

Himalayan Trek – Kedarkantha Peak

Date – April 9th – 14th 2022

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It all began with my father's passion towards trekking. He started trekking since his school days and still does and that's how he tagged me along on most of his treks during the weekends and many in the Western Ghats. I started trekking from the year 2016. My first Himalayan experience was in April 2019 to a place called Dayara Bugyal. That was a blast! The second time I stepped into Himalayas was in the month of December 2021, which was a winter trek. That was another great experience!

Now, onto my third and recent Himalayan trek to a place called Kedarkantha peak in Uttarkashi district of Uttarkhand state. This trek was planned in the year 2022 and all the Himalayan treks have to be planned perfectly in advance of a month before the trek. We have to be fit enough to trek in the Himalayas as we spend time in the higher altitudes daily. As the days approached my school exams were announced and the last exam clashed on my departure day. Hence, my parents requested the principal, Dr. Neerada ma'am to grant me leave immediately after I finish my exam so that I could catch my flight in time. Thanks to her I was able to catch the flight to Delhi on time!

From Delhi we had to catch our onward flight to Dehradun. On reaching dehradun we met the rest of our group and stayed their overnight. The next day's journey was by road to the basecamp which was in a village called Sankri in Uttarkashi district of Uttarkhand state. Few more trekkers who were from different parts of India tagged along. After an hour's drive from Dehradun we reached Mussorie, and from here on we were mesmerized by the Himalayan ranges and the glaciers all the way to our basecamp. As we drove on the winding roads the scenery kept shifting from right to left and left to right. We stopped for lunch on the way and had local food. There were pine trees all along the way. We crossed many mountains and finally reached the basecamp in the evening. Hot soup and snacks were served. There was a briefing session in the night. We were introduced to the trek leader, local guides and a group of cooks who would accompanied us on our entire trek and back.

Day 1 - Hike to the 1st camp :

The next day was hike about 6 km from the basecamp to the first campsite. The trail was an easy and a gradual ascent, and was filling with Rhododendron flowers just blossoming. Me and my friends were right behind the guide. There were small shops along the way where they sell Maggi, tea, etc. We took small breaks along the way and sipped water to keep us hydrated.

Me being photoholic took many photos. We reached the first campsite which was before Juda ka talab (another campsite) and the tents were already pitched. We had lunch and, in the evening, we played many games. Acclimatization is very important for every trekker at higher altitudes, so we did our usual acclimatization walk. Now, before our dinner the trek leader briefed us about our next day's program. After dinner our body temperature was

checked using the pulse oximeter. Finally, we got in our sleeping bags in our tents. We were provided a liner which was made of fleece which we were supposed to wear before getting into the sleeping bag. For those who were not used to sleep in a sleeping bag will find it uncomfortable initially.

Day 2 - Hike to Kedarkantha Basecamp :

The next day's hike was to the Kedarkantha base via another campsite by name Juda ka talab. Now, I was surprised to see snow patches along the trail here since it's spring in the Himalayas. Today's trail was not very difficult, but at some places it was a steep ascent and we reached the next camp very early. Here, we noticed the clear sky with greenery all around and the birds chirping. It couldn't be more peaceful than this! After reaching this camp which is also called the Kedarkantha basecamp we were taught how to pitch our tents. After this hot lunch was served and later, we played cricket in the evening. Yes, you heard that right!!! we played cricket in Himalayas.

Day 3 - Kedarkantha peak :

(This is not to be mistaken with Char Dham Kedarnath temple)

1:00am - Wakeup call

2:00am - Breakfast

3:00am - Trek starts

It is mandatory to start the trek to the summit before dawn (as early as 3am) in order to return back to the basecamp before sunset the same day. By doing this we get to catch the mesmerizing sunrise (usually around 7am) from atop the peak. We started our trek at 3am. It was a steep ascent from **9,800ft to 12,500ft**.

As ascending I witnessed the sky turning from dark to gold as the sun rose over the mountains. It was a sight to behold! Although the trail starts off with a gradual ascend and as you get closer to the peak, the trail becomes more challenging. I was lucky enough to reach the summit first around 6:55am. We could enjoy the views of many peaks like Yamunotri range, Gangotri range, Rupin Valley, Harki dun Valley. We had lots of photoshoots on top. We had some snacks and relaxed here on the peak. The time spent on top was worth the effort put in.

The Descend :

Now, the descend started around 10am and next hour was completely on snow.

It was a challenging descend. We had a wonderful opportunity to slide down the snow which was safe. Later, few of us took time to build a snowman over here.

After a long trek which lasted till afternoon we returned back to our camp where we had nice hot lunch prepared by our hardworking cooks. We took a nap where we were woken up for soup and snacks. Here our cooks prepared a wonderful cake at this altitude for one of our co-trekker's birthday. The cook had prepared a nice cake. We ate the cake and later had our dinner.

Day 4 - Kedarkantha basecamp to Hargaon to Sankri :

On the final day of the trek we started descending to the Sankri basecamp. This took about 5 – 6 hours. We passed through Hargaon (a campsite) to reach Sankri. Descending down, we witnessed the splendid Himalayan ranges. We had our lunch after reaching our main base camp.

Food :

The menu was nutritious and never repeated, which also included a sweet dish every night. Cooking at this altitude is tough. Hats off to the cooks for dishing out scrumptious meals on-time every day.

Dining tent :

The food will be served in the dining tent for all of us. Here the briefing and the daily pulse and heart rate is checked. Since all of us are sitting together and having dinner, it feels really warm inside this tent.

Campsites :

At every Campsite we were provided tents for sleeping and two toilet tents will be erected which will have pits in them, it's called a Rabbit pit hole. After a trekker uses the toilet, he/she has to cover the pit with the mud using a shovel which will be kept there.

Every morning we freshen up by just brushing our teeth, no bath for the entire duration of the trek.

Clothing :

We have an option to offload our main backpacks which will be around 50 - 60 ltr in volume carried on mules with an additional charge. A 10-litre backpack is a must which should contain refreshments, water and daily essential needs like medicines also.

Spikes for our shoes are provided to us as we have to use them while trekking on ice.

To sum up everything, everyone finished the trek safely with zero injuries! We should ensure that the Himalayas and its surroundings are kept clean by not littering with non-biodegradable things like plastic.

Trekking in Himalayas without bathing, electricity, network for the entire duration of the trek, is a feeling to be experienced. Himalayas is something which keeps u pulling again and again...literally to trek!!! Once you start trekking in Himalayas, you can never stop going there. It keeps calling you to come experience and enjoy its "Himalayaness". I thank my father for encouraging me to go on treks like these!!!

Note :

Before venturing or participating in a Himalayan trek one has to make oneself physically fit at least a month before the trek by doing their walk, run or any physical fitness, exercises. This is mandatory.