



From left to right: At Artisanal Alchemy, fresh chhutagi (Ladakhi pasta) is cooked with root vegetables, seasonal greens and meat; Willow Kitchen & Bar is nestled in an apricot orchard; festive, cosy and authentic meals are shared at the Balti Farm Experience.

Unmissable meals in Ladakh

Ladakh, a former Trans-Himalayan kingdom nestled in the high north of India, is a delicious option for travellers looking to experience India beyond the clichés.

BY SMITHA MENON

IMAGES: KAREN ANAND / SUPPLIED

What with a local in Ladakh and it won't be long before you get invited home to sip on a drink called butter tea and huddle around the fire in the hearth. Older Ladakhis will tell you that in richer homes, the hearth's fire was always kept burning, and never allowed to die. Back before matches were readily available, neighbours came over to 'borrow' fire, to keep the kitchen bustling

and the hearth warm. While much has changed across the erstwhile Himalayan kingdom since then, the Ladakhis' kindness and hospitality remain the same. Nestled between Kashmir, Pakistan-administered Gilgit-Baltistan to the north-west, and Chinese-controlled Tibet and Xinjiang to the east and north, Ladakh's location on the ancient Silk Route allowed for its culture to draw from many regional influences, from Islamic neighbours and

19th century Sikh invaders to Tibetan traders who passed through the region. Its food then—a reflection of the harsh terrain and unforgiving climate—is not only a lesson in flavour combinations and textures, but also in history. Thanks to the efforts of enterprising locals, those new to the region can enjoy the cuisine, its ingredients and culture—in delicious and exciting new ways. Here are six unmissable food experiences to have in Ladakh.

Indulge

01 BEST FOR FARM-TO-TABLE Balti Farm Experience

A six-hour drive from Leh, Turtuk, one of the last few inhabited villages near the Indo-Pak boundaries, is a bright green valley of bubbling brooks and mountain foliage. The village was in Pakistan territory until 1971, when it was occupied by the Indian Army during a skirmish. Turtuk was closed to travellers due to border security reasons and only opened for tourism in 2010. Part of the erstwhile Baltistan region, Turtuk's locals enjoy a cuisine that departs from the food of most of Ladakh, owing to its temperate climate that produces fresh, leafy vegetables. The 10-course tasting menu comprises exquisite flavours using garden vegetables, herbs from nearby mountains, and grass-fed lamb. Get the ba-leh, barley noodles in a lamb broth, and the Kisirnagrang-thur, buckwheat pancakes served with tsamik, a yoghurt dip topped with radish leaves and dried herbs.



02 BEST FOR VEGETARIANS Tsas

While much of the food in Ladakh is fermented and meat-heavy owing to the climate, Tsas, which translates to 'kitchen garden' in Ladakhi, is a paradise for vegetarian eaters looking to explore the local cuisine in modern and innovative ways. The menu is inspired by owner Rigzin Lachic's travels, with dishes that draw from Spanish, Japanese and French cuisine, paired with principles from Ladakhi cooking, which is rooted in a respect for nature and seasonality. Take for instance, the local Ladakhi mushroom pâté covered with young apricot kernels, paired with a variety of bread, crisps and an umami-rich mushroom broth; and arancini balls made from barley with a filling of walnut and soft churpi (yak's cheese) and served with marinara and saffron cream. Some of these dishes are almost too pretty to eat.



Clockwise from top left: At Namza Dining, fresh high-altitude apricots are incorporated into the menu; the radish carpaccio at Tsas is bursting with flavour; get comfortable for the 10-course tasting menu at Balti Farm Experience.

03 BEST FOR HOME COOKING Namza Dining

Tired of sending clients from their fashion boutique to mediocre restaurants around Leh, friends Padma Yangchen and Jigmet Diskit—who run Namza Couture—decided to make Ladakhi cuisine their new obsession. After documenting recipes from grandmothers and extensive travels across the region to learn more about lesser-known cooking practices and techniques, the duo launched Namza Dining in 2016, one of the first restaurants in the region to cook and serve long-established Ladakhi cuisine outside a home kitchen. In the traditional dining room next to a kitchen garden, be sure to try gyuma, Ladakh's famous hearty blood sausages, yarkandi pulao, a comforting rice dish flecked with chunks of slow-cooked mutton and shapchen, a local Ladakhi tartare made with pounded yak meat.

no.3

USD 20 | ZAR 375



Bhutan

YEAR OF THE DRAGON

Big cats

WITNESS THEM IN THE WILD

The allure of travel
CULTURES, CUISINES & CONTINENTS

bateleur

SEE WHAT LIES BEYOND

BATELEUR

Contents



The Punakha Dzong, which translates to 'the palace of great happiness or bliss'.

18
COVER STORY

TRAVEL THAT TRANSCENDS TIME
Bhutan is a destination seemingly untouched by time, yet way ahead of its time too.

04
Editor's letter

06
Contributors

10
Music to travel to

12
The hot list

14
Small act, big impact

140
The last laugh

142
Bateleur recommends

144
What lies beyond

EXPLORE

34
Luxury to the nines

The most enviable places to stay in and around Cape Town.

44
Down by the river

A dramatic new look for &Beyond Grumeti Serengeti River Lodge.

52
Not your average safari tent

Three out-of-the-ordinary safari sleeps.

INDULGE

60
A taste of 3 continents

Recipes from Bhutan, Namibia and Chile to try at home.

68
Market stalls & Michelin stars

Explore the diverse culinary landscape of Peru.

76
Unmissable meals in Ladakh

A delicious fusion of local ingredients and cultural influences.

82
The pursuit of wellbeing

Travel inspiration to help recharge the soul's battery.