

## *RUPIN PASS TREK*

### INTERESTING FACTS/INFORMATION ABOUT THE PLACE

#### **Garhwal – (the start region of our trek)**

The North Western state of Uttarakhand shares its Northern border with Nepal and Tibet and is blessed with an incredible range of flora and fauna and soaring, rugged Himalayan peaks. It is divided into two major districts – Garhwal and Kumaon of which Garhwal is the administrative region of the state. The Garhwal region is divided into seven sub-divisions of which Haridwar, Pauri, Tehri Garhwal and Dehradun comprise the low lying foothills, while the divisions of Uttarkashi, Rudraprayag and Chamoli host the high Himalayan peaks and are the base camp for a number of treks and holy pilgrimages.

The city of Dehradun (lying in Dehradun district) is the administrative capital of the state and it is famous for its world class boarding schools.

A Brief History - The name “Garhwal” is symbolic of the many small forts (called “Garh” in the native language) in the region which had their individual feudal overlords. The small principalities were finally merged into one kingdom by King Ajai Pal as late as the 15<sup>th</sup> century, with Srinagar on the banks of the Alaknanda being the capital. For three centuries the region was ruled by Garhwali kings until the Gurkha invasion from neighbouring Nepal, who drove the kings out and annexed the region. The Gurkhas ruled for 12 years after which the British drove them out and re-instated the original rulers after annexing most of Garhwal and Kumaon as British district while the Tehri principality was restored to the son of a local chief.

Mythology – The region of Garhwal has found mention in the Skanda Purana and the Van Parva and was also a part of the Mauryan Empire. It is home to the revered high-altitude shrines of Kedarnath, Badrinath, Gangotri (the origin of the Ganga) and Yamunotri (the origin of the Yamuna) It is also famed for its rivers that have found a place in Hindu mythology – the Alaknanda, the Bhagirathi and the Saraswati. The sacred city of Haridwar, which is one of the four sites in mythology where a drop of “amrit” (the elixir of immortality) is supposed to have spilled while being carried aloft by Garuda. It hosts one of the biggest religious fairs of India – the Kumbh Mela.

Geography – Most of the region comprises of the jagged, high altitude peaks of the Himalayan range including the second highest mountain in India (the highest mountain that lies exclusively in India) Mt. Nanda Devi (25,643 ft). Some of the other notable peaks are the towering pyramidal peak of Mt. Kamet (25,446 ft), the tent-like four sides Mt. Chaukhamba (23,419 ft), the trident shaped Mt. Trisul (23,360 ft), the sharp knife-like Mt. Dunagiri (23,182 ft) and Mt. Kedarnath (22,769 ft). It also boasts the incredibly beautiful Mt. Shivling and the striking Mt. Meru (also known as “Shark fin” for its shape) that are best viewed from Tapovan.

The High mountains and glaciers, including Gaumukh where the river Ganga originates, and steep, narrow ravines and gorges make Garhwal prone to landslides and flash floods as has been evident

from the recent Kedarnath tragedy where the lake broke its banks and brought down a flood far downstream till Haridwar that laid waste massive property and claimed numerous lives.

### **Sangla (the end region of our trek)**

Sangla lies in the Baspa valley of Himachal's Kinnaur district, bordering Tibet to the East and Garhwal to the South. It lies along the Baspa river and is famous for its golden Kinnauri apples and high quality potatoes. It is also famous for its incredible wooden architecture, of which the Kamru Fort is a must-see as also the intricately carved Devi temple at Chhitkul, the last village on the Indo-Tibetan border. The old Indo-Tibetan highway also passes through Sangla and connects to the main National highway 22 at Karcham.

Culture and Myths – The beautiful green coloured patterned cap is the identity of the Kinnauri people and its design indicates the wearer's social standing. The most interesting aspect of the Kinnauris is their origin with one of the theories linking them as descendants of Alexander, while a second theory suggests that they are ancient Iranians who crossed over and decided to carry on living here. There is also another myth that believes they are descendants of the Pandavas (Mahabharat) who are attributed with supernatural powers.

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