

TRIYUGINARAYAN- PANWALIKANTHA TREK

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1: Drive from Delhi to Srinagar (350 Kms, 8 to 9 hrs), Overnight Stay in hotel at Srinagar

The drive from Delhi to Srinagar is a long one and as always starts off pretty easy until the climb up the Uttarakhand Himalayan foothills where the road twists and turns in switchbacks as we get higher. The town of Srinagar is the last city in the Uttarakhand plains before the mountains begin. It is an important market and is also the largest city in Garhwal. Since it has been a long drive, there isn't much we can explore today, other than strolling along the markets and picking up any essentials for the trek ahead.

Day 2: Drive from Srinagar to Triyuginarayan^{1982mtrs} (130 Kms, 4 to 5 hrs), Trek from Triyuginarayan to Magguchatti^{3086mtrs} (8 Kms, 4 to 5 hrs), Overnight Camping

The motorable road from Srinagar to Triyuginarayan is the usual narrow road winding up the foothills, clinging to the lush hillsides. After about 4-5 hours of winding along, we finally reach the Triyuginarayan Temple where we will alight. The temple is famous as being the sacred spot where Lord Shiva married Parvati and it is said that the yagna fire has been kept burning through the ages since the time of the holy marriage itself! We will visit the temple and witness the sacred fire after which the devout can take a dip in the 4 sacred ponds (kund) that lie in the temple courtyard. Once we are done with our visit, we begin the trek up to the village of Magguchatti.

The trek takes us up a trail that veers off toward the west and leads us deep into a spectacularly rich forest. You will find a dense vegetation at the ground level composed of a mix of ferns, mushrooms and grasses of various kinds, all fed by the numerous streams that gurgle along the forest. Rising above us are tall trees with branches that fan out and interlink, creating a pathwork of deep shadow along the path which is why this region is famous for its huge variety of mushrooms, thanks to perfect conditions for their growth, cool, dark and damp.

The trail itself is also rutted, thanks to the runoff from the many streams that criss cross along it and overflow during monsoons. We will also encounter a number of pretty waterfalls but none more so than the one we encounter a short while before reaching Magguchatti. This is a patch of level land surrounded by shrubs and trees with the waterfall rushing down and resulting the stream into two around a small patch of lush grass covered land that sits like an island in its very midst. Take some time out to relax and enjoy the scenic beauty and marvel at the life and vitality of the forest that echoes with birdcalls all around.

A further 30-45 mins of ascent from here leads us along to the higher altitude where we now come across rhododendron bushes and the tall trees thin out onto a flat land that is the village of Magguchatti where a number of shelters now lie abandoned. The village was abandoned after the

road till Triyuginarayan was constructed, since this meant that there would be no pilgrim traffic along this route. We will camp outside near the crystal clear stream or within the shelters if the weather seems like worsening.

Day 3: Trek from Magguchatti to Panwalikantha^{3963mtrs} (13 Kms, 6 to 7 hrs), Overnight Camping

It is best to begin the day as early as possible since the trek today will bring us on to the unique panorama of the Gangotri peaks all lined up in probably one of the best vantage points in the region. We already get a tantalizing glimpse of the snow giants early in the morning from Magguchatti itself but the real vista awaits us at the top of the Panwalikantha ridge.

The path climbs up steadily through brightly coloured wild flowers and bushes, all the while taking us closer to the Kinkhola Khal (Kinkhola Pass) at 11,154 feet. The path will lead us through bushes and shrubs since the tree line only extends upto Magguchatti after which the altitude is only conducive for hardy shrubs and bushes. Although the climb is tough, proceeding along switchbacks, it does not feel tiring at all because of the vista of the Gangotri peaks that slowly keep unraveling as we get higher. Finally when we reach the top we can see on the right, the beautiful snow capped peaks of Meru, Kedar Dome, Chaukhamba, Nanda Devi, Gangotri, Kedarnath, the Trishul group and pretty much all the other stalwarts of the Gangotri range, all standing tall and proud like white guardians in the clear blue sky! Far away down on the right is the Bhilangna valley while on the left further ahead, is the beautiful bugyal of Panwalikantha in the distance.

The walk is undulating as we walk along the stony path that lines the knife edge ridge, all the way to the majestic Panwalikantha meadows that extend in a sea of soft green as far as the eye can see! The meadows are grazing grounds for the shepherds and it is common to see a shepherd grazing his flock of sheep here. There are also some Gujjar shelters and the remains of an abandoned ashram that is used by travelers in case of inclement weather.

We will camp here at the spectacular meadows and enjoy the fantastic sight of the sunset painting the snow capped peaks a soft pink as dawn approaches.

Day 4: Trek from Panwalikantha to Kinkhola khal^{3400mtrs} (11 Kms, 4 to 5 hrs), Overnight Camping

The early part of the day today is spent exploring the meadow and just enjoying the peace and serenity of the sylvan surroundings after which we break camp and head off on our way back. This time we will not be halting at Magguchatti, instead we will extend the time spent among the Gangotri giants by camping on a grassy ledge slightly above and away from the ridge line at Kinkhola Khal, from where we get yet another spectacular uninterrupted view of the peaks, the bugyal and the deep valley. In the distance, on a clear day you will also be able to see as far as the village of Gangi that lies on the trail that heads up to the Khatling Glacier!

As the evening approaches, keep your eyes peeled to the sky for the wheeling giant scavenging lammergeiers (bearded vultures) with wing spans as large as 7-9 feet! As the night falls with its multitude of stars spreading across the sky, we will turn on with pleasant memories of a fantastic trek.

Day 5: Trek from Kinkhola-Khal to Triyuginarayan(10 Kms, 4 to 5 hrs), Drive from Triyuginarayan to Srinagar(130 Kms, 4 to 5 hrs), Overnight stay in hotel at Srinagar

The trek today is pretty easy, all the way downhill past the campsite of Magguchatti, back into the dense forest to finally exit out at the Triyuginarayan temple complex, where we will pay our respects at the temple and get in for the long drive back to Srinagar where we will be halting for the night.

(If the trek members wish to visit Gauri Kund which lies 5 kms away along the route to Kedarnath, then they are requested to please inform in advance. Gauri Kund is the place where the Goddess Parvati performed penance to woo Lord Shiva after which they were married in the Triyuginarayan temple. It is also home to hot springs that are said to have healing properties.)

We should be able to reach Srinagar in early evening and can take some time out to visit the various temples in the town such as the Kamleshwar Mahadev, Kilkleshwar Mahadev, Shankaramath temple or the Chopta mandir located near the Koteshwar Dam.

Day 6: Drive from Srinagar to Delhi (350 Kms, 8 to 9 hrs)

As before, the drive from Srinagar to Delhi is largely easy and mostly downhill or along level roads and passes through the holy towns of Haridwar and Rishikesh.