



The Nanda Devi Trek

Day 1 Depart UK

We depart from the UK for our flight to Delhi. We fly via Amsterdam with KLM and arrive into Delhi late in the evening. We transfer to our five star hotel in the centre of the city, close to the tourist sights on Connaught Place, Janpath and the Parliament buildings.

Day 2 Free Delhi

We have a full day in Delhi to recover from the flight and to adjust to the sights and sounds of this crazy city. For those who haven't travelled to this part of the world before it will be a real eye-opener. Delhi is really two cities – old and new. Old Delhi is made up of a mass of narrow lanes and alleyways, fascinating colourful bazaars and exotic Hindu temples. We stay in New Delhi which is a British invention and the impressive avenues and public buildings which make up the Indian Parliament were designed by Edwin Lutyens.

Day 3 Drive to Corbett National Park

After an early breakfast we set off by road and drive for about 6 hours to Corbett National Park situated on the banks of the Ram Ganga River. We check into the comfortable wildlife lodge and can take an evening walk where we should be able to see a wide variety of birdlife including Parakeets, Kingfisher and Redstart. The park dates from 1935 and was named after Jim Corbett who spent many years in this area and wrote the book 'The Man Eaters of Kumaon' about the region's Tigers.

Day 4 Drive from Corbett to Ranikhet

Early in the morning we can take a short elephant-back ride around the local park environs. This is one of India's finest game reserves and besides wild boar, crocodile and other elephants we may be lucky enough to see the Tigers which the park is famous for. We then drive north to the delightful former British hill station at Ranikhet. Of the many hill stations in northern India this one has retained a substantial proportion of its colonial buildings and has an unhurried and very relaxed feel. We stay at the Rosemount Hotel which dates from the days of the British Empire and could easily be located in the home counties.

Day 5 Drive Ranikhet to Mandoli

We have a long mountain drive today, following the Pindar River to the town of Debal. We turn off here and climb up a steep mountain road which takes us to Mandoli at the start of the trek. Mandoli is a delightful village built in the traditional Kumaon style with stone roofs and carved wooden supports. We camp here at an altitude of 2134m.

Day 6 Mandoli – Didina

In the morning our team of porters will arrive and we will set off on the first stage of our trek. We have a steady climb up to the Lohajang Col at 2590m which we cross to reach the valley of the Bedni Ganga. We descend on the north side of the pass down to the river before climbing back up to the little village of Didina (2439m) where we camp.

Day 7 Didina – Bedni Bugyal

Today is a steep trek through oak trees and large stands of bamboo up to Ali Bugyal. From here we can enjoy an expansive view of the Garhwal peaks. We continue trekking through thick forests as far as Bedni Bugyal (Bugyal means meadow in the local Garhwali dialect). Very occasionally the brown Himalayan bear can be encountered on this section of the trail, but it is an elusive animal. From Bedni Bugyal we have an excellent view of the various summits of Trisul (7120m) and the peaks of the north of Garhwal. Bedni Bugyal is a charming green meadow adorned with a myriad of colourful flowers. There is a lake situated in the middle of the meadow where Hindu pilgrims come to bathe, and nearby is a small temple.

Day 8 Bedni Bugyal – Bagubasa

The trail continues easily over rolling grassy hills to the meadow at Bagubasa – 4000m (which means ‘place of flowers’ in the local dialect). This is a wonderful camping place with the high peaks of Trisul and Nanda Ghunti becoming more prominent.

Day 9 Bagubasa – Roopkund - Bagubasa

Leaving our camp at Bagubasa in place we make a day trip to the holy lake of Roopkund. This small tarn, only a few metres deep is situated in a rocky corrie at an altitude of 5029m. Trisul towers above us here in all its glory, but the lake has a dark tale to tell. Many years ago large numbers of human skeletons and the remains of horses were found here. There are two current explanations of this; one is that they were the remains of soldiers which were on their way to attack Tibet, the other is that they are the remains of devotees on a pilgrimage to Trisul or Nanda Devi. There were thought to be around around 300 skeletons and estimates of their age put them at anything from 200 years to 600 years old. Whatever their origin the lake certainly has an eerie quality and when the snows melt from around the lake shore, one can sometimes see skeletal remains well preserved in the frozen conditions. After some time for a little local exploration at Roopkund we can return to our camp at Bagubasa.

Day 10 Bagubasa – Bhuna

From Bagubasa the trail crosses a grassy ridgeline which drops from the southern flanks of Roopkund from where we descend to the village of Bhuna (3500m). The trail is somewhat steep in places but the hillsides are covered with luxuriant forests of rhododendron and giant ferns, and rare snow leopards have sometimes been seen in this area.

Day 11 Bhuna to Sutol

The trail now drops down through the village of Kunol into the Nandakini Valley which drains the waters of Roopkund and the Trisul massif. After following the river of the same name we arrive at the village of Sutol (2192m). Our campsite for the evening is located just before we reach the village, in a delightful meadow by the river.

Day 12 Sutol - Ramni

We begin the morning with a stiff climb out of the Nandakini valley heading towards the watershed which marks the divide with the Brithi Ganga valley. Climbing up through these remote villages we may be lucky enough to see various large birds of prey including lammergeier, eagles and griffin vultures. Before us we can gaze over a classic Garhwal landscape of rolling green hills with distant snow-capped peaks. Our destination for the evening is a campsite in a terraced meadow above the village of Ramni (2450m). A long day but a rewarding one.

Day 13 Ramni – Jenjapani

From Ramni we begin to follow part of the route that Shipton and Tilman took during their pioneering exploratory trip to the Rishiganga gorge and the inner sanctuary of Nanda Devi. We have a gentle ascent through open grazing meadows interspersed with occasional shepherd huts. These gradually give way to thick forests of oak and rhododendron. After lunch we have a steep descent to Jenjapani village and our campsite (1850m) in the gorge of the Brithi Ganga river.

Day 14 Jenjapani – Satoli

We cross a wide suspension bridge and make a steep climb out of the gorge to the ridge at 2300 metres. The path levels out and contours around the valley side, crossing several small tributary rivers and waterfalls including one which offers a great opportunity for a shower. After a steady climb we arrive at more grazing meadows where from we get our first view of the Kuari pass. Shortly after this we reach our camp at the meadows of Satoli (3050m) where there are a variety of shepherd huts.

Day 15 Satoli – Kuari Pass

An early start today as we head to the Kuari Pass. We begin with a steep climb which eases off as we approach the base of the pass. The Kauri pass is not difficult and the trail which zig-zags up to the top is well constructed. From the crest of the pass at 4268 metres we are rewarded with an incomparable view which so moved Eric Shipton over 60 years ago. The mountains are arranged before us in a magnificent arc including Nanda Devi (7816m), Dunagiri (7066m) and Changabang (6864m). To the north we can see the Chaukamba range including Nilkanth (6598m) and the distant Zanskar range with the distinctive peak of Kamet at 7756m extends towards the border with Tibet. We descend for a few hundred metres on the north side of the pass and camp in a meadow at 3800m with a fantastic sunset view over Nanda Devi.

Day 16 Trek to Auli

On our last day of trekking the trail descends continuously downhill through small villages and cultivated fields to Auli. Once a small, obscure village this is now India’s premier ski resort, although there ought not to be snow here when we

pass through. If the ski lift is operating, it may be possible to ride the last 500 metres down to the village where we stay in a local hotel.

Day 17 To Rishikesh

After breakfast our private bus will be waiting for us and we drive the short distance down to the valley and the town of Josimath. The town is situated at the confluence of the Alaknanda and the Dhauliganga rivers and is a pleasant, if somewhat noisy, Indian hill station. We continue our drive down the Alaknanda valley as far as the town of Rishikesh. As Beatles fans will know this is where the group stayed in 1967 whilst on their Indian journey. Located on the banks of the Ganges, Rishikesh is considered one of the holiest pilgrimage places in the Himalaya and there are numerous fascinating Hindu temples to visit.

Day 18 Free day in Rishikesh

Rishikesh is one of northern India's most fascinating towns, and as well as the opportunity to explore this free day also breaks the long road journey back to Delhi.

Day 19 Drive to Delhi

We depart our hotel by 7am to avoid the worst of the traffic on the busy road back to Delhi. We should be back at our central hotel in time for a late lunch with the remainder of the day free for relaxation around the hotel swimming pool.

Day 20 Free day – evening departure

The day will be free for sight-seeing in Delhi. We will have the use of day rooms at the hotel. In the evening we drive to the airport for our flight back home with KLM.

Day 21 Arrive home

We arrive back home in the early morning.