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## Routes and Road Conditions In Leh – Ladakh | Ladakh Self Drive Tips

By [Dheeraj Sharma](#) on May 28, 2012 00:05 in [Ladakh](#), [Travel Articles](#) / [126 comments](#)

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Tourism in Ladakh has risen in the last few years and many people prefer to self drive to Leh – Ladakh for satisfying their hunger for adventure 😊 ... There are many tourist places in Leh – Ladakh like Nubra Valley, [Pangong Tso](#), [Tso Moriri](#), [Sham Valley](#) etc. and most of them are connected via Leh town except the adventurous connecting routes which exist between them. However, it always a good idea to plan your Ladakh journey well enough so that you do not come with a nightmare experience from heaven, which I found many people had, this time when I was present in Ladakh. And, one of the key areas or things is to know about road conditions that you might expect along with the fuel stations or availability of fuel within Ladakh or in roads to Ladakh like Manali – Leh Highway and Srinagar – Leh Highway, once you reach Ladakh and drive on your own. I know there are many great articles or maps available over the Internet and even in Ladakh section of my blog but I will just try to add two more OK types article in the list :)...

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In the first two article of this series “[Ladakh Self Drive Tips](#)“, we talked about **7 most useful tips for Leh – Ladakh self drive** (as linked [here](#)) and we discussed about the petrol/diesel or fuel availability within Leh – Ladakh (as linked [here](#)). In this third and final article of this series “Ladakh Self Drive Tips“, we will talk about the standard road conditions on various routes within Leh – Ladakh leaving aside in-roads to Ladakh viz. Manali – Leh Highway and [Srinagar – Leh Highway](#) as much have been discussed about them in their respective Travel Guides. I know road conditions keep changing but still I feel to share them with you all because knowing about such road conditions is extremely critical and one can take critical decisions such as whether he/she requires to take own car or not, if Sedans or Hatchbacks will be suitable to be driven or they need High Ground clearance of SUVs or may be SUVs with 4×4 etc. Thus, if one knows the road conditions in advance, it might be really helpful in deciding on such factors.

For each and every route sections elaborated below, I will try to suggest car types with difficulty level as **Easy, Manageable, Tough, Very Tough, Car Killer**. Driving comfort is also taken into account while suggesting, so it is not just the driving. But, **PLEASE DO NOT** take it literally especially in the cases of Sedans and Hatchbacks. Even, if it is mentioned that route is manageable for Sedans and Hatchbacks, you still have to drive with extreme caution and care.

#### Leh Local Sightseeing + Sham Valley

Most of the roads around Leh town as well as Sham Valley are good in conditions through out the year barring few sections where water keeps running through, thus damaging them. Only very few sections of these roads are in bad conditions. Sham Valley include Alchi, Likir, Basgo Palace, Magnetic Hills, Confluence at Nimmu, Gurudwara Pather Sahib and Leh Local Sightseeing include Namgyal Gumpa, Leh Palace, Shanti Stupa, Shankar Gumpa, Main Market, Hall of Fame, Spituk Gumpa.

Sedans/Hatchbacks = Easy.

High Ground Clearance SUVs (4×2) = Easy.

High Ground Clearance SUVs (4×4) = Easy.

#### Leh – Khardung La – Nubra Valley – Leh

The road conditions within Nubra Valley are very good but the ascent from South Pullu to Khardung La and then descent towards North Pullu has major sections of the road in tatters. Now, in winters or early summers like April and May, due to the presence of snow, it is extremely difficult to drive on this section (South Pullu – Khardung La – North Pullu). Once, you are in Nubra Valley most of the roads are excellent.

Sedans/Hatchbacks = Easy (Nubra Valley) but Tough (South Pullu – Khardung La – North Pullu), Very Tough in early summers.

High Ground Clearance SUVs (4×2) = Easy (Nubra Valley) but Manageable (South Pullu – Khardung La – North Pullu), Tough early summers.

High Ground Clearance SUVs (4×4) = Easy (Nubra Valley) but Manageable without 4×4 (South Pullu – Khardung La – North Pullu), Manageable in early summers with 4×4.

#### Leh – Karu – Shakti – Chang La – Durbuk – Tangste – Pangong Tso (Lukung)

The road conditions towards Pangong Tso are mix of good (Leh – Karu – Shakti, Durbuk – Tangste – Lukung), bad (Lukung – Spangmik) and very bad (Shakti – Chang La – Durbuk). Roads from Leh upto Shakti are decent in conditions but again the ascend from Shakti to Changla is something very treacherous and with bad road conditions. Similarly, as you descend towards Durbuk from Changla most of the road is in bad shape. From Lukung to Spangmik, there is no road but a dirt track.

Sedans/Hatchbacks = Tough, at least the climb up/down for Chang La and Lukung to Spangmik but rest is Manageable.

High Ground Clearance SUVs (4×2) = Manageable.

High Ground Clearance SUVs (4×4) = Manageable without 4×4.

#### Leh – Upshi – Chumathang – Mahe – Sumdo – Kiagar Tso – Tso Moriri (Korzok)

The road conditions towards Tso Moriri are mix of good and bad. Roads from Leh upto Mahe are decent in conditions but once you cross Kiagar Tso ahead of Sumdo the road ends and the dirt track starts. From Kiagar Tso upto Korzok Village, being dirt track, it is very treacherous. If it rains or in early summers when snow is present around roads, many sections forms slush on them which is difficult to manage at times.

Sedans/Hatchbacks = Mostly Manageable but Tough in early summers.

High Ground Clearance SUVs (4×2) = Mostly Easy.

High Ground Clearance SUVs (4×4) = Mostly Easy without 4×4.

#### Pangong Tso (Spangmik) – Man – Merak – Chusul – Tsaga – Loma – Nyoma – Mahe – Sumdo – Kiagar Tso – Tso Moriri (Korzok)

Major part of this remote but most beautiful route of Ladakh in Changthang, runs on a dirt track due to absence of any road. Lukung – Spangmik – Man – Merak – Chusul – Tsaga does not have any road at all and have some really bad sections where getting through with low ground clearance is very difficult, especially before Chusul. Tsaga – Loma – Nyoma – Mahe is freshly laid tarmac (as per April 2012) where it will be easy to drive. Even the diversion road to **Hanle from Loma** is in very good condition barring few patches. For rest, refer Tso Moriri route.

Sedans/Hatchbacks = Mostly, Very Very Tough and may be Car Killer at some sections, Manageable after Tsaga Village.

High Ground Clearance SUVs (4×2) = Manageable, Tough at some sections when slush and ice is present on it.

High Ground Clearance SUVs (4×4) = Manageable, Tough without 4×4 but Manageable with 4×4.

#### Nubra Valley – Agham – Wari La – Shakti – Chang La – Durbuk – Tangste – Pangong Tso (Lukung)

This one is mostly used by tourist interested to reach Pangong Tso directly from Nubra Valley. Major part of the ascend and descend towards Wari La from Agham Village is tough and roads are mix of average and bad. Second part about this route is that, you will very rarely spot a taxi or other vehicle, so in case of any exigency, help will be very hard to find. Since, this route does not have much priority so you may most likely to find it either closed or in extremely bad shape. For rest, refer Pangong Tso route.

Sedans/Hatchbacks = Tough, at least the climb up/down for Wari La and then again to Changla. Very Tough in early summers.

High Ground Clearance SUVs (4×2) = Manageable, Tough in early summers.

High Ground Clearance SUVs (4×4) = Manageable, Tough in early summers without 4×4.

#### Nubra Valley – Agham – Shyok Village – Durbuk – Tangste – Pangong Tso (Lukung)

**In future this route will be** mostly used by tourists interested to reach Pangong Tso directly from Nubra Valley. It has been three years since this route has been made through but has remained mostly closed so far due to major landslides that happens on this route. Some of the sections between Agham and Shyok villages are extremely difficult, very much landslide prone and will most likely get your heart in the mouth. This whole stretch has variety of troubles to greet you – water crossing (some nasty ones), loose rocks, sharp stones, big rocks under water crossings or standing water etc. There are some sections especially before Shyok Village, which might be very tough to climb even with High Ground clearance vehicles without 4×4. At one of the section, we were moving and one person kept clearing stones falling from above 😊 ...

YOU MUST keep in mind that this route is rarely taken by anyone and even taxis from Leh refuse to take this route. Govt. has given orders to keep this route open for this tourist season 2012 and onwards but being there myself in April and seeing the roughest terrain, I seriously doubt that they would be able to keep this route operational especially at the time of rains or when snow melts very fast making some nasty water crossings. Anyone, in any vehicle should try to attempt this route only if other taxis are doing it so that you get some help at least in case of any breakdown or if he/she is too, too adventurous to take on the challenges on this road but sensibly. Vehicles with high Ground Clearance with 4×4 in them is only suggested on this route. Always inquire about the road conditions either at Agham Village or Khalsar Village before attempting it from Nubra Valley side and either at Shyok village or at a GREF hut that comes after Shyok village from Durbuk side.

Sedans/Hatchbacks = Car Killer!!

High Ground Clearance SUVs (4×2) = Very Tough, may be Car Killer one when water flows heavily in July, August.

High Ground Clearance SUVs (4×4) = Tough even with 4×4 at some sections.

**Loma – Hanle – Charchaghan La – Chumur – Tso Moriri (Korzok)**

This remote route of Ladakh in Changthang, runs on a dirt track due to absence of any road at all. It also has some bad sections where getting through with low ground clearance vehicle is difficult. There is one VERY nasty water crossing near Charchaghan La, I guess which is very difficult to cross especially post afternoon. Loma to Hanle is in very good condition barring few patches.

Sedans/Hatchbacks = Very Tough.

High Ground Clearance SUVs (4×2) = Tough but manageable, Very Tough if snow/slush/ice is present and in water crossings.

High Ground Clearance SUVs (4×4) = Tough but manageable without 4×4.

#### Conclusion:

I hope the above article will be useful in planning your trip to Leh – Ladakh by giving you a better idea of the routes and their conditions. I know the road conditions keeps changing but still it will give some level of idea about what to expect and where. I hope you enjoyed If you have ever self-driven to Leh – Ladakh and have some valuable tips to share, please share it with us too, so that it could be helpful to other self-drive enthusiasts and fellow travellers planning their upcoming trip to Leh – Ladakh 😊 ...

Did I miss any route??? 😊 ...

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## 126 Comments

- 
**Jaya** says:  
**Apr 28, 2014 at 17:08**

Hello dheeraj, Your blog is really very informative and helpful. I really appreciate. Well I am planning a road trip with my fiancé in Mid June taking Manali-Leh route by own car. Is it feasible to go by car or should we hire local taxi and Is it safe to take that route?

#### Reply

- 
**Dheeraj Sharma** says:  
**Apr 29, 2014 at 14:35**


Jaya, what is the type of car you are planning to take and how many days do you have in hand? You must have already read the above series for road conditions and tips for Self Drive to Ladakh.

#### Reply

- 
**Jaya** says:  
**Apr 29, 2014 at 15:11**

We are planning to go by hatchback and we would be having around week to 10 days.

#### Reply

- 
**Dheeraj Sharma** says:  
**Apr 29, 2014 at 15:28**

10 days for Ladakh road trip will be less and tiring. For hatchback/sedan taking on Manali – Leh Highway and Ladakh, please refer the link: [FAQ | Can I do Leh – Ladakh trip in Hatchback or Sedan?](#) for more details.

- 
**Nikhil** says:  
**Mar 10, 2014 at 08:41**

Please guide me the and cautions required for biking the trip to ladakh

#### Reply