

Design Resource

The Hanle Monastery

Life, Learnings and More from Ladakh

by

Prof. Sumant Rao and Ruchi Shah

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/hanle-monastery>



1. About - Hanle
2. Life at Hanle
3. Hanle Monastery
4. Contact Details

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Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/hanle-monastery/about-hanle>

About - Hanle

Located on the Indo-China border in the region of Changthang, Hanle is no longer accessible to tourists. A couple of nomadic villages and military bases is all that occupies this spacious and scenic region of Ladakh.

It is hard to miss the vacant but peaceful feeling aroused by the rolling mountains & grassy fields with offshoots of the Indus cutting through them. The word s-p-a-c-e gets a new meaning here.

Hanle is famous for its 16th century monastery located high above in the mountains, giving a spectacular view of the picturesque expanses. The monastery houses about 20 monks, and is visited by more during the year. It is also well known amongst scientists and Astro-physicians for its Astrophysics centre that is the second highest in the world.



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Life at Hanle

Habituated by a few people owing to its remoteness and extreme climatic conditions Hanle has a few small villages with 10-15 families living in them. The locals live a simple life sustaining themselves on cultivation.

Army officials can be seen regularly and occasionally engineers visit the Astrophysics centre located here. Hanle also sees a fair share of road construction laborers coming from Bihar and Orissa to work in this territory.

There is only one residential school in the region, which is the Hanle Gompa CIBS School, run at the Hanle monastery. Little monks and children study and live together here, they are all from the neighboring villages like Kaldho and Ponguk. There are currently 22 students studying here. Electricity is inadequate and temperatures can dip very low during the winters.

People here have a high level of detachment, and remain happy through most circumstances. What supports my theory is the fact that each family that has more than three children, gives one child away as a monk while one joins the Indian army.



The students in Hanle Monastery school are a mix of little monks and children from the nomadic families living in that region.

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2. **Life at Hanle**
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4. Contact Details

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The students of Hanle Gompa, CIBS School - having their morning tea.



The students working hard in an English class.



A teacher taking a Bodhi (Tibetan) class in the monastery school.



A student studying reciting verses from his Bodhi textbook.

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2. **Life at Hanle**
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Hanle Monastery

The Hanle monastery dates back to the 16th century. It was built through the patronage of King Sengge Namgyal.

While its architecture is typical of other monasteries found in Ladakh, what sets it apart is the setting of the monastery amidst the sparse surroundings.

Located at a steep height, a visitor has to climb it in the clockwise direction. High set, white walls are visually broken with splashes of bright color seen on the 'dhwaja's or flags, temple entrances and painted roofs.



The Hanle Monastery is built on a high hill, it dates back to the 16th century.

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2. Life at Hanle
3. **Hanle Monastery**
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2. Life at Hanle
3. **Hanle Monastery**
4. Contact Details



The Mani Padme stones that have been carved over the ages by the monks and local villagers dots the entire path leading to the temple and the monastery.



Stupa's, Small rooms, store rooms, local dry toilets and the school area can be seen in these images.



A smaller temple below the Monastery, where the little monks pray and chant every day.

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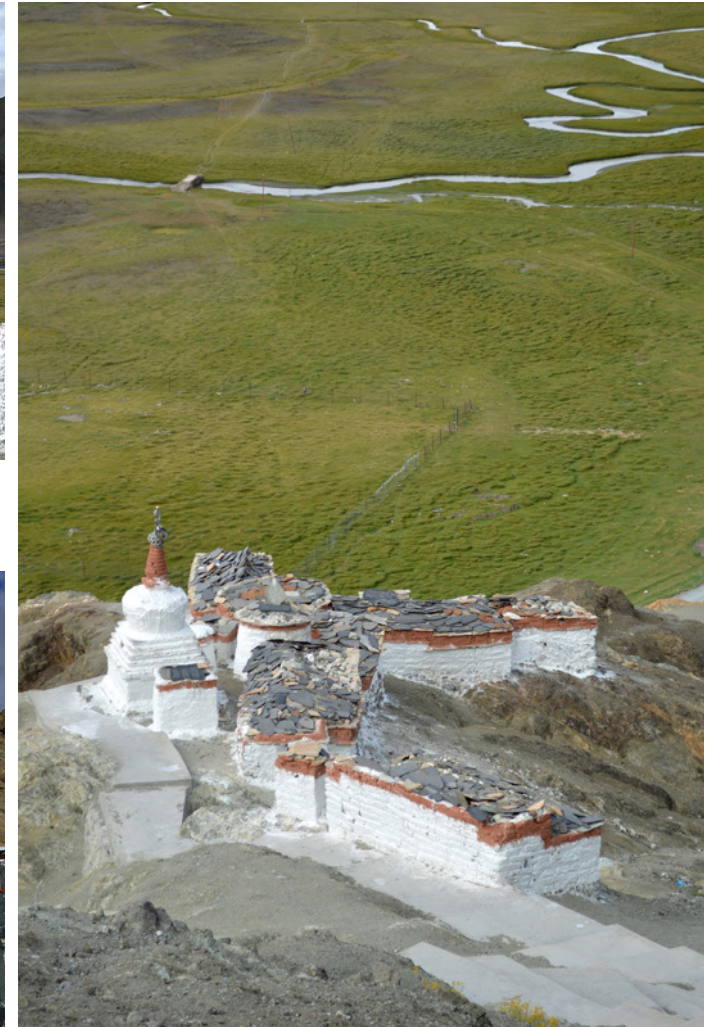
1. About - Hanle
2. Life at Hanle
3. **Hanle Monastery**
4. Contact Details



Stupa's, Small rooms, store rooms, local dry toilets and the school area can be seen in these images.



Trishul's on the roof indicate that the latter room is a temple. The white building in the forefront houses the monks looking after the administrative work of the monastery school.



The path leading up to the Monastery is flanked on the sides with numerous mounds of carved Mani stones and stupas.

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2. Life at Hanle
3. **Hanle Monastery**
4. Contact Details



The courtyard of the monastery has patches of paint amidst the architecture, signifying the Buddhist color theory, also adding to the vibrancy of the space.

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2. Life at Hanle
3. **Hanle Monastery**
4. Contact Details



A huge old and traditional prayer wheel sits in the centre of the courtyard.



Rooms belonging to different monks open into this courtyard.

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2. Life at Hanle
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The roof of the monastery shows the traditional chimneys and skylights that allow light to enter the rooms below.



Dhwaja's can be seen all over the monastery.

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2. Life at Hanle
3. **Hanle Monastery**
4. Contact Details



Dhwaja's can be seen all over the monastery.



The tallest dhwaja is in the courtyard, just outside the temple. It has the 'Darchor' a vertical prayer flag tied to the length of its pole.

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2. Life at Hanle
3. **Hanle Monastery**
4. Contact Details



The entrance to the temple has the traditional yellow fabric draped over it, signifying that it is a sacred place of worship.



Prayer wheels are placed all around the temple, walking in the clockwise direction they have to be turned the same way (similar to the movement of the sun across the sky). Each wheel contains prayer scriptures, hence on turning them it is believed that one can collect wisdom and good karma while purifying the negativities.

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2. Life at Hanle
3. **Hanle Monastery**
4. Contact Details



The view from the hill shows the various offshoots and branching of a part of the River Indus cutting across the plains.



A picture captured from the back of the monastery offers this spectacular view of the river, its offshoots, the plains and surrounding mountains.



With a lot of sky above and vast land below, this is the 'more' populated part of Hanle.

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2. Life at Hanle
3. Hanle Monastery
4. **Contact Details**