

DODITAL -DARWA PASS TREK(Angler's paradise)

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 Uttarkashi and further to Sangam Chatti(186 Kms, 6 to 7 hrs), Overnight camping

The drive from Rishikesh to Uttarkashi goes through the towns of Narendra Nagar, Mohan Chatti, Tehri, Chamba and Chham. Most of the road is narrow and is pretty much a constant climb. From Uttarkashi, we need to take the road going left, parallel to the Assi Ganga river for a little more than 16 kms across bumpy roads, till you finally reach the small town of Sangam Chatti. This is the end of the motorable road and we will begin our trek from here tomorrow morning.

Day 3: Trek from Sangam Chatti^{1350 mtrs} to Agora^{2250 mtrs}(6 Kms, 3 to 4 hrs), Overnight camping

The trek begins today with an easy gradual climb along a well paved stony trail through the pine forest, once we cross the wooden bridge. After a while you will see the trail forking away with the ascent leading towards Barkoli village. We take the descending arm of the fork for a short while before it again starts ascending in a series of switchbacks. As you crest the rise, you will need to walk about half an hour before you can see our destination Agora village, in the distance with the snow clad mountains in the background. In the foreground lies the village of Dundkhola, that we will cross first.

After a short while of walking beyond the Dundkhola village, we finally arrive at our destination, which caps the end of an easy first day trek. We can spend some time exploring the surroundings and getting acclimatized for the upcoming days. The region also has a fair number of birds and butterflies and they present some lovely photo opportunities.

Day 4: Trek from Agora to Dodital lake^{3310mtrs} (16 Kms, 6 to 8 hrs), Overnight Camping

The trek from Agora begins along a well-marked stone trail with stone staircases and side barricades along narrow paths. To our side we can see the deep river gorge of the Assi Ganga as we move along, hugging the mountain side. We will reach the village of Bevra after a gradual descent to and across the river. The village has a restaurant and cafes with adjoining campsites.

We can replenish our water stocks and then proceed up the ridge that lies in front of us. As we get higher, we can now see Agora village directly at the back on the opposite side, receding away. We continue to walk through the Pine and Deodar forests until we turn sharply to the left and finally crest the ridge after a steep ascent.

As we walk on along the ridge, we will come across a shelter from where we can see the famous Bakaria Top that marks the highest point of the beautiful Dayara Bugyal. For those intending to cover Dodital and Dayara Bugyal in one trek, this is where they can branch off on their way back from Dodital.

From this shelter, Dodital is 10 kms away, while halfway (at 5 kms) lies the clearing of Manjhi. The trail which was hugging the mountain side and the river gorge, will now enter a dense covered thicket of rhododendrons and pines which means you are likely to find patches of snow here in summers and deep snow in winters!

After a further hour and a half of gradual ascents up the mountainside, we will come across a fork in the trail with the left angling upwards sharply. This is the way to Manjhi and after a short sharp climb, we will be able to see a cluster of shepherd huts spread out all over the slope under the oak trees.

From Manjhi, the trail to Dodital is on the right and is largely a level walk, with a few ascents, as you traverse the mountain slopes from one ridge to the other. The forest thins out as you get higher and we skirt a small shrine to come across a stream running across largely level ground. We are now very close to Dodital and this is the stream that leads out from the lake itself. A short walk later, we finally arrive at Dodital that has a few shepherd huts and temples along a large open clearing. This is Dodital and you can see the beautiful lake awaiting you as we finally break for the day.

In winters the trek is much more difficult as most of the sector we have done is through snow that can be as deep as 1-2 feet deep, multiplying the difficulty level exponentially.

Day 5: Explore Dodital lake with a periphery of 1.6 Kms and rest day for angling & sightseeing.

Overnight Camping

Today we will take it easy and explore the lake by walking along its periphery. The complete "parikrama" (circumambulation) is only 1.5 kms and we can do it at a leisurely pace and enjoy the serenity and beauty. For the anglers among us, we can spend a comfortable day along the banks of the river, angling for the rare and incredible Dodi (Himalayan Trout). Since it is rare and protected, the trout needs to be released back into the waters and this should be followed strictly by all members.

Time spent at the lake is incomplete without visiting the temple of the presiding deity of the lake, Lord Ganesha. This is an ancient temple and while it is open during summers, heavy snowfall in winter causes it to be shut.

Day 6: Trek from Dodital lake to Darwa Top^{4180mtrs} and further to Seema^{3450 mtrs} (16 Kms, 7 to 8 hrs), Overnight Camping

We will begin early in the morning since it is a long and tough trek today. The slope and ridge that we see from Dodital camp is the route up to Darwa Pass and it is a fairly steep climb that takes us up to the pass which lies at approximately 3800 metres. From here another steep climb will take you to Darwa Top, at 4,180 metres, where exhausted, we enjoy the 360 degree panorama rewards of our hard work – the stunning vista of Bandarpoonch, and its partner Gangotri range of peaks. It is worth noting here that Darwa Pass and Darwa Top are usually covered with snow fields throughout the year and walking along here will be slow and more difficult than usual.

From Darwa Top, the trail will now continue up and down along rolling slopes, enjoying the spectacular views of the Gangotri range, with even Nanda Devi visible on a clear day! After about an hour and a half of walking, we finally come across to the meadows of Seema where we will be camping for the night.

Day 7: Trek from Seema to Hanuman Chatti^{2400mtrs} (18 Kms, 5 to 6 hrs), Overnight Camping

The trek from Seema to Hanuman Chatti is downhill with the trail till Kandoli passing through undulating, beautiful alpine meadows sprinkled with wildflowers and the mesmerizing snow peaks paralleling us all the way along the horizon. From Kandoli, the trail enters a thick oak and rhododendron forest and is much steeper as it descends dramatically to the town of Hanuma Chatti (2400 metres) after about a total of 3-4 hours of constant walking.

We will be camping here, signaling the end of a long and amazing trek covering meadows, snow, a sacred lake and temple and of course the spell binding Himalayan peaks at arm's length away!

Day 8: Drive from Hanuman Chatti to Rishikesh (285 Kms, 7 to 8 hrs), Overnight stay in hotel at Rishikesh

The drive from Hanuman Chatti to Rishikesh is down the slopes along rough roads passing Barkot till we reach the junction of Dharasu from where it is the same route that we came up by, passing through Tehri till we reach Rishikesh after a long 7-8 hours drive.

Day 9: Drive from Rishikesh to New Delhi (250 Kms, 5 to 7 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.

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