

BAGINI GLACIER TREK

Detailed Itinerary

Day 1: Drive from Delhi to Rishikesh (250 Kms, 5 to 7 hrs), Overnight stay in hotel at Rishikesh

We meet in Delhi and begin our drive as early as possible, so that there is some time to explore Rishikesh in the evening. The drive by itself is unspectacular until we come across the holy ghats of Haridwar where we will skirt the wide and swift flowing river Ganga. From this point on, the road gets more interesting with a climb up the wooded foothills of Rishikesh, passing by the various Yoga ashrams and retreats that Rishikesh is known for.

Check-in to the hotel and venture out in the evening along the banks of the river Ganga, or enjoy a walk along the Laxman and Ram Jhula, the famous suspension bridges of Rishikesh.

Day 2: Drive from Rishikesh to Joshimath (255 Kms, 7 to 8 hrs), Overnight stay in hotel at Joshimath

We need to start early in the morning for Joshimath since it is a long drive and there can be traffic jams along the route due to the road being narrow. It is a picturesque journey with the lovely blue river Ganga as a constant companion on our right. You can see the colorful kayaks and rafts dotting the spectacular white sands.

After a few hours, the road begins ascending sharply and we will encounter the beautiful confluences of the rivers that make the Ganga, with the Alaknanda being the primary arterial river meeting the others at Rudraprayag, Karnaprayag and Nandaprayag.

We will reach Joshimath by evening and will check into the hotel for a well deserved rest!

Day 3: Drive from Joshimath to Jumma (44 Kms, 1 to 2 hrs) and trek to Dronagiri Village^{11840 ft/3610 mtrs} via Ruing Village^{9180ft/2800 mtrs} (11 Kms trek, 3 to 4 hrs), Overnight camping

The drive to Jumma from Joshimath has a few bad sectors and we will need to leave early to make sure we cover it as soon as possible. We will pass the villages of Reni, Lata, Tapovan and Surraithota en route. Keep your eyes peeled for the confluence of Dhauri and Rishi Ganga far below, opposite Reni village. There is a small temple built here which is approachable by a narrow track. In about an hour and a half, we finally reach the village of Jumma where the road ends.

From Jumma, we cross the Dhauri Ganga across a suspension bridge and begin our trek upwards to Ruing village along a well marked forest trail through the conifers that keeps ascending gradually. After about a couple of hours of ascent, we finally come across the quaint village of Ruing with its dual storeyed houses made of wood and stone and slate roofs. We will take a short break here and then

carry on towards Dronagiri (or Dunagiri) village, which is a tougher hike as compared to the pleasant gradual climb we have had so far.

The walk to Dronagiri village is characterized by segments of ascent followed by level segments that help ease the effort. Along the way, you will come across many wildflowers and if lucky, quite a few exotic birds as well, commonest of which are the spotted dove and the striped Chukar. The Bagini stream constantly accompanies the trail gurgling over the undulating rocks.

The final couple of kms to Dronagiri are the trickiest as they involve steep ascents and descents through landslide zones and scree that are quite slippery and must be done with caution. Finally after navigating this patch, we will walk along a concrete path that leads to the village of Dronagiri with our first clear view of the snowy peaks in the distance.

Day 4: Trek from Dronagiri Village to Bagini Base camp^{14700 ft/4484 mtrs} (10 Kms trek, 4 to 5 hrs), Overnight camping

We again begin early in the morning for our trek to Bagini Base Camp via Langatoli. The trail will lead us up a gradual ascent of about a km till the top of the ridge from where the peaks of Trishuli, Hardeol and Purvi Dunagiri are visible. We will now descend down to the true left bank of the Bagini stream. Cross the cemented bridge across the Bagini stream to the other side where you will see two trails, one to the left and one to the right. The trail to the left leads to Kanari Khal which is the ridge that lies behind the Dronagiri village. We will be taking the right trail that leads to Langatoli which is 3 kms away. After a continuous ascent we arrive at the Langatoli campsite which is a level meadow where the Bagini river has carved a large swathe through the rocks. We will take a short break here and then carry on.

From here, the trail goes up along large boulders and rocks and the correct direction can only be ascertained, thanks to the long line of cairns. It is advisable to be very careful while traversing the boulders since it is very easy to miss your step and twist your ankle! Please do not rush and proceed with concentration and confidence.

One of the unique experiences along this route is that post-monsoon, the rocks abound with beautiful fragrant, bright yellow Himalayan thyme flowers that only grow above 4000 meters. Halfway along the walk, we come across the Garuda stream which can be crossed easily in the morning, but can get a bit tricky in the afternoon as the snow melts and swells it up. Thereafter the walk is fairly level and easy until we reach the Bagini Glacier Camp site. From here you can see the massive Upper Bagini glacier bang opposite, with its sheer ice walls and snouts rising through the rocky moraines that cover most of it.

Day 5: Trek from Bagini Base Camp to Changabang Base Camp^{15000ft/4572mtrs} via Bagini Glacier & back to Bagini Base Camp (12 to 14 Kms, 7 to 8 hrs), Overnight camping

We need to get started early in the morning again since we have a long haul up to Changabang base camp and then back. The first couple of kms are an easy walk with mostly level walk combined with a few uphill sections along a huge meadow to the true right of the Bagini Glacier. We will need to cross 3 streams which are easy in the morning owing to less water in them. After a while of walking, we finally come to the Changabang Base Camp from where we get an amazing uninterrupted view of Kalanka peak bang in front. However, curiously the Changabang peak is not visible from here and the really amazing view is further ahead after climbing the boulder strewn ridge on the left.

We will continue walking along the meadow that is strewn with a profusion of purple colored Primula flowers post monsoon, until we come to the base of the ridge. The climb up is strenuous since we are now at a pretty high altitude and the steep ascent as well as the lack of atmospheric pressure makes breathing and movement quite difficult. It is recommended to proceed slowly, stopping every few steps to catch your breath. After about 30-45 mins, we will reach the top of the ridge, from where you will witness a stupendous view of the massive peaks Trishuli West, Trishuli Main, Kardeol, Rishi Parbat, Sai Minal, Kalanka and Changabang, appearing close enough in the rarefied air to almost touch! Rest for a while and enjoy the stupendous view before turning back to base camp.

The sunrise from the ridge is spectacular but this can only be viewed if we leave very early in the morning and needs to be discussed with all the members and the trek leader in advance.

Day 6: Trek from Bagini Base Camp to Dronagiri Village(10 Kms, 3 to 4 hrs), Overnight camping

We will be starting our journey back to civilization, but if we are lucky to be at the Base Camp on a full moon night, it is well worth the effort of waking up very early today to view and photograph the peaks glistening spectacularly in the moonlight. You can also undertake walks along the base camp toward the ridge in the morning to catch a glimpse of Rishi Parbat reflected in the Rishi Kund against the early morning sky.

The route back to Dronagiri village re-traces our way up and is pretty much the same. Take your time and enjoy spotting the various species of birds and flowers that you will spot en route.

Day 7: Trek from Dronagiri Village to Jumma(11 Kms trek, 3 to 4 hrs), Drive from Jumma to Joshimath (44 Kms, 1 to 2 hrs)

The trail from Dronagiri to Jumma village is also the same that we took while coming up and care needs to be taken at the landslide zone to avoid slipping and causing serious injuries! The highlights of the route are the superb views we get of the Bagini river flowing through the gorge far below and the snow peaks in the background. Descending takes a toll on the legs, so you need to be careful till we reach Ruing village.

After Ruing it is a fairly easy walk down till Jumma village from where we will drive back to Joshimath where we will halt for the night.

Day 8: Drive from Joshimath to Rishikesh (255 Kms, 7 to 8 hrs), Overnight stay in hotel at Rishikesh

The drive from Joshimath to Rishikesh is pretty long and follows the gushing Alaknanda far below on the right hand side. Watch out for the fantastic views of the river confluences at Rudraprayag, Devprayag and Karnaprayag. While the journey is beautiful, it is also quite a thrilling drive, with the narrow roads and the deep gorges along one side.

Near Rishikesh, you will see a number of adventure operators offering kayaking and river rafting and you can see resorts and rafting camps on the white river sands. We should be able to reach by around late evening and can take a relaxed break walking around town later in the night.

Day 9: Drive from Rishikesh to New Delhi (250 Kms, 5 to 6 hrs)

From Rishikesh to Haridwar, we descend along forested slopes, paralleling the river Ganga. The drive from Haridwar onwards to New Delhi is through the plains via Roorkee, Meerut and Ghaziabad and is almost an anti-climax after the beautiful time spent amidst the sublime Himalayan beauty.