

SKYQI · SATELLITE DATA REPORT

India Night Sky Report 2026

A decade of NASA night-lights data over 50 Indian cities — who still has stars, who lost them, and where darkness is disappearing fastest.



SkyQI · skyqi.in · August 2026 · Data: NASA Black Marble (2015–2025)

Key findings

NASA Black Marble VNP46A4 annual composites, 2015 → 2025, identical sensor and processing for all years.

+70%

Median brightening of city night skies, 2015–2025. 47 of 50 cities are worse.

+546%

Leh — India's fastest-growing light pollution, at the gateway to its only Dark Sky Reserve.

6 / 50

Cities where the Milky Way is still clearly visible.

34 / 50

Cities with Bortle 8–9 skies, where almost no stars remain visible.

Bengaluru has overtaken Delhi as India's brightest night sky (65.0 vs 57.5 nW/cm²·sr), and every one of India's classic dark-sky getaways — Manali, Shimla, Jaisalmer, Rishikesh, Ooty, Darjeeling — is measurably losing its darkness.

India's brightest city skies

Roughly 270 million people live in these ten cities, under skies where the Milky Way has not been visible for a generation.

#	CITY	RADIANCE 2025	SKY CLASS	SINCE 2015
1	Bengaluru	65.0	Bortle 9	-6%
2	Delhi	57.5	Bortle 9	-3%
3	Hyderabad	49.5	Bortle 8	-7%
4	Kolkata	45.8	Bortle 8	+34%
5	Ahmedabad	41.9	Bortle 8	+99%
6	Lucknow	39.9	Bortle 8	+18%
7	Mumbai	36.5	Bortle 8	+48%
8	Pune	31.8	Bortle 8	+79%
9	Chennai	31.7	Bortle 8	+61%
10	Jaipur	30.5	Bortle 8	+48%

India's darkest city skies

The dark skies that remain are exactly where you'd hope — and every one of them is brightening.

#	CITY	RADIANCE 2025	SKY CLASS	SINCE 2015
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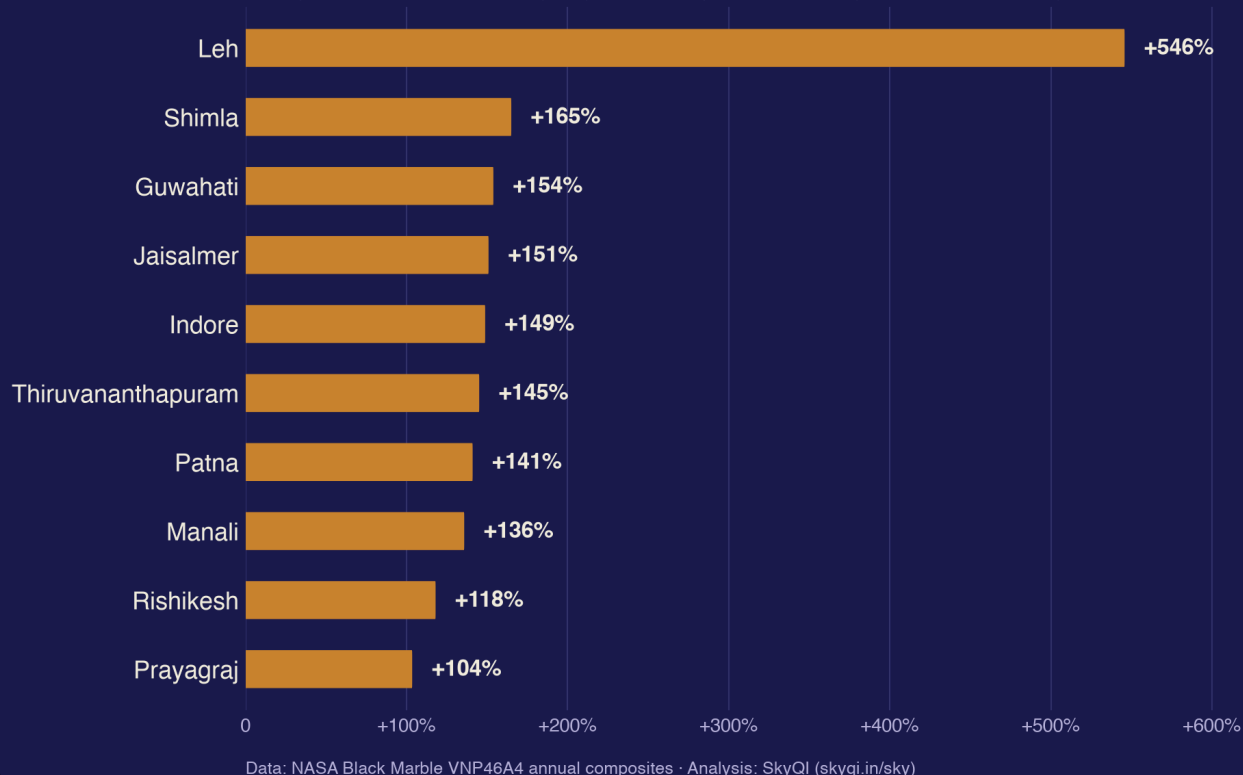
1	Manali	0.35	Bortle 1	+136%
2	Darjeeling	0.66	Bortle 4	+54%
3	Shimla	1.61	Bortle 4	+165%
4	Ooty	1.68	Bortle 4	+51%
5	Leh	2.16	Bortle 4	+546%
6	Jaisalmer	2.90	Bortle 4	+151%
7	Rishikesh	4.14	Bortle 5	+118%
8	Panaji	7.51	Bortle 5	+74%
9	Madurai	8.25	Bortle 5	+54%
10	Thiruvananthapuram	9.35	Bortle 5	+145%

The decade India switched on

The fastest-growing light pollution in India is not in the metros — their skies are already saturated. It is in the small, beautiful places people escape to precisely *because* they are dark.

India's fastest-brightening night skies, 2015–2025

Change in satellite-measured night light · Leh's sky is now 6.5x brighter than a decade ago

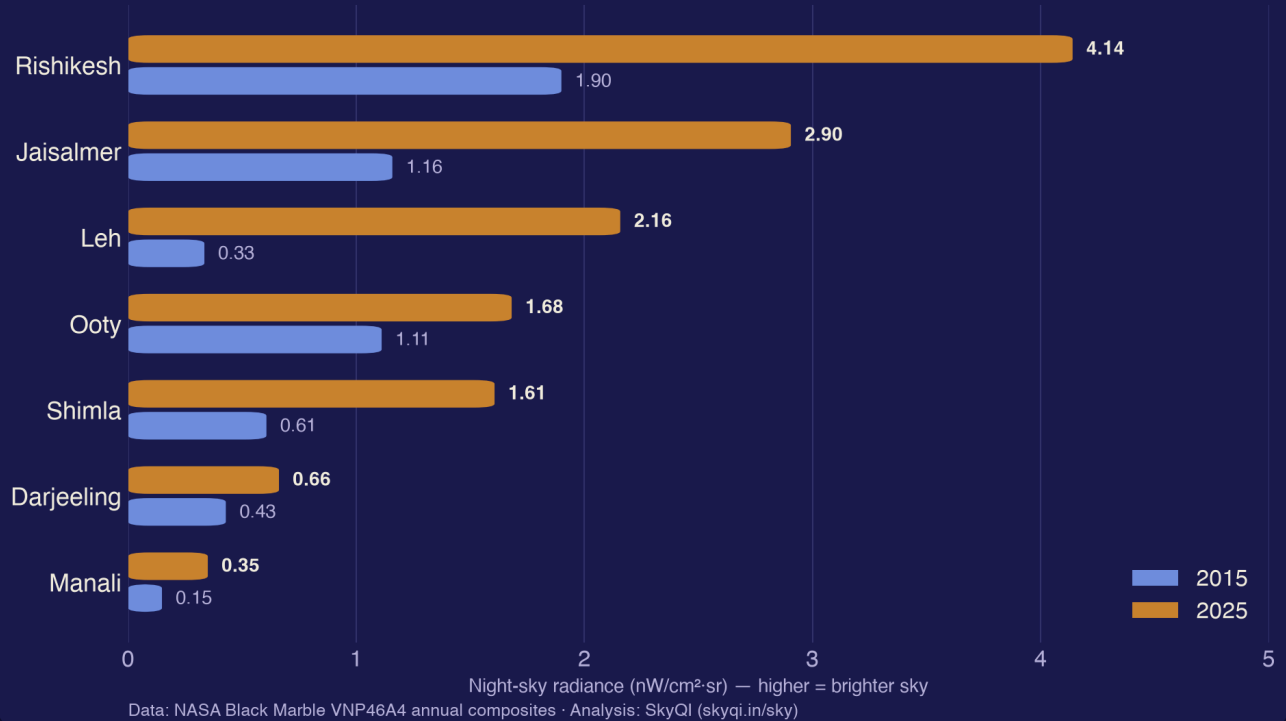


Leh's night sky is 6.5x brighter than a decade ago — the fastest change of all 50 cities measured.

Hanle, 250 km southeast of Leh, became India's first official Dark Sky Reserve in 2022. Astro-tourism boomed; hotels, homestays and streetlights followed — and the sky above the gateway town every stargazer passes through is vanishing at the fastest rate in the country. Dark skies are becoming India's rarest natural resource, consumed by the tourism they attract.

India's dark-sky getaways are losing their darkness

Satellite-measured night light over 7 astro-tourism towns — every one brighter than in 2015



The metro illusion

Three cities appear to have improved: Delhi (−3.4%), Bengaluru (−5.9%), Hyderabad (−7.2%). Don't celebrate yet. These are the years of India's mass conversion to LED streetlights, and the VIIRS satellite sensor **cannot see blue light** — the band where white LEDs emit most strongly. Cities that "darken" in satellite data during LED transitions often got worse for actual skyglow, because blue light scatters more in the atmosphere, not less.

This is precisely why ground measurement matters: satellites see cities from above; only people under the sky can measure what it actually looks like. That ground-truth layer is what SkyQI's citizen-science network provides.

Measure your own sky tonight

One phone photo → your sky's SQM value and Bortle class, on the map in seconds.

[City sky pages](#)

[Measure on the web](#)

[Android app](#)

[iOS app](#)

All 50 cities

Radiance in nW/cm²-sr, ranked brightest to darkest. Full interactive profiles at skyqi.in/sky.

#	CITY	2015	2020	2025	CHANGE	CLASS
1	Bengaluru	69.10	65.63	65.00	-6%	B9
2	Delhi	59.49	47.12	57.48	-3%	B9
3	Hyderabad	53.31	42.67	49.50	-7%	B8
4	Kolkata	34.28	37.71	45.85	+34%	B8
5	Ahmedabad	21.07	26.95	41.94	+99%	B8
6	Lucknow	33.76	34.61	39.85	+18%	B8
7	Mumbai	24.61	27.05	36.54	+48%	B8
8	Pune	17.77	23.19	31.79	+79%	B8
9	Chennai	19.68	22.60	31.73	+61%	B8
10	Jaipur	20.62	23.00	30.54	+48%	B8
11	Indore	12.07	16.74	30.02	+149%	B8
12	Prayagraj	13.31	12.05	27.08	+104%	B8
13	Vadodara	13.54	16.98	25.29	+87%	B8
14	Chandigarh	14.48	15.91	24.66	+70%	B8
15	Surat	12.94	16.54	23.74	+83%	B8
16	Kanpur	16.37	18.97	22.77	+39%	B8
17	Patna	8.93	15.63	21.53	+141%	B8
18	Nagpur	15.13	12.45	20.16	+33%	B8

19	Bhopal	11.04	12.95	20.16	+82%	B8
20	Jodhpur	15.40	16.41	19.71	+28%	B8
21	Varanasi	9.79	11.24	19.25	+97%	B8
22	Ludhiana	10.36	11.48	17.81	+72%	B8
23	Agra	14.47	12.49	17.68	+22%	B8
24	Bhubaneswar	9.53	9.22	17.66	+85%	B8
25	Raipur	10.01	11.32	17.24	+72%	B8
26	Visakhapatnam	11.66	11.71	15.54	+33%	B8
27	Ranchi	9.62	11.19	15.13	+57%	B8
28	Nashik	9.52	10.39	14.20	+49%	B8
29	Coimbatore	8.12	9.99	13.48	+66%	B8
30	Gwalior	8.26	10.26	13.34	+62%	B8
31	Amritsar	7.94	9.84	13.34	+68%	B8
32	Dehradun	6.71	7.73	13.03	+94%	B8
33	Mysuru	10.45	12.09	12.34	+18%	B8
34	Guwahati	4.79	4.96	12.16	+154%	B8
35	Jabalpur	7.48	8.92	11.78	+57%	B7
36	Kochi	5.60	6.72	11.31	+102%	B7
37	Kota	8.50	7.39	11.02	+30%	B7
38	Udaipur	5.91	6.26	9.98	+69%	B5
39	Vijayawada	5.26	6.48	9.74	+85%	B5
40	Srinagar	5.24	6.42	9.67	+85%	B5
41	Thiruvananthapuram	3.81	5.81	9.35	+145%	B5
42	Madurai	5.36	5.59	8.25	+54%	B5

43	Panaji	4.33	4.57	7.51	+74%	B5
44	Rishikesh	1.90	2.23	4.14	+118%	B5
45	Jaisalmer	1.16	1.61	2.90	+151%	B4
46	Leh	0.33	0.69	2.16	+546%	B4
47	Ooty	1.11	0.82	1.68	+51%	B4
48	Shimla	0.61	0.81	1.61	+165%	B4
49	Darjeeling	0.43	0.26	0.66	+54%	B4
50	Manali	0.15	0.11	0.35	+136%	B1

Methodology

Source: NASA Black Marble VNP46A4 Collection 2 annual composites (Suomi-NPP; Román et al. 2018, Remote Sens. Environ. 210), years 2015, 2020, 2025 — the latest annual available. Measure: AllAngle_Composite_Snow_Free radiance at native 15-arcsec (~500 m) resolution, averaged over a $\pm 0.1^\circ$ box (~22×22 km) on each city centre. Sky classes derive from the same radiance→SQM→Bortle calibration used on SkyQI's live map. Limitations: VIIRS is blind to blue light (see "The metro illusion"); satellite radiance measures upward emission, which correlates with but understates observed skyglow; city-box averages smooth bright cores and dark outskirts.

India Night Sky Report 2026 · SkyQI (skyqi.in) — a citizen-science platform founded by student inventor Suhani Gupta.

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Media: sastrophy@gmail.com · Web version: skyqi.in/blog/india-night-sky-report-2026