WORLD MONUMENTS WATCH

2008 List of 100 Most Endangered Sites

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SYRIA

TANZANIA

TURKEY

UKRAINE

UNITED KINGDOM

UNITED STATES

UZBEKISTAN

ZIMBABWE

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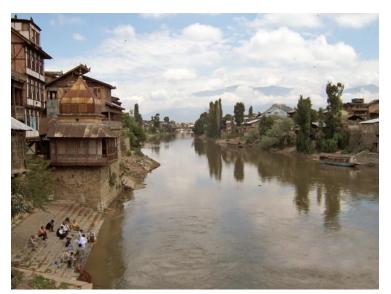
he Old Town of Leh, capital of the once-independent Himalayan kingdom of Ladakh, presents a rare example of an intact historic Tibeto-Himalayan urban settlement. Due to the region's formidable terrain and tradition of nomadic life, few urban centers (outside of fortified monasteries) ever existed in this area, and almost none survive today. Leh's first buildings—fortification walls, temples, and a royal residence—were built in the early fifteenth century. In the centuries that followed, many other important structures were erected there.

When the Indian government began building the first navigable roads through the region in the 1960s, many of Leh's Old Town gates and walls were demolished, some as recently as the 1980s. Nonetheless, Leh has managed to retain much of its historic character, comparable in scale and design to pre-1950 Lhasa, Tibet. A

2004 survey by the Tibet Heritage Fund revealed that 55 percent of the 189 historic or traditional buildings in the Old Town of Leh are in poor condition, requiring maintenance or repair if they are to survive another decade. The impacts of seismic activity and climate change, including increased rainfall in recent years, have accelerated the deterioration of traditional buildings in Ladakh. Melting glaciers in the Himalayas are also likely to cause problems for this region in the coming years, including glacial lake flooding and run-off as well as soil erosion. Measures must be taken to protect landmarked buildings, improve civic infrastructure and develop guidelines for sustainable development in the historic city. It is hoped that Watch listing will significantly increase the profile of Leh and help to draw attention to the rich cultural heritage of Ladakh that is at risk.

Srinigar Heritage Zone

SRINAGAR, JAMMU & KASHMIR, INDIA



ounded between the Jhelum River and Dal Lake in the mid-third century B.C., the city of Srinagar reached its apogee in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The city's most famous monuments, including the Shalimar and Nishat Gardens, were built after the Mughal emperor Akbar captured the province of Kashmir in the sixteenth century. During the

14TH-19TH CENTURIES A.D.

eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British occupation of Srinagar, colonial-style colleges, hospitals, and courts were constructed. In the downtown area of the city are less well-known residences, mosques, temples, hammams, and bazaars constructed in the local vernacular of timber and masonry architecture. Together, these buildings represent an unusually intact pre-modern urban environment.

Demand for land in historic areas of Srinigar is raising the commercial value of many residential buildings, which are being sold, demolished, and converted into modern dwellings or shopping malls. Unplanned and unregulated development schemes and a lack of basic amenities make Srinagar perhaps the most threatened yet valuable site in India. Several hundred buildings in downtown Srinagar have been identified for protection as part of a cultural resource mapping project, carried out by the Indian National Trust for Art & Cultural Heritage (INTACH). Ongoing conflict in the region continues to pose a threat to the city and its

inhabitants. The effort to protect the historic areas of Srinigar is part of a new emphasis in the region on heritage tourism and the local arts and crafts industry, which already forms the backbone of the state's economy. Watch Listing may lend timely support to these efforts and help increase public awareness of this important historic city.

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