL

Suru Valley in Kargil is Ladakh's adventure hub, offering trekking, mountaineering, rafting, bouldering, and paragliding amid vibrant village life

M.A

LADAKH FESTIVAL

Dive into Ladakh's grandest cultural celebration—heritage, crafts, flavors, and Himalayan magic awaits.



THE HIMALAYAN FILM FESTIVAL

A growing cinematic platform in Ladakh, uniting filmmakers and storytellers to showcase films, celebrate local narratives, and promote the region as a unique film destination.

LADAKH BIKER WEEK

A Himalayan odyssey where rugged peaks, adrenaline rides, and a vibrant biker tribe redefine adventure."

MH 23 BJ 5563

CONCEPT & OVERALL GUIDANCE

Tsering Paldan, JKAS
Director
Department of Tourism & Culture
UT Ladakh

EDITORIAL TEAM:

Padma Angmo, JKAS, Assistant Director Department of Tourism Leh.
Mohd. Ali Tak, Assistant Director Department of Tourism Kargil.
Rasool Lal, Tourist Officer, Zanskar
Stanzin Chondol, Assistant Tourist Officer, Leh

DESIGN & RESEARCH TEAM:

Ishey Dorjey, Graphic Designer, Tourism Department UT Ladakh
Urgain Dolma, Receptionist Tourism Department Leh
Jigmet Gyalson, eceptionist Tourism Department Kargil
Abbas Dardistani, Photographer Tourism Department UT Ladakh
Phuntsog Angmo, Content Writer Tourism Department Leh
Rinchen Angmo, Social Media Handler, Tourism Department UT Ladakh

PHOTOGRAPHERS:

Dorje Nyerchung
Nilza Alchi Kitchen
Professor Dawa Tsangspa
Zaheer Abbas
Stanzin Pachuk
Dorjey Kaya
Dr.Iqbal Ali Khan
Feroz Hussain lati
Chospel Kukshow
Tonyo Tashi
Chospel Matho
Iftikhar Hussain
Hakima Banoo Ali
Mudasir Ahmad
Ilyas Ansari

INFORMATION PAGE

Official Tourism Website:

Ladakh Tourism

Follow Us On:

Instagram | Facebook | YouTube

LADAKH

LADAKH

THE LAND OF HIGH PASSES