

Srinagar To Leh Highway Guide

Out of the only 2 roads that connect Ladakh with rest of the India, Srinagar - Leh highway, also known as National Highway 1D, is easier than Manali Leh highway, both in terms of distance and terrain. You will not be completely cut off from civilization while on this road, unlike Manali Leh road, and will not get stranded in middle of nowhere in case your car or motorcycle breaks down.

However, this road is an equal to Manali Leh route when it comes to the beautiful vistas that both of these roads have to offer. The 440 kms long highway passes through the mesmerizing valley of Kashmir and Sonamarg, takes you across the heights of zoji La, Namika La, Fotu La to the beautiful towns of Drass and Kargil and finally to Leh. One of the most interesting part of this road is that it runs right next to LOC.

If you are taking this road to reach Leh, the route would be as follows. Please right click and save the map to your hard disk in order to view it in full size.

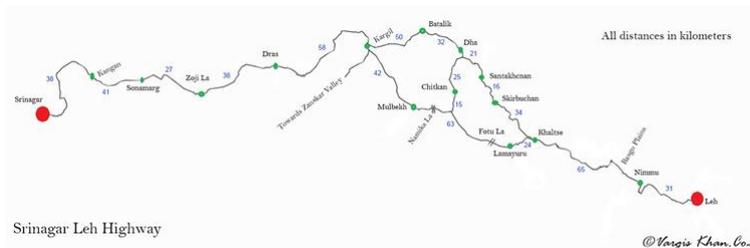
Srinagar - Sonamarg [85 Kms]

Sonamarg - Zoji La - Drass [62 Kms]

Drass - Kargil [58 Kms]

Kargil- Mulbekh - Namika La - Fotu La - Lamayuru [110 Kms]

Lamayuru - Hangro Loops - Nimmu - Leh [125 Kms]



This journey can easily be done in 2 days, starting from Srinagar on day 1, night halt at either Drass or Kargil and reach Leh by the evening of 2nd day. This is a pretty smooth highway, at least until Kargil, with a few rough patches. Around Kargil, road is a little damaged but not for long and ride once again gets smooth as you get closer to Leh.

1. Srinagar - Sonamarg [85 Kms] :

Get ready to be awed by the beauty of Kashmir as soon as you start on this journey. It will only take a couple of hours to reach Sonamarg, literally meaning meadows of gold. Beautiful in every terms, Sonamarg is a place that will take your breath away. Presence of Army is so heavy in this area that it will make you feel that you are in an Army base. There are soldiers posted every few hundred meters, on every road, every hill and every bridge, eying you suspiciously if you stopped somewhere. But rest assured, they are there only to protect you and it is only because of them that you are able to take this journey safely.

Don't forget to take a break and eat at Sonamarg. This place has the most delicious food to offer and if you are a non-vegetarian, you are in for a treat.

2. Sonamarg - Zoji La - Drass [62 Kms] :

After crossing Sonamarg, you will be driving up the first high altitude pass on this road, Zoji La located at 11,640 ft. Visitors are required to register themselves before crossing the pass and here you will also encounter the roughest patch on this entire route. There is in fact no road at some places and it turns more into a dirt track, so if you are crossing the pass during monsoon or while its raining, extra caution is advised.

Road across Zoji La is in excellent condition and it wont take you long to reach the beautiful town of Drass. You can either break your journey here or continue to Kargil and halt there for the night. Hotels in Drass are pretty cheap and you can find a room for as low as Rs. 300 for the night. Kargil however is a little costlier and you may find it difficult to find a hotel if you are on a budget. If you don't mind shedding a few hundreds more, then staying at Kargil would work just fine.

3. Drass To Kargil [58 Kms] :

The next town after Drass is Kargil. Yes, the same Kargil that Pakistan tried to capture and where so many Indian Heroes fell during the war. After hearing and reading so many stories related to this town and the war here, you will be surprised as how ordinary it looks, just like any other Indian city or village with people going on about their day to day life amidst heavy security. Roads here are in excellent condition and wont take you much time to reach Kargil from Drass.

This is where most people traveling on this road halt for the night so finding a hotel wouldn't be a problem, but finding one in a budget could be quite a task.

Located on the road from Drass to Kargil is the Drass War Memorial, built in the memory of soldiers killed in the 1999 war. It is a must visit for every passing Indian.

4. Kargil - Mulbek - Namika La - Fotu La - Lamayuru [110 Kms] :

Around 40 kms from Kargil is the small village of Mulbek. The chief attraction of this village is the 9 Meters statue of Maitreya, the future Buddha, carved out of solid rock. It is believed that this statue dates back to 7th or 8th century, when Buddhist missionaries came traveling east of the Himalayas. This statue is quite a marvel of art and you don't want to miss seeing it while crossing the village of Mulvek. Taking photographs of the statue however is not allowed.

Next is the 2nd high altitude pass on this route, Namika La, located at a height of 12,198 ft. Another 40 odd kms from Namika La is the 3rd high altitude pass, Fotu La, located at 13,479 ft. It is also the highest point of Srinagar Leh highway.

Descent from Fotu La will take you to the village of Lamayuru, which is famous for one of the oldest Gompas. Take a break here for a visit to the Gompa and click some photos.

5. Lamayuru - Hangro Loops - Nimmu - Leh [125 Kms] :

After Lamayuru is the ascent of Hangro Loops. Be very careful while driving here as these 18 loops are very steep and sharp.

From Hangro it is a straight run to Leh with a quick break at the village of Nimmu to visit the famous Gurudwara Patthar Sahib.

Accommodations And Other Facilities :

All towns on this route have hotels and guest houses.

Petrol Pumps are also located at all major towns including Sonmarg, Kargil, Drass and Khaltse.

Prepaid phones do not work in this region. If you have a post-paid connection, network will be a come and go. While MTNL and BSNL works throughout the highway, other network phones will keep getting and losing signal.