



Jammu & Kashmir (including Ladakh)

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Best Places to Eat

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- ➔ Food Planet (p239)
- ➔ Falak (p280)
- ➔ Café Cloud (p247)

Best Places to Sleep

- ➔ Stok Palace Heritage Hotel (p244)
- ➔ Srinagar Houseboats (p270)
- ➔ Nimmu House (p256)
- ➔ Khyber Himalayan Resort & Spa (p276)
- ➔ Hidden North Guest House (p255)

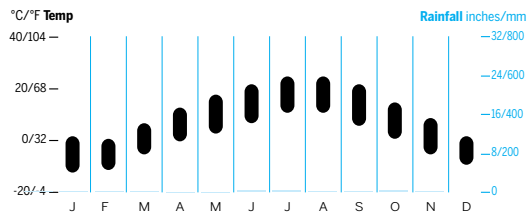
Why Go?

The state of Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) brings together three incredibly different worlds. Hindu Jammu and Katra, in the south, are the state's rail hubs and a major draw for domestic pilgrims. Muslim Kashmir is India's Switzerland, attracting hordes of local tourists seeking cool summer air, alpine scenery and Srinagar's romantic houseboat accommodation. And then there's the Himalayan land of Ladakh, which for most foreigners is J&K's greatest attraction. Its disarmingly friendly, ethno-linguistically Tibetan people are predominantly Buddhist; their timeless monasteries are set between arid canyons and soaring peaks, while emerald-green villages nestle photogenically in highland deserts.

Kashmir is politically volatile, with July and August often the 'season' for shutdowns, demonstrations and curfews. Indeed, arguments over Kashmir's status caused three 20th-century wars. Ladakh is altogether different, a calm place where your main concern will be high-altitude acclimatisation.

When to Go

Leh



Apr–Jun Kashmir is in full bloom but overloaded with domestic tourists. Prices peak.

Jul–Aug Perfect for Ladakh; rain drenches Jammu. Pilgrims flood to Amarnath.

Dec–Mar Ski season at Gulmarg. Ladakh has festivals but no road access or tourists.



Jammu & Kashmir (including Ladakh) Highlights

1 Indus Valley

monasteries (p245)

Murmuring meditative mantras in mural-decked gompas (Tibetan Buddhist monasteries) such as Chemrey or Thiksey.

2 Markha Valley (p248)

Experiencing the stark magnificence of Ladakh with a hassle-free (and traffic-free) homestay trek.

3 Srinagar (p270)

Enjoying an amusingly caricatured Raj-type experience relaxing on a deluxe Dal Lake houseboat.