Master plan for development of trekking routes in Uttaranchal

Prepared for the Department of Tourism Government of Uttaranchal

By Pannell Kerr Forster Consultants Pvt Ltd New Delhi

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Executive summary

Introduction

The new Indian State of Uttaranchal has identified tourism as one of the priority sectors of the State’s policy. Consequently, the Tourism Development Board (TDB), within the State has identified nature and adventure tourism as significant components. With the State’s outstanding scenic beauty and topography, trekking is also a popular activity and there are already numerous trekking routes throughout the State.

As part of the initiative to position itself as a leading destination for nature, eco and adventure tourism, the TDB has commissioned the tourism and hospitality planning firm of Pannell Kerr Forster Consultants Pvt Ltd (PKF), to develop a master plan to conceptualise and detail a long-term perspective plan for the sustainable development of trekking in the State of Uttaranchal in a strategic, scientific and planned manner, so as to create a high quality visitor destination, while honouring the vital principle of sustainability.

The regional context

Uttaranchal is one of the newest States of the Union. Formed in 2000, it was carved out of the erstwhile northern State of Uttar Pradesh. It is made up of three distinct regions, Garhwal, Kumaon and the Terai. Predominantly mountainous, the State is one of the Himalayan regions of India. Similar in terrain to neighbour Nepal, it suffers in that it has only one of the highest eight mountains, the Nanda Devi and is not as popular as Nepal for tourism. Economically weak, it is currently on the special category State list, which makes it eligible for greater assistance from the Central Government.

Understanding tourism in Uttaranchal

One of the more distinct tourism regions in the country, Uttaranchal is uniquely located in proximity to Delhi, a principal gateway. While currently hampered by the lack of infrastructure, improvements to highway access and the development of high-altitude airports will greatly enhance the tourism image of the State. With a policy that prioritises tourism and the presence of significant tourism flows already, improvements in infrastructure and destination management will only improve the quality of tourism to the State. Currently, tourism to the State can distinctly be divided into holiday or leisure tourism (largely restricted to the domestic market), pilgrimages (wholly domestic) and adventure / nature related (domestic and international). The nature / adventure tourism market is still limited but offers significant growth potential.

Trekking as a segment of the tourism industry

The last half of the last century has seen a dramatic rise in the development of travel and tourism in the world. While mass tourism dominated the sector, a niche market has always been involved in more nature and adventure oriented travel and tourism. However, the last few decades has seen a dramatic change in tourism with a shift towards more sustainable tourism. While this market is still niche and limited in numbers, it is growing rapidly. Much of the nature tourism market emanates from
North America and Europe and is directed at pristine natural locations such as Asia and South America. Nepal, as the home of the Greater Himalayas, sees the majority of mountaineering and adventure tourism. Uttarakhand, located strategically near Nepal and with the Himalayas has great potential for development, in the present scenario, especially as a trekking destination.

Trekking in Uttarakhand

Trekking in Uttarakhand can be categorized as either that related to adventure trekking or pilgrimage. While pilgrimage travel is more related to mass tourism, it constitutes the larger segment of trekking tourism to the State. While many of the pilgrimage routes don’t require physical trekking, of the 27 popular and predominant treks identified for this study, at least 7 (Gangotri, Kedarnath, Yamunotri, Badrinath, Chandrasilla, Devi Darshan and Panch kedar) are pilgrimage treks or extensions of pilgrimage treks. Most of the adventure treks in Uttarakhand are popular both in the domestic and the international circuits. The majority of treks are located in Garhwal but the more remote and pristine treks are found in Kumaon. While mountains have been categorized based on difficulty there exist no standard ratings for trekking and only various personal ratings for treks. The rating used for this study is based on a comparative assessment of a number of experts. The treks in Uttarakhand offer diversity in difficulty levels as well as character and are comparable to the best in the world.

The master plan

The master plan has been based on the existing tourism guidelines and policy of the State of Uttarakhand. Based on the key policy enhancement of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and the holistic development of human resources, with special focus on employment, the master plan conceptualises trekking as a product, with a need for a marketing platform. With tourism as a system, the master plan attempts to analyse the gaps between demand and supply between the tourism set-up and the potential visitation. In the context of trekking, the product is indicated as an amalgam of five key factors- the existing trekking routes themselves, transportation and access, information, promotion and support services. The support services in turn are identified at a policy level, as a product, as components of leadership and organization, as regulatory issues as well as local community issues. All these factors finally build into a marketing strategy.

Host community and capacity building

In keeping with the guidelines of the tourism policy of the State, measures to enhance the local participation in the operation of the trekking industry is called for in order to enhance GDP and the overall development of the region. While the local community at the village level is essentially remote and has little interaction with the trekkers, the growing numbers of trekkers in the region has forced the villagers into closer contact with outsiders. In order to maximise the potential from the trekking industry, a two pronged approach of sensitisation and education of villagers to the demands of ecotourism as well as an illustration of the commercial advantage through participation in the trekking industry, has to be adopted. Other issues that are addressed are equity issues regarding the establishment of access controls and regulations, the involvement of local participation in decision making regarding land management, garbage removal, afforestation, visitor education as well as promotion and trail maintenance, the development of capacity building through sensitisation, education and training, vocational skill training, the development of entrepreneurship as well as sourcing of investments for infrastructure.
Marketing strategy

Conceived as both an institutional plan as well as a marketing plan, the master plan provides a broad direction for both the marketing and promotion of trekking in Uttaranchal. Based on the market opportunity that Uttaranchal is a safe, secure, pristine and naturally diverse destination for trekking (as against mountaineering) for both the volume driven domestic market as well as the high yield international market, the State can be positioned as a leading trekking destination in the Himalayas, providing a quality experience in a sustainable manner. At an action level, the key steps would be to identify key market segments (Europe vs. Asia), conduct market research on the visitor profile, establish guidelines for product development as well as identify the promotion mix and marketing strategy.
Introduction

Presented in the following document is a master plan for the development of trekking in Uttaranchal in a planned, integrated and sustainable manner. It represents the conclusions of a detailed study conducted by Pannell Kerr Forster Consultants in the period April 2002 to June 2002.

Background to the project

The new Indian State of Uttaranchal has identified tourism as one of the priority sectors of the State’s policy. Consequently, the Tourism Development Board (TDB), within the State has identified nature and adventure tourism as significant components. The Himalayan setting and topography of the State has historically invited numerous mountaineering expeditions while its mountain rivers, particularly the Ganges with its tributaries, the Bhagirathi and the Alaknanda, as well as the Kali have in the past decade attracted white water rafting. With the State’s outstanding scenic beauty and topography, trekking is also a popular activity and there are already numerous trekking routes throughout the State.

As part of the initiative to position itself as a leading destination for nature, eco and adventure tourism, the TDB believes that the planned and integrated development of trekking will give the State a unique and competitive tourism product and market positioning, both on a national and international basis. It will promote more sustainable tourism both in terms of visitation and the distribution of tourists within the State. A planned approach builds on tourism flows that are already occurring with the objective of achieving more visitors and greater visitor satisfaction.

A planned and integrated approach will also synergise the development of trekking with other forms of tourism occurring or desired in the State. As such, the master plan for trekking is one of several such studies and plans commissioned by the TDB for the development of tourism in the State as a vital economic activity.

Objective of the master plan

The objective of this master plan is to conceptualise and detail a long-term perspective plan for the sustainable development of trekking in the State of Uttaranchal in a strategic, scientific and planned manner, so as to create a high quality visitor destination, while honouring the vital principle of sustainability.
Terms of reference

Based on an interpretation of the terms of reference for the assignment provided by the TDB, this master plan has the following key components:

- Assessment of the current status of trekking in Uttaranchal
- Identification and inventory of trekking routes in Uttaranchal
  - Description of key trekking routes (including maps)
  - Assessment of key trekking routes and recommended enhancements
  - Assessment of infrastructure (physical and tourism), support facilities, amenities, services and infrastructure on which trekking is dependent (by type of tourist – leisure or pilgrim) and recommended additions and improvements, including specification of minimum standards
- Prioritisation of routes
- Grading of Routes
- Assessment of institutional and regulatory arrangements and recommendations (after a review of best practice case studies from other countries)
- Assessment of stakeholder (local community) participation, costs and benefits, and recommendations on capacity building
- Assessment of environmental conditions and recommendation of guidelines
- Market assessment and recommendations on marketing and promotion
- Recommended projects (for investment)

Methodology for the study

Master planning is typically the reconciliation of the physical conditions, market factors and economic considerations of an area so as to achieve the correct balance of development, given certain development objectives.

Trekking by its very nature requires little infrastructure and hence a physical plan for the development of trekking in the State was not a requirement. Furthermore, a primary review of extant conditions along each route was stated as being infeasible from a time and cost perspective. Instead, what was required was a master plan that was more strategic in nature and focused on ‘enabling’ aspects (such as accessibility to base camps, support facilities and services) and institutional aspects (such as regulatory mechanisms, building sustainability and local capacity, etc.)

The methodology and conduct of the assignment was oriented to be market-based, to address the issue of sustainability, to achieve balanced development, to create a high quality destination and to integrate with the other forms of tourism in the State.

The study commenced with extensive desk research and literature search. During this phase every available form of printed or online material on trekking in general and trekking in Uttaranchal in particular was researched. This included information and data on the market structure of the tourism industry, on the destination region, on individual trekking routes, and international comparables, case studies and best practices on aspects such as the regulatory framework and institutional arrangements. Efforts were made to assemble and collate data from various bodies currently working in the region.

Thereafter, the study team itself undertook a reconnaissance trek to Har ki Dun to serve as a case study to serve as the basis for further assessments. This trek, in addition to previous treks that members of the study team have undertaken to Gaumukh, Milam Glacier and the Kumaon Region,
served as case studies and as the basis for formulation of research instruments (checklists, questionnaires) used in this study.

In order that all trekking routes within the State be assessed on common criteria and be comparable, a detailed questionnaire was compiled based on the desk research and primary experience. This was then reviewed in detail with a number of experts to ensure that it was valid and comprehensive. The final questionnaire is placed at Appendix 1. The list of experts who reviewed this instrument included the Garhwal Mandal Vikas Nigam, the Kumaon Mandal Vikas Nigam and Rajiv Bhartari, Wildlife Institute of India.

The questionnaire-cum-checklist was then administered to a wide gamut of individuals and institutions involved in mountaineering and trekking in the State. The list of individuals approached is listed in Appendix 3. Personal interviews and discussions were held with some experts. While 60 experts were requested for their views and opinions, a total of 30-35 responses were received (including interviews conducted).

In addition to the questionnaire-cum-checklist that dealt mostly with aspects related to the trekking routes themselves, another survey was conducted amongst tour operators prominent in the marketing and promotion of adventure tourism and trekking in India. The survey instrument used for this purpose is placed at Appendix 2. This survey sought to gain an insight into the size, scale and experience of the trekking market in India, and in Uttaranchal in particular, with a view to determining potential for further development. This survey assumed vital importance, as the views of these tour operators were surrogates for the views of consumers / trekkers themselves. In all, a total of 25 of such interviews were conducted.

A series of discussions were held with authorities and stakeholders within the State and relevant data obtained, as available. It may be stated here that the lack of complete and reliable data on trekking in India and within the State has been a constraint to this study.

As per the agreed stages of work, initial discussions were to be held with the client, followed by the submission of a report on completion of fieldwork. Various discussions took place between the client and PKF during the course of the study and in lieu of the report on completion of fieldwork, a presentation was made and submitted at a special meeting with the Union Minister for Tourism on May 9, 2002. Further, after the first reconnaissance into Uttaranchal, the scope of the project appeared far more complex that expected and components such as grading of routes and infrastructure on the trekking routes came into criticism by the trekking community. Consequently, the methodology of the project was modified to make the final objectives of the study more strategic in nature. Thereafter, on September 14, 2002, the draft master plan was presented and submitted (in presentation format) to the TDB. A report in prose was also submitted in January 2003 and was reviewed by the TDB and local tourism officials. Their comments and suggestions have been incorporated and this report represents the final master plan for the development of trekking in Uttaranchal.
The regional context

Uttaranchal is one of the newest States of the Union. Carved out of the erstwhile Uttar Pradesh, it came into being in November 2000, together with the other new States of Jharkhand and Chattisgarh.

Defining the region

The State was created by incorporating eight of the north-western hill districts of the Uttar Pradesh State. These districts were Nainital, Almora, Pithoragarh, Dehradun, Uttarkashi, Tehri, Chamoli and Pauri. A further four districts were simultaneously created, those of Udham Singh Nagar, Bageshwar, Champawat and Rudraprayag. In addition, the district of Haridwar was added to the new State.

Located to the north of the country, the State now has 13 districts, 49 tehsils, 10 sub tehsils, 97 Development Blocks, 71 towns and 15,793 villages. With an area of 53,483km², the State occupies 1.7% of the total landmass of India.

Garhwal and Kumaon

Uttaranchal essentially comprises the two distinct hill regions of Garhwal and Kumaon, connected by a stretch of flatlands at the base, called the terai. Garhwal, which contains the districts of Haridwar, Pauri Garhwal, Dehradun, Tehri Garhwal, Rudraprayag, Chamoli and Uttarkashi, is the more prominent of the two regions and more developed in terms of physical infrastructure. This is essentially because India’s two most important rivers (the Ganga and the Yamuna) originate here, and it also has India’s ‘Char Dham’ or the four holiest Hindu shrines of Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri and Yamunotri. Aside from the char dham, Garhwal is best known for the tourist town of Mussoorie, the holy towns of Haridwar and Rishikesh (also the centre for white water rafting in north India), the ski resort of Auli, as well as Dehradun, the new State capital and centre for institutions and boarding schools in India.

Kumaon, the smaller of the two regions is less developed, especially in its higher reaches, and consists of the districts of Udham Singh Nagar, Champawat, Nainital, Almora, Pithoragarh and Bageshwar. It is best known for the tourist town of Nainital, the Corbett National Park, the Nanda Devi peak, the Pindari glacier and the route to Kailash Mansarovar.

History of the region

While Uttaranchal is an amalgamation of the two regions of Garhwal and Kumaon, the two regions are distinct in their history, culture and ethnicity. The Garhwal Himalayas has long been the locale for the mythology of the Puranic period. The traditional name for the Garhwal was Uttarakhand and it is attributed to have been part of the Mauryan Empire. However, it is with the 8th c spiritual reformer, Shankaracharya, that the region is linked. Adi Shankara was responsible for setting up the math at Joshimath, and the adjoining shrines of Badrinath and Kedarnath rose to prominence in this period. The period of Garhwal as one unified territory began in the 15th century, when the king Ajai Pal merged the 52 principalities, each with their own garh or fort. Garhwal remained an independent kingdom for almost 300 years with its capital at Srinagar, till Pauri and Dehradun were ceded to the British crown in the 19th century as payment for help to defend Garhwal against the Ghurkha invasion.
Kumaon derives its name from the ‘koorn’ or tortoise guise of Lord Vishnu, named after a hill top near Champawat. The region is reputed to have evidence of Stone Age settlements, with paintings from the Mesolithic period. However, the early medieval history of Kumaon is the history of the Katyuri dynasty (7th–11th century), that held power over large areas of Kumaon, Garhwal and western Nepal. Baijnath, near Almora, was the capital of this dynasty and was renowned for its arts. The Chands of Pithoragarh, with their magnificent temple complex at Jageshwar, came to power after the Katyuris.

Uttaranchal has the distinction of having retained its sovereignty for a considerable period of time. This was due in part to the peaceful nature of the region, as well as its harsh terrain. While Dehradun and Nainital became centres of British power in the 1800s, the higher ranges of the region were hardly affected by the British occupation.

State boundaries and neighbours

Uttaranchal, in the north of India, is bound by Uttar Pradesh in the south and the west, by Himachal Pradesh in the north-west and by China (Tibet) and Nepal in the east. Uttaranchal, for reasons of geography, topography, migration and historical trading ties, shares a number of similarities with its mountain neighbours.

Figure 1: Uttaranchal, showing major towns and neighbours

Source: Expedia.com

1 Tibet is separated from Uttaranchal by a series of 17 high passes to the north of the State
Population

The population\(^2\) of Uttaranchal was estimated at 8.479mn in 2001, an overall decrease of 10% from the 1991 population of 8.583mn. The density of population\(^3\) in the State is 159persons/km\(^2\), which is markedly less than the country average of 324persons/km\(^2\). Dehradun, the provisional Capital of the State has a population of 447,808 in 2001, an increase of 177% over the 1991 figure of 270,159.

Society and culture

Uttaranchal, largely due to inhospitable terrain, is sparsely populated except in the terai region. Traditionally a pastoral society, like much of the Himalayan region, the inhabitants make their living from subsistence farming and limited animal husbandry that the hilly land supports. Some of the tribes, such as the Bhotias, are migratory traders. Most of the indigenous people like Jaunsari, Bhotia, Buksha, Tharu, and Raji are heterodox Hindus and Buddhists, while Sikh migrants from West Punjab have settled in the terai since 1947. A few Muslim groups are also native to the area, although most of them have settled recently. The Muslim Gujjar herders of the region migrate between the hills and the terai.

While not traditionally an artistic society, the region is known for two major art forms, stone and wood carving. The art of stone carving gradually died down, but woodcarving continued and could be seen on almost every door of a traditional Garhwal house until only half a century ago. Woodcarving can still be seen in hundreds of temple across Garhwal. The remains of architectural work have been found at the Chandpur Fort, the temple of Srinagar, Pandukeshwar (near Badrinath), Devi Madir (near Joshimath) and Devalgarh Temple.

Topography

Uttaranchal lies almost entirely in the Himalayan region, with three distinct topographical belts - the Shivaliks in the sub Himalayan tract (300-600m amsl), the Himachal ranges in the lower Himalayan region (1,500-2,700m amsl), and the Himadri ranges in the upper Himalayan region (4,800-6,000m amsl). The Garhwal and Kumaon regions of the State together form approximately 350km of the 2,500km long Himalayan range.

In the south of the State is the terai, a belt about 15-20km wide, that separates the hills from the plains, and comprises thick jungles, swamps and grasslands. Large tracts of this land now comprise highly fertile farmlands. Next follows what can be called the lower hilly region, ranging between 600m-1,800m and it is in this region that the bulk of the population lives. The middle hill region that lies between 1,800-3,000m is mostly forested, thinly populated, has poor water supply and is dependent on animal husbandry. The high altitude region (above 3,000m) is about 30-45km wide along the northern international border and is usually snowbound throughout the year, with only a few valleys with human habitation. Winter migration is still a common practice in the region.

The prominent peaks that fall within the State are Nanda Devi (7,818m), Mana (7,274m), Chaukhamba (7,144m), Trishul (7,122m), Dunagiri (7,068m), Satopanth (7,075m), Nanda Kot (6,861m), Pindar (6,320m), Bandar Poonch (6,315m), Swarg Rohini (6,245m) and Panchchuli

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\(^2\) Source: Census of India, 1991 and 2001
\(^3\) Source: Census of India 2001, Provisional Population Tables
(6,095m). In addition, there are several other peaks including the Kamet, Trishul, Shivling, etc which are all above 6,000m in height. Some of the best known glaciers too fall within the State, e.g., Pindari and Milam glaciers.

Home to India’s most prominent rivers, the Ganga and Yamuna, the State also has other important rivers. These are the Alaknanda and the Bhagirathi (tributaries of the Ganga, which have their origins in the mountains bordering Tibet) Kali, Ramganga, Saryu, Pindar, Malini, Rawasain, Khoh and Nayar. The Tons River and the Yamuna separate the Garhwal and Kumaon from the Kinnaur and Sirmaur districts of Himachal Pradesh, while the Mahakali River forms a natural boundary with Nepal in the west. With the rivers come dramatic valleys, best known amongst which are Valley of Flowers and Har-ki-Dun.

According to experts, despite the lack of the highest peaks in the world, the natural resources and attractions of Uttaranchal are on level, if not better than those of Nepal and are far superior to the natural beauty of Himachal Pradesh. With many of the important peaks in the region higher than 7000m, it has some of the best mountaineering.

The peaks, glaciers and valleys, together with the unique religious, cultural and social diversity of the people living in these hills, have long attracted adventure seekers to Uttaranchal. The State boasts some of the best known trekking routes in the country including the trek to Pindari Glacier, the Har-ki-Dun trek, the Yamunotri - Gangotri trek and the Nehru-Curzon trail.

**Climate**

The climatic conditions change with the rise of altitude, ranging from sub-zero temperatures at high altitudes in winter to moderate temperatures in the lower tracts in summer.

The region has three distinct seasons - monsoon (June - September), winter (October- February) and summer (March - May). Nearly all forms of precipitation, from rain to hail and snow can be more or less observed in the State. The southwest monsoon commences after mid-June and continues up to September, characterised by high cloudiness and torrential rainfall. Snowfall occurs between January and March in the upper and lower Himalayan ranges.

The average rainfall in the region varies from 1,016mm in Pauri (Garhwal foothills and lower to sub-Himalayan tracts) to 2,540mm in Nainital (lower Kumaon Himalayan ranges). Snowfall occurs at places situated at higher elevations, particularly above 2,000m.

**Flora and fauna**

Traditionally the mountains in the lower regions of Uttaranchal were covered with a thick blanket of moist deciduous forest. Today, however, much of this forest has been cut for commercial lumber. Between elevations of 1,500-3,000m, natural vegetation consists of pine, oak, rhododendron, poplar, walnut and larch. Below the snow line, the vegetation consists of forests of spruce, fir, cypress, juniper and birch, while above the snow line (in the higher reaches of the State) is alpine vegetation that includes mosses, lichen and a diversity of wildflowers such as blue poppies and edelweiss.

As a result of deforestation, much of the original fauna of the Himalayas is now restricted to protected areas and sanctuaries. Notable fauna in the region includes the Himalayan bear, musk deer, the wild goat ghoral, bharal or blue goat, wolves, snow leopards and varieties of deer such as barking deer.
Avifauna in the region is regarded as one of the richest in the sub-continent, with over 500 species of birds.

**Economy**

The rugged terrain has made infrastructure and economic development challenging, with large investment requirements that have not been available. As a result, the State has historically been industrially backward and has mostly subsisted on agriculture. In April 2001, the State was granted the status of a ‘Special Category State’, which makes it eligible for greater assistance from the Central Government.

Recent studies in the region indicate that the hill region with its pollution free environment is most suitable for industries based on biotechnology, information technology and hardware production. In addition, floriculture has obvious potential in the hill districts. With perennial rivers such as Ganga and Yamuna, the potential for hydroelectric power generation is considered to be immense. The scenic beauty and the diversity of the State make tourism a key thrust area.

**Conclusion**

Uttaranchal is one of the newest States of the Union. Formed in 2000, it was carved out of the erstwhile Uttar Pradesh. It is made up of three distinct regions, Garhwal, Kumaon and the Terai. Predominantly mountainous, the State is one of the Himalayan regions of India. Economically weak, it is currently a Special Category State, which makes it eligible for greater assistance from the Central Government. However, the unique mix of natural beauty, pilgrimage sites and low level of exploitation make the State ideal as an ecotourism destination.

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4 Special category status is given to States with the following extant conditions - hilly and difficult terrain, low population density, and strategic location sharing a border with a foreign country, economic and infrastructure backwardness and non-viable nature of the State finances
Overview of tourism in Uttaranchal

Introduction

Uttaranchal has since long been one of the more prominent tourism destination/ zones in the country. However, as a part of the greater Uttar Pradesh tourism circuit, the region was neglected due to the existence of the more prominent Taj Mahal and Varanasi within the erstwhile State. While there are limited studies on the State of tourism in Uttaranchal, there is currently a well established pattern of touring that is particular to the State and is dictated by its unique geographic location, its scenic tourism assets, its places of religious significance and most of all, transport infrastructure.

Accessibility

Mountainous terrain and snow bound winter months in the higher ranges have made accessibility to large parts of the State difficult. While important base towns such as Dehradun and Haldwani / Kathgodam have relatively good road and train connections from the main gateway of New Delhi, accessibility to the higher reaches of the State is limited to roads. The length of National Highways in the State is limited.

Air connections in the State are currently limited to Dehradun’s Jolly Grant airport. The Pant Nagar airstrip located in Udhamsingh Nagar District in the foothills of Kumaon has remained closed for several years now. Existing high-altitude airstrips located at Chinyalisaur and Naini Saini in the Garhwal region and at Pithoragarh in the Kumaon region are proposed to be enhanced and made operational for the first time shortly.

Figure 2: Uttaranchal, with major roads and rail heads

Source: Maptell.com
Tourist visitation within the State

Official tourist arrival data in India is characteristically unreliable as the established system is typically based on hotel and accommodation statistics, which are often incomplete and are prone to double counting of the same visitor. Accordingly, the statistics cited in this report should be read with discretion.

According to TDB, domestic tourism to Uttaranchal in 2001 was 10.4mn, while international visitors to the State were approximately 55,000. Based on these statistics, domestic tourism to Uttaranchal is approximately 5.9% of all-India domestic tourism while international tourism is approximately 2.2% of international tourism to the country. Domestic tourism to the State has grown at a compound rate of 6% since 1996, although it fell from a high of 11.5mn in 1998. International tourism to the State reached a high of 68,600 in 1999, but has since fallen to levels close to those of 1996.

Domestic tourism within the State is primarily associated with religious pilgrimage and visiting friends and family. Based on statistics available, it is estimated that the domestic pilgrimage tourism accounts for approximately 18-20% of total domestic tourism. However, assessments from experts in the field indicate that it could be far higher. Statistics indicate that the international trekking segment does not exceed 7% of all tourism at any point.

Popular destinations within the State

Placed overleaf is a listing of the domestic tourist visitation of destinations within Uttaranchal. Mussoorie and Nainital, the traditional ‘hill stations’, are the most popular individual tourist destinations, followed closely by pilgrimage destinations. Dehradun is popular due to a variety of reasons, as a transit hub, a base town for the Garhwal region, as well as being the seat of the State government. Notable in the listing is the overall popularity of the Garhwal region.
Table 1 - Popularity Rating of Destinations in Uttaranchal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Character</th>
<th>% of domestic visitors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mussoorie</td>
<td>Garhwal</td>
<td>Hill Station</td>
<td>21.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dehradun</td>
<td>Garhwal</td>
<td>Transit / Hub</td>
<td>10.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Badrinath</td>
<td>Garhwal</td>
<td>Pilgrimage</td>
<td>10.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nainital</td>
<td>Kumaon</td>
<td>Hill Station</td>
<td>8.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttarkashi</td>
<td>Garhwal</td>
<td>Pilgrimage transit / hub</td>
<td>6.39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rishikesh</td>
<td>Garhwal</td>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>5.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joshimath</td>
<td>Garhwal</td>
<td>Pilgrimage transit / hub</td>
<td>5.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hemkund Sahib</td>
<td>Garhwal</td>
<td>Pilgrimage</td>
<td>5.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kedarnath</td>
<td>Garhwal</td>
<td>Pilgrimage</td>
<td>4.61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gopeshwar</td>
<td>Kumaon</td>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>3.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pauri</td>
<td>Garhwal</td>
<td>Hill town</td>
<td>3.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Srinagar</td>
<td>Garhwal</td>
<td>Hill town</td>
<td>2.74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kotdwar</td>
<td>Garhwal</td>
<td>Hill town</td>
<td>2.39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pithoragarh</td>
<td>Kumaon</td>
<td>Hill town</td>
<td>1.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almora</td>
<td>Kumaon</td>
<td>Hill town</td>
<td>1.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kausani and Bageshwar</td>
<td>Kumaon</td>
<td>Hill resort</td>
<td>1.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranikhet</td>
<td>Kumaon</td>
<td>Hill resort</td>
<td>1.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corbett National Park</td>
<td>Kumaon</td>
<td>Wildlife tourism</td>
<td>1.38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yamunotri</td>
<td>Garhwal</td>
<td>Pilgrimage</td>
<td>1.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathgodam</td>
<td>Kumaon</td>
<td>Transit / hub</td>
<td>1.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gangotri</td>
<td>Garhwal</td>
<td>Pilgrimage</td>
<td>0.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auli</td>
<td>Garhwal</td>
<td>Ski resort</td>
<td>0.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valley of Flowers</td>
<td>Garhwal</td>
<td>Trekking</td>
<td>0.06%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: based on statistics from the Department of Tourism, Uttaranchal

Tourism products

Tourism to Uttaranchal can be categorised into three distinct product categories – holiday or leisure, pilgrimage and adventure.

Holiday or leisure travel

Holiday or pure leisure travel is best typified by the kind of travel that occurs to destinations such as Mussoorie, Nainital, Ranikhet and other lesser hill stations in the State such as Binsar, Kausani, Chakrata, etc. These hill resorts are present in both the regions of Garhwal and Kumaon. While in the past this used to occur primarily in the summer months, in festivals periods such as Dussehra, or during school vacations, it is now increasingly occurring throughout the year, especially over long weekends. This form of tourism comprises almost entirely of domestic tourists, the majority of whom travel on relatively low budgets.

Tourism to cultural or heritage sites also forms part of this holiday travel and includes such centres as Almora, Bageshwar, Bajjnath, Jageshwar and Champawat. Most of these centres lie in the Kumaon region and are sites of ancient temples, fairs and festivals and ashrams.
Pilgrimage travel

With the char dham, the route to Kailash Mansarover, as well as a number of other religious centres such as Haridwar and Rishikesh, pilgrimage travel to and within Uttaranchal is perhaps the largest segment of travel, even though not borne out by the statistics cited.

Other pilgrimage circuits in the State include the:

- Panch Badri
- Panch Kedar
- Panch Prayag
- Devi Darshan

Almost all of these are located in the Garhwal region. The pilgrimages are somewhat seasonal, occurring mostly between April and September. Pilgrimage travel is typically very low spending and lasts 10-15 days.

Adventure travel

Adventure travel in the State includes hard adventure such as mountaineering, and relatively soft adventure such trekking and white water rafting. The peaks, glaciers and valleys of the State are the centres for this adventure travel. Notable here is the fact that the majority of trekking routes are in the Garhwal region, as is the prime river-rafting centre of Rishikesh. The fact that the pilgrimage circuits also double as trekking circuits makes the Garhwal region even more significant for adventure tourism.

Adventure travel could also perhaps be said to include visits to wildlife sanctuaries such as the Corbett and Rajaji National Parks. There are other sanctuaries in the State as well, which are less visited.

These include:

- Valley of Flowers
- Govind Wildlife Sanctuary
- Kedarnath Sanctuary
- Nanda Devi National Park
- Assan Barrage Wetland
- Binsar National Park

Traditionally the bastion of the enthusiast outdoors-persons, this market is slowly evolving to include weekend/3-4 day visitors from the close metropolitan areas such as Delhi and Chandigarh as well as a larger number of international tourists.
Tourism circuits

The review of the geographic position of the State, as well as its tourism products, makes it apparent that the State in fact has two distinct regions, Garhwal and Kumaon. Garhwal is prominent for pilgrimages, rivers and trekking routes, while Kumaon has a more diffuse image that includes being more remote, forested, with ‘tals’ (lakes), glaciers, some historic attractions, the Nanda Devi Sanctuary and a closer view of the Himalayan peaks. Cultural tourism is predominant in Kumaon. However, analysis of the region indicates that much of the adventure and nature related tourism stretches over both the Garhwal and Kumaon region with the more difficult and challenging treks actually ranging across the two regions. River rafting activities also span the regions, with the Gomti and the Rishi Ganga stretching across the two regions. The terai, to the south of the State, spread across both Garhwal and Kumaon, forms the wildlife circuit of the State.

According to tour operators, there were only few frequented destinations in the State. These include:

- Rishikesh: located in Garhwal, as an adventure / religious / festival destination
- Uttarkashi / Joshimath: located in Garhwal region, as an important religious / pilgrimage centres
- Char Dham: located in Garhwal region, consist of four pilgrimage sites
- Dehradun: located in Garhwal region, educational and institutional centre as well as transit node between plains and hills
- Mussoorie: located in Garhwal region, hill-station for domestic tourists
- Nainital: located in the Kumaon region, hill-station for domestic tourists
- Corbett: located in the Kumaon region, important wildlife sanctuary

Competition

While the State has perhaps not so far thought in terms of the competition it faces from other destinations, it would be a fair assessment that its primary competitors will be its neighbours, Himachal Pradesh and Nepal, with whom it shares many similarities in terms of tourism product. Both these places are identified by the higher Himalayan ranges with spectacular views of the ranges and adventure-based activities.

At an international level, Nepal is considered a far superior product despite the similarity in terrain and climate. This is largely due to two factors; the first that Nepal has the highest mountains in the world and attracts a strong mountaineering community and the second that the tourism infrastructure and air capacity in Nepal is established and superior to the existing facilities in Uttaranchal. On the level of positioning, Uttaranchal suffers in that it is not perceived as a distinct tourism destination.

Internally, the State faces considerable competition from Himachal Pradesh. A market survey\(^5\) of tourists visiting hill stations and focused on Mussoorie and Dehradun in particular, indicated that 33% of the respondents found hill stations in Uttaranchal less attractive compared to other hill stations in North India, namely Himachal Pradesh. At the same time, however, an almost equal number (34%) found the State more attractive than its competitors in North India. It could be surmised that Himachal Pradesh scores by virtue of its two prominent destinations – Shimla and Kullu-Manali, both of which offer dramatic and closer Himalayan views.

It must be mentioned here that this survey did not cover the higher reaches of the State, many of which are dramatic in their beauty. Perhaps the perception amongst domestic tourists of Uttaranchal

\(^5\) Conducted by PKF in 2002
Master plan for development of trekking routes in Uttaranchal

not being as attractive as Himachal also comes from a lack of awareness of what the State truly has to offer, for the survey results also showed that another 28% of respondents did not have enough knowledge to actually make a comparison.

The ‘opening up’ of the State through access and awareness creation measures is clearly an imperative, as is product development of high quality, all supported by professional marketing.

Consumer opinions on Uttaranchal as a tourism destination

PKF has recently conducted a brief study of consumer opinions about the State of Uttaranchal, relevant excerpts of which are presented below.

Uttaranchal has high appeal as a tourist destination

The State’s high tourism appeal is seen in the fact that almost 74% of respondents were repeat visitors. The State’s climate is its primary draw (36%), with its scenic beauty – hills, nature, and forests – coming close behind (35%). The hospitality of the State’s residents is a very significant factor (16%) in that such a high mention is rarely received by destinations within India. The sense of peace was cited as another positive factor (8%).

The State presents a very high degree of satisfaction to visitors, with over 90% being satisfied with their visit.

Infrastructure is a key constraint

Infrastructure factors are repeatedly cited as factors that detract from the tourist experience of the State. The quality of roads was the most disliked factor with fully 41% singling out this factor. A weighted analysis of the top five responses by respondents also shows that a primary suggestion for ‘additions’ to the tourism product of Uttaranchal related to connectivity to the State (19%), within which tourists singled out air connectivity (7%).

All other factors were far less in significance and revolved around infrastructure gaps and the increasing popularity of the destination. 16% believed there should be significant additions to infrastructure in general.

A key concern was the increasing popularity of certain destinations, which together with inadequate civic infrastructure support, was resulting in degraded environments in and around destinations and attractions.

Superior tourism facilities and services are required

Notable suggestions were made by respondents that relate to tourism facilities and services. Superior quality accommodation in particular was a key requirement with both consumers and tour operators. There is also a moderate demand from tour operators for ‘new’ destinations (as in destinations made accessible, ski destinations, and destinations that can be sold the year round).

Respondents seem to make a specific recommendation for the introduction of ‘packages’ (11%), which can perhaps be interpreted as tour packages which overcome the access, transportation and infrastructure issues (as well as perhaps cost issues). This comment may also be mirroring the view of
tour operators, that in general, the quality of marketing of Uttaranchal as a tourist destination, has, so far, been poor.

**Strengths, opportunities and constraints of the Uttaranchal tourism product**

Based on the above overview, a brief assessment of the strengths, opportunities and constraints of Uttaranchal as a tourism destination is presented below, in brief:

**Strengths**
- Diverse scenic beauty
- The Himalayas as an icon
- Strong cultural links to the Hindu faith
- Strongly rural character with unique ethnic communities

**Constraints**
- Physical infrastructure support in general, especially inadequate transport infrastructure
- Limited quality accommodations
- Poor destination management at established centres

**Opportunities**
- Holiday / leisure tourism based at the many hill resorts and natural locales
- Pilgrimages
- Nature-based and adventure activities (both hard and soft)
- Integration of rural communities into the development and promotion of tourism
- Integration of cultural elements into the natural tourism product
- Creative packaging of the State’s tourism product and its professional marketing

**Possible positioning**

**Regional positioning**

With these attributes, as a tourism product, Garhwal takes on a more activity orientation, with pilgrimages, river rafting, and trekking being dominant. Kumaon, with its diverse attractions, takes on a more holiday/leisure orientation set in scenic locales.

**Consumer positioning**

A survey of tour operators and intermediaries showed that within the travel trade, the tourism market for the State is seen as being mostly domestic, with its core tourism product being nature-based and pilgrimages. Within the nature based positioning, other than scenic areas, there is a strong identity for adventure (soft and hard) in the locales of mountains (trekking, climbing) and rivers (river rafting).

Within India, the State of Uttaranchal as a whole is perhaps best positioned for hill resorts, pilgrimages and soft adventure, while for international markets, its optimum image strategy would be of Himalayas and adventure.
State policy context

In May 2001, the new State government declared its first budget, with tourism and information technology as focal areas for development. As a part of its strategic thrust on tourism, the State has also released a tourism policy defining its major focus areas and development strategy.

The tourism policy states that the objective of tourism development in the State is for employment generation and for overall improvement in the GDP. It states that the focus of all development schemes should also be the development of human resources.

The policy states that tourism in the State must be developed in a comprehensive planning framework, should focus on domestic tourists, should follow principles of sustainable development, must promote private sector investment and must result in the balanced development for all regions and peoples.

The tourism policy also defines certain action plans, which need to be undertaken to ensure the achievement of the above objectives. These include the setting up of a statutory tourism board as a legal body to undertake various identified projects (already done as the TDB), the improvement of infrastructure especially roads and communications facilities, the promotion of new development schemes for the comparatively less developed areas which are relatively well connected, and the improvement of marketing efforts of the State.

The tourism policy identifies various tourism products, which could be positioned for different tourist segments. These are:

- Pilgrimage
- Adventure
- Winter
- Wildlife
- Cultural
- Festivals
- Handicrafts
- Tourist villages
- Eco-tourism
- Rural / village

Conclusion

One of the more distinct tourism regions in the country, Uttaranchal is uniquely located in proximity to Delhi, a principal gateway. While currently hampered by the lack of infrastructure, improvements to highway access and the development of high-altitude airports will greatly enhance the tourism image of the State. With a policy that prioritises tourism and the presence of significant tourism flows already, improvements in infrastructure and destination management will only improve the quality of tourism to the State. Currently, tourism to the State can distinctly be divided into holiday or leisure tourism (largely restricted to the domestic market), pilgrimages (wholly domestic) and adventure / nature related (domestic and international). The nature / adventure tourism market is still limited but offers significant growth potential.
Defining the context: Trekking as a segment of the tourism industry

The tourism industry

‘Tourism’ is defined as the industry that has developed as a response to the activity of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment. While this includes travel for leisure, business or other purposes, in this report the definition is taken to mean travel for leisure purposes. The reference to tourism as an ‘industry’ and the need for planning arises as it is widely accepted that economic value must also be created from travel activity.

The scale of global and India tourism

Global tourism

Tourism is today the world’s largest industry, with the Travel and Tourism (T&T) ‘Industry’ and T&T ‘Economy’ respectively contributing 4.2% and 10.7% of global GDP. Tourism is also the highest generator of jobs, with the T&T Economy accounting for 8.2% of total employment or 1 in every 12.2 jobs. Tourism is the single largest and fastest growing category of international trade, accounting for 12.8% of total exports. It is one of the Top 5 export categories for 83% of countries and the main source of foreign exchange for 38%. The potential for international tourism is vast as today only 3.5% of the world’s population travels internationally.

International tourists to India were 2.64mn in 2000, or approximately 0.39% of world tourism.

In the period since 1980, international tourism to India has averaged a growth of between 5.25-5.50% p.a. on a compounded basis. World Tourism Organisation (WTO)’s forecasts for international tourism to India are 5.09mn arrivals in 2010 and 8.9mn arrivals in 2020. On this basis, international tourism to India is forecast to grow at a compound rate of 11.85% p.a. till 2010 and at 7.46% p.a. between 2010 and 2020.

Domestic tourism

The WTO estimates that the scale of world domestic tourism far exceeds world international tourism, by a ratio of 10:1. In fact, in 2000, domestic tourists in India were estimated at 320mn, a ratio of 1:67. A more accurate assessment of domestic tourism in India derived from the 54th round of the National Sample Survey shows that domestic tourism in India amounts to 109mn tours p.a. from urban areas and 211mn tours p.a. originating in rural areas, or a total of 320mn tours p.a.

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6 Source: WTTC Year 2001 Tourism Satellite Accounting Research, WTTC, 2001
7 Source: Tourism 2020 Vision, Volume 6, South Asia, WTO, 2000
9 The details of this are presented in a later section of this document. The Central Department of Tourism estimated domestic travellers at 176mn for 1999, based on statistics collected from the States. This is considered a severe underestimate as it is based on usage of paid accommodation and partial reporting. In contrast, China has domestic tourism of 744mn in 2000.
Official estimates of the recent growth (1995-1999) in domestic tourism are 7.6% p.a., while a forecast by WTTC estimates that domestic tourism in India will grow - in value - at a compound rate of 9.7% per annum till 2011.

**The changing nature of global tourism**

In keeping with the global trends of sustainability, environmentalism and social equity, there are certain dominant trends in tourism today that are already influencing the development of tourism policy, and will do so to a far greater degree in the future. This section highlights those trends that impact this master plan.

- Customers today are more experienced, more sophisticated, and more knowledgeable about their individual choices and better informed of possibilities. They reflect a variety of reasons and motivations for travel and seek a diversity of new and interesting travel experiences. With this, there has been polarisation of tastes, with large volumes of mainstream tourism and smaller volumes of more ‘individualised’ travel.

- This has resulted in the increasing popularity of off-the-beaten-track or ‘exotic’ destinations that are more remote and less well known. It has also resulted in niche markets of special interest tourism - such as culture, ecology, cruises, diving, trekking, white water rafting, safaris, bird watching, fishing, flora and fauna, farm, adventure, rural, health, spiritual tourism, and even weddings abroad. Many of these will, over a period of time, grow into mainstream tourism and smaller volumes of more ‘individualised’ travel.

- With rapidly rising public awareness of environmental and socio-cultural issues, travel to more natural settings, virgin, wilderness and protected areas is expanding rapidly. The demand for authenticity is high and environmental and conservation concerns are becoming paramount.

- Activity holidays are attracting more and more participants and there is a shift from more passive vacations.

- The trends highlighted above, together with ageing populations in the key tourism generating markets of Europe, North America and Japan will result in a decline in the more traditional beach tourism, and this will prove positive for both long haul and culture tourism.

- Tourists will increasingly travel to destinations where they get value for money – ‘value for money’ being defined as a higher quality experience than that available for the same money elsewhere. ‘Service’ will have to transform to ‘delivering unique experiences that personally engage the customer’. Site planning and design has come to play a major role in creating a unique experience.

- With Internet penetration reaching 50% of homes in industrialised countries by 2010, technology will increasingly play a key role in tourism, providing ever-increasing levels of information, allowing and expanding freedom of choice, providing direct access to suppliers, enabling identification and communication with distinct market niches and special interests, and shortening travel planning time.
Tourists will increasingly avoid destinations with an absence of socio-political stability or where tourists’ health and security are perceived to be under threat. This will be exacerbated by a rise in internal conflicts as groups defined by ethnicity, religion or social structures increasingly demand to be recognised in their own right, as well as by greater media reporting of global problems.

**Categories of tourism**

**Sustainable tourism**

In the last two decades, the concepts of sustainability, environmentalism and social equity have become an important part of both world thinking as well as industry. Sustainable development is defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs\(^{10}\). Sustainability, one of the enduring legacies of the 1991 Rio Summit (Agenda 21), has become one of the basic concepts for development in the tourism industry. Today, terms like sustainable tourism are commonplace.

For tourism development to be sustainable, it is generally accepted that such development should follow several key principles\(^{11}\), key amongst which are:

- Respect for the land
- Creation of a balanced economy
- Sensitivity to long-term preservation of environments
- Creation of long-term economic benefits
- Sensitivity to the needs to the host population

For the purposes of this study, the following categories of tourism have been considered, as distinct from cultural, religious and leisure tourism.

- Nature based tourism
- Ecotourism and
- Adventure tourism

The concepts of ‘Sustainable tourism’ can further be applied to all the above sub-categories.

**Nature-based tourism**

Sustainable tourism is, in fact, a form of tourism that occurs within the context of a natural environment. Nature tourism, or nature-based tourism, forms one of the largest categories of tourism, along with the other dominant categories of tourism such as cultural, beach, religious and leisure tourism. In general, it is considered a category of special interest / niche travel.

Nature tourism is defined\(^{12}\) as “those forms of tourism where natural attractions of ecological significance are the destination…” In other terms, nature tourism denotes all tourism directly dependent on the use of natural resources in a relatively undeveloped state, including scenery.

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\(^{10}\) Source: World Commission on Environment and Development

\(^{11}\) Source: Paul F. J. Eagles, ‘Understanding the Market for Sustainable Tourism’

topography, water features, vegetation and wildlife and includes such activities as diverse as wildlife viewing, hunting, countryside motor biking, white-water rafting, mountain climbing, trekking, exploring rainforests, diving on coral reefs and travel to popular nature reserves, or to remote and little known areas.

Nature tourism is still only a small fraction of global tourism, but is reported to be one of the fastest growing tourism markets. Different estimates exist of the size and value of global nature tourism. The global value of nature based tourism was estimated at US$1 trillion by IUCN. WTO in 1993 estimated that nature tourism generates 7% of all international travel expenditure. Nature travel is estimated\(^\text{13}\) to be growing at an annual rate between 10% and 30%.

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**Figure 3: Structure of tourism categories**

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**Ecotourism**

Ecotourism is a category of nature tourism and of sustainable tourism

Ecological tourism or Ecotourism is defined by The International Ecotourism Society as “responsible travel to natural areas, which conserves the environment and sustains the well being of local people”. Ecotourism is also defined by IUCN – The World Conservation Union\(^\text{14}\) as “environmentally responsible travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas, in order to enjoy and appreciate nature (and any accompanying cultural features - both past and present) that promotes conservation, has low visitor impact, and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local populations.”

Ecotourism is participatory and has its main focus as conservation, interpretation and understanding of the area visited, while making an economic contribution to the local community. Ecotourism has come to be a force in sustaining natural resources and promoting sustainable development.

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\(^{13}\) Source: World Resources Institute, 1990; Reingold, 1993

\(^{14}\) Ceballos Lascuráin, 1993
While there is no specific data on the size and growth of ecotourism, statistics for ecotourism destinations around the world point to a growing trend. Since 1989, Nepal has seen an annual 18% growth in trekkers to the Annapurna sanctuary, while in South Africa, the number of visitors to game reserves has grown by an annual rate of 106% between 1986 and 1998. Destinations like Belize, Costa Rica, the Galapagos Islands, Kenya, Peru, Brazil and even Australia report that significant proportions of tourists visit natural areas at an increasing pace.

Ecotourists typically stay longer (10-15 days) and are higher spenders.

**Adventure travel**

Adventure travel is another segment within nature tourism and sustainable tourism. Adventure travel can be defined\(^1\) as “…personal accomplishment through the thrills of dominating dangerous environments...is based on challenge and winning....The goal is to gain thrills, excitement, and accomplishment...involves strenuous, outdoor vacation travel, typically to remote places renowned for their natural beauty and physical attributes, involving hazardous activities.” The Adventure Travel Society adds that “… (Adventure travellers) expect to experience varying degrees of risk, excitement, tranquillity and to be personally tested...They also seek the inner world of personal challenge, self-perception and self-mastery”.

The key difference between nature tourism or ecotourism and adventure travel is that adventure travel seeks to conquer nature and not just study it. The search for thrills can lead to high levels of danger, and injury and death define the limits.

Typical adventure travel activities include mountain climbing, white-water rafting, deep sea diving.

In the quest to conquer nature, sometimes, environmental protection and the pristine qualities of the environment are given lesser importance as the thrill is more important than the rules and the environment is a place to fulfil a challenge. As a result, environmental impact can often be negative and is neutral at best. As a result, controls on access and use of certain sensitive environments are often required.

The motivation for adventure tourists is intensely social, to be seen to be achieving and to be with similar others. Most often it is a team sport and adventure tourists are typically young and healthy.

The scale of adventure travel is still moderate, although it is growing and new destinations are introduced every year. At the same time, the ageing of the global population may reduce the numbers of adventure tourists over time. Increasingly, restrictions are being placed on adventure travel to sensitive areas and on adventure travel that is not wholly environmentally responsible.

Adventure travel can be categorized as ‘hard’ or ‘soft’. Hard adventure requires experience and a high degree of fitness due to the risk involved and includes such activities as mountain climbing expeditions, extreme river-rafting, white-water rafting/ kayaking, arduous treks, hand gliding, rock climbing, and wilderness survival. Soft adventure has less physical risk, requires little or no experience and provides greater comfort and convenience in terms of sleeping arrangements and cuisine. Many activities are similar to those in the hard adventure category, yet they occur at a less physically demanding level. Examples would include horseback riding, rafting, snorkelling, camping, cross-country skiing, wildlife watching, short treks, etc.

\(^1\) Source: Paul F. J. Eagles, Understanding the Market for Sustainable Tourism
Understanding trekking

Trekking, as a tourism activity, is essentially an adventure activity that involves walking long distances with the objective of experiencing nature or simply reaching a destination. Trekking is always undertaken in natural surroundings, with overnight accommodations most frequently being camping or remote cabins/huts with basic or no amenities.

Trekking, as an activity, in fact straddles both adventure tourism and ecotourism. It is an adventure tourism activity in that it takes place in natural and wilderness settings and is associated with high levels of outdoors activity, with varying degrees of challenge, risk and excitement. While it may sometimes be solely achievement oriented and may not be responsible either to the natural environment or to local communities (and there are numerous examples of this, the best known in this region being the despoliation of the Nanda Devi Sanctuary), trekkers often seek to understand and experience natural environments, local host communities and their cultures and are driven by a strong conservation ethic. They are careful to minimise negative visitor impact and do provide some revenues to the local community.

While trekking is generally associated with mountains, other forms of terrain can also be trekked, for example deserts, forests/wildlife reserves or other natural settings. The strong association of trekking with mountains has emerged as an extension to mountaineering or mountain climbing. Most major mountaineering expeditions require a few days of walking up to the base camp and these walking journeys themselves became an experience. Often, trekking trails are well known mountain climbing routes or historic trading or travel routes. As the prestige and popularity of mountain climbing has grown over the past forty years, as has the popularity of outdoor activities and nature tourism, many have chosen to participate in the less technical, less treacherous and less strenuous yet thrilling activity of trekking. The fact that technical requirements and regulations are minimal has further encouraged the growth of this activity.

Hiking is a derivative of trekking, and is typified by shorter treks/walks, typically lasting a day or two, over shorter distances, and lower and less strenuous terrain. Hiking would fall within the “soft” spectrum of adventure while trekking would typically fall within the “hard” category.

Many seasoned trekkers would describe a trek as a spiritual experience as well, since through highly personal challenge and achievement, it has a quality of an inward journey into self-perception in oneness with nature and in complete tranquillity.

Conclusion

The last half of the last century has seen a dramatic rise in the development of travel and tourism in the world. While mass tourism dominates the sector, a niche market has always been involved in more nature and adventure oriented travel and tourism. However, the last few decades has seen a dramatic change in tourism with a shift towards more sustainable tourism. While this market is still niche and limited in numbers, it is growing rapidly. Much of the nature tourism market emanates from North America and Europe and is directed at pristine natural locations such as Asia and South America. Nepal, as the home of the Greater Himalayas, sees the greater majority of mountaineering and adventure tourism. Uttarakhand, located strategically near Nepal and with the Himalayas has great potential for the development of similar activities, in the present scenario.
Trekking in Uttaranchal

Introduction

While the natural environments of Uttaranchal, parts of Jammu & Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh encourage trekking for adventure, trekking in these States takes on another character that is unique not only in India but also in the world. Along with adventure trekking, these States are dotted with religious shrines that bring thousands of pilgrims every year who often trek for days to pay homage, creating an entirely new set of trekkers; pilgrimage trekkers.

Pilgrimage tourism

Pilgrimage is often regarded as the oldest form of tourism, and pilgrimages to sages and shrines in the Himalayas and transcontinental crossings to visit shrines in Rome and Canterbury are well documented. In fact, a document written in AD 1130 by Aimeri de Picaud, a French monk, for pilgrims making their way to the Spanish shrine of Santiago de Compostela, is credited as being the first tourist guide ever.

Pilgrimage is by far the most prolific form of tourism in India. The Tirumala shrine in Andhra Pradesh, for example, receives over 20mn visitors every year, and by this token, would rank as the seventh largest tourism destination in the world.

Pilgrimage treks and adventure trekking in India

Pilgrimages that involve trekking differ vastly from adventure trekking (nature tourism) in that they are not leisure oriented and are motivated by spiritual or religious sentiment (or sometimes superstition). Pilgrims on a trek have a single-minded focus on their goal – that of a ‘darshan’ (literally, viewing) of the deity. Often this would be in the nature of thanksgiving, askance, or just homage to the deity. The actual trek is seen as a kind of necessary penance or endurance that one has to go through to reach the goal of darshan. The experience of the trek is, therefore, of quite a different character to that of a ‘nature trek’, even though the environment may be the same.

Pilgrim tourism and trekking in India falls within the category of mass tourism and is wholly different from adventure trekking. It is almost wholly comprised of domestic travellers who are typically on a very limited budget. Experiencing nature, conservation and sustainability issues are for the most part inconsequential. Most pilgrim centres in India too have grown organically over centuries in a random and unplanned sprawl around the central shrine/ temple structure with severe environmental and conservation implications for residents and visitors alike. Regardless, pilgrim tourism in India brings numerous economic benefits to local communities and other intermediaries, due just to its sheer volume.
Pilgrimage trekking in Uttaranchal

The continuous references in the Hindu faith to the Himalayas as both the Abode of the Gods as well as an area of penance make Uttaranchal one of the most important centres of the Hindu faith in India. In fact, most of the adventure treks are also associated with pilgrimage treks in a manner.

There are primarily four pilgrimage routes in Uttaranchal. These are:

- Gangotri
- Kedarnath
- Yamunotri
- Badrinath

While all the above shrines are located in the higher reaches of the Himalayas, access roads are now available to all but the Kedarnath shrine (which involves a 14km trek from the road head to the shrine) and to Gaumukh (considered the mouth of the Ganges).

Three other treks are also considered religious in nature. They include the following:

- Chandrasilla
- Devi Darshan
- Panch Kedar

As seen in the chart below, Uttaranchal has seen a dramatic rise in the number of pilgrims travelling to the four major shrines.

**Figure 4: Traffic at major pilgrimage sites in Uttaranchal**

![Traffic chart showing pilgrimage sites in Uttaranchal](chart.png)

*Source: Department of Tourism, Uttaranchal*
Adventure trekking in Uttaranchal

Inventorying adventure treks in Uttaranchal

Adventure trekking in Uttaranchal has long been an established activity. Popular with both professional mountaineers as well as amateur trekkers, the State has a number of treks, ranging from a few days to those that take at least a month. A number of the treks are well documented in guidebooks and other literature on the region, with descriptions as well as route maps.

For this study, the known treks in Uttaranchal were inventoried based on an intensive literature search. Based on a comprehensive inventory assessment, the overall list was streamlined to a total of 27 major trekking. This list was then verified by experts in the field of trekking, mountaineering, as well as with other prominent persons familiar with Uttaranchal. These 27 routes constitute the more prevalent/ popular trekking routes in the State. While a number of shorter routes are associated with the 27 routes, they have been discounted for this study for reasons such as shortness of length, lack of difficulty or lack of popularity. These routes have, however, been mentioned in the route descriptions, later in the chapter.

Placed below is a comprehensive listing of identifiable trekking routes in Uttaranchal that form the basis for this study. These have been short listed, based on interviews with experts, as well as secondary research:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Trek 1</th>
<th>Trek 2</th>
<th>Trek 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Yamunotri</td>
<td>Uttarkashi- Dodital-Yamunotri</td>
<td>Gangotri- Gaumukh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Gangotri- Tapovan</td>
<td>Kedarnath</td>
<td>Kedarnath-Vasukital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Har ki Dun</td>
<td>11. Rishikesh Pauri Binsar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Lata- Panveli</td>
<td>17. Valley of Flowers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>24. Darma Valley / Panchchuli</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>25. Lata- Panveli</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>26. Nagtibba</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>27. Kailash Mansarovar (through Kumaon)</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The State also has several other treks of lesser importance from an adventure trekking perspective such as the Dayara Bugyal, Gangotri – Kedartal, Parali – Bramhital, Dharali – Saptal, Sankari – Kedarkantha, Bhuki – Khodatal. These have not been included given the relatively lower popularity with the trekking community. In fact, given the nature of trekking as an impromptu, personalised activity, there are several variations of the treks above, and these would be too numerous to list.

16 While the Kailash Mansarovar trek is in Tibet, it is still considered one of the more important pilgrimage routes for Hindus and has been considered as part of this listing since it is accessed through Kumaon in Uttaranchal.
These treks have further been classified by location into the Garhwal and Kumaon regions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3 - Classification of treks by region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Garhwal</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☑ Yamunotri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☑ Lata- Panveli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☑ Gangotri - Gaumukh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☑ Gangotri- Tapovan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☑ Kedarnath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☑ Kedarnath –Vasukital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☑ Panch Kedar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☑ Badrinath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☑ Devi Darshan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☑ Uttarkashi- Dodital-Yamunotri</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The treks have also been classified by type (i.e. pilgrimage / adventure / hiking):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4 - Classification of treks by type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adventure</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☑ Uttarkashi - Dodital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☑ Rishikesh - Pauri - Binsar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☑ Pindari Glacier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☑ Milam Glacier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☑ Roop Kund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☑ Har ki Dun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☑ Valley of Flowers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☑ Nanda Devi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☑ Hemkund</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The treks can be further classified by difficulty and grading. Climbing/ mountaineering ratings are a hotly debated topic with many climbers believing that treks cannot and should not be rated due to the subjective nature of the treks.

However, it is considered imperative for this study as it forms the basis for a comparative assessment of the treks on an international basis. While no definitive method of grading exists for the classification of treks, expert’s rate the climbs based on a number of various factors.

17 A number of lesser treks (defined as hikes if not in excess of a day of trekking and limited in strenuousness) can be located in the vicinity of the listed treks. The hikes are essentially variations on the existing treks. However, these hiking trails have not been listed for the purpose of this study.
The factors considered to grade the treks include:

**Table 5 - Grading of treks**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Score ranges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duration of the trek</td>
<td>Based on the number of days of actual walking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 for a 5 days to 1 week duration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 for 7-12 day duration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 for 7-12 days trek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toughness</td>
<td>5 for the most difficult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 for the easiest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gradient of the trek</td>
<td>5 for a steep 45° climb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 for an almost flat climb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrain</td>
<td>5 for trekking on boulder strewn moraines, glacier beds or snowfields</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 for slippery mountain paths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 for trekking through meadows/ flat terrain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altitude</td>
<td>5 for above 4,000m amsl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 for up to 3,000m amsl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temperature</td>
<td>5 for rainy weather/ snowfall in the summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 for pleasant weather in the summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditions of the route</td>
<td>5 for identification of new trails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 for well laid-out trail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The grading of the treks was then extrapolated as a standard average based on the series of results received.

The treks are categorized as:

- **Grade I**: Up to 3,000m; 2-3 day duration; easy access and low gradient/incline
- **Grade II**: 3,000m – 4,000m; above 3 day treks; reasonable access and slight incline
- **Grade III**: Above 4,000m; above a week in duration; Steep incline; snow and difficult terrain

The treks are also graded as soft and hard based on the toughness of the trek.
Inventory and assessment of key trekking routes in the State of Uttaranchal

The following section inventories and assesses the trekking routes available in Uttaranchal. This chapter comprises of two sections. The first section deals with a basic inventory of the trekking routes in terms of the following factors - location, access, length, duration, altitude, type / classification, climbing season, difficulty and grading, scenic quality, logistical support and basic infrastructure and amenities such as guesthouses, garbage disposal and signage enroute.

This section also includes a brief description of the trek to capture the experience achieved along the trek. The second section assesses the current trek routes in terms of future potential as well as the current infrastructure and requirements for both the development of trekking as well as the upliftment of the region. The components of assessment include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Within Uttaranchal, proximity to urban agglomeration/town</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Access to road head from closest urban agglomeration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of the trek</td>
<td>Of the trekking route only - road head to road head - varies from trek to trek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>Number of days of walking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altitude</td>
<td>Highest point on trek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type/classification</td>
<td>Pilgrimage / Adventure / Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Season</td>
<td>Summer / Winter / All Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty and Grading</td>
<td>Based on the gradient of the trek, the duration of the trek, terrain and the altitude and temperature conditions of the route. The treks are categorized as:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade I</td>
<td>Up to 3000m; 2 - 3 day duration; easy access and low gradient/incline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade II</td>
<td>3000m - 4000m; above 3 day treks; reasonable access and slight incline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade III</td>
<td>Above 4000m; above a week in duration; Steep incline; snow and difficult terrain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The treks are also graded as soft and hard based on the toughness of the trek.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brief description</th>
<th>Summarizing the experiences on the trek</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scenic quality</td>
<td>A subjective assessment of the views and landscape associated with the trek relative to other treks in the region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness / popularity</td>
<td>Based on the relative number of trekkers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logistical support</td>
<td>Availability, organization, structure, efficiency of food, porters, mules, training etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local authority assistance</td>
<td>Availability, efficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>Availability, quality, hygiene, private or government - Physical infrastructure and tourism infrastructure such as accommodation, eating centres etc</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key -
FRH - Forest Guest House
TB - Tourism Bungalow
H - Private Hotel
V - Village
PWD - Public Works Dept Rest House
N.A. - Not available
C - Camping site
D - Dhabas
R - Restaurants

The inventory of the treks and their description has been compiled on an “as best” basis, using a variety of sources, including a comprehensive literature research, personal accounts of trekkers, and selective personal experience.
## Yamunotri

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Near Bandarpoonch Peak, Uttarkashi District, Garhwal Himalayas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>With no direct road access to Yamunotri, the closest road head to the shrine is Hanuman Chatti. Access to Hanuman Chatti itself is rather difficult and is only via road from Rishikesh or Dehradun. Buses and jeeps on the pilgrimage route are the easiest form of transport to the Chatti. A rough road has recently been extended to Janki Chatti, 6km closer to Yamunotri. The best route to the road head is Dehradun – Barkot - Hanuman Chatti – Janki Chatti, a total of 163km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length</td>
<td>7km from Janki Chatti, 13km from Hanuman Chatti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>1 –2 days round trip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altitude</td>
<td>3,291m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Pilgrimage Route</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Season</td>
<td>May - June, September - October Temple is open from April - Diwali (Nov)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty and grading</td>
<td>Grade I Soft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief description</td>
<td>The Yamunotri trek is one of the important pilgrimage treks in the Char Dham circuit. Essentially a 13km trek from Hanuman Chatti, the road head (a rough road now extends up to Janki Chatti, shortening the length of the trek to 7km), the route winds through picturesque countryside along the river track to reach the pilgrim town of Yamunotri. The trek itself, though short in length, is adequately endowed with thermal springs at Janki Chatti and the artistic Shiva temple at Kharsali, a small village 11km away from Janki Chatti. Yamunotri itself is an organic and haphazard settlement. The Yamunotri temple in the town, rebuilt by Maharani Guleria of Jaipur after the 1923 earthquake, is dedicated to the river Yamuna. The entire trek is generally completed in two stages (or two days). The first stage includes travel to Janki Chatti, a settlement complete with small dhabas and a tourist bungalow. The second stage involves a gradual trek up to Yamunotri and return to the Hanuman Chatti the same day. Other treks in the region include the Dodital trek, linking Gangotri and Yamunotri, passing through Agoda, Dodital, Darwa Top and Shima, which is approximately 60km long and four days long. These treks are described later in this section.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenic quality</td>
<td>While the trek is high in scenic quality, much of the route is ruined by the mushrooming of developments all along the trek from Hanuman Chatti to Yamunotri, with dhabas, stalls and teashops and the occasional sadhu bothering travellers for alms along the route</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness / popularity</td>
<td>This trek is very popular with pilgrims, being one of the Char Dhams. More than 0.6mn pilgrims visit the shrine per annum and as a result it is not very popular with adventure travellers due to the large crowds during the pilgrimage season.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Yamunotri

**Logistical support**

While the climb to Yamunotri is not very difficult, porters, dandis (palanquins) and horses/mules are available at Hanuman Chatti for the pilgrims/tourists that are unable to climb to the shrine.

**Local authority assistance**

The closest administrative centre is Tehri and all assistance has to be sourced there. However, local authorities at Gauri Kund and Hanuman Chatti are helpful.

**Infrastructure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Accommodation</th>
<th>Eating facilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hanuman Chatti</td>
<td>TB</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janki Chatti</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yamunotri</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the infrastructure along the Yamunotri trek is basic, it includes private lodges and dharamshalas at Janki Chatti and Yamunotri. Many of the lodges are hired on a seasonal basis by travel operators from Gujarat and Bombay to ensure cleanliness and hygiene levels for their clients.

**Signage**

Only in the form of randomly painted arrow marks on the landscape along the route.
Uttarkashi – Dodital – Yamunotri

Location
A distance of 32km north of Uttarkashi, in the Uttarkashi District of the Garhwal Himalayas

Access
Can be approached by a well-maintained road between Uttarkashi and Dodital. Uttarkashi itself is accessible from the nearest railhead Rishikesh (180km away).

The best route to Dodital is Rishikesh - Uttarkashi - (motorable) - Agora - Dodital - Seema - Hanuman Chatti - Yamunotri

Length
The length of the trek ranges from:
- 22km (Kalyani - Agoda - Dodital);
- 57km (Kalyani - Agoda - Dodital - Hanuman Chatti - Yamunotri)

Duration
The duration of the trek ranges from 2 days (Dodital from Kalyani) to 5 days (Kalyani to Yamunotri via Dodital and Hanuman Chatti)

Altitude
3,024m

Type
Summer trek

Season
April - October (May to June and mid-September to November)

Difficulty and grading
Grade II Hard

Brief description
Dodital, located to the north of Uttarkashi, has its origins in the several natural springs in the region and its crystal waters are surrounded by dense woods of oak, pine, deodar and rhododendrons. The lake at Dodital is full of fish including the rare Himalayan Golden Trout. Fishing, however, is banned at the lake. The lake provides an idyllic setting for rest and recreation such as boating and bird watching. The forest surrounding the lake is full of wildlife.

The trek for Dodital commences from Uttarkashi or Kalyani, both approachable by road. Kalyani to Agoda is a gradual climb through woods, fields and villages along a mule track. The trek from Agoda to Dodital is steep and through thick forests. The Yamunotri stretch of the trek is possible only during the summer. A brief description of the Dodital Yamunotri trek is placed below:

Day 1: Haridwar - Kalyani

Drive to the road head at Kalyani. The drive passes through the picturesque Garhwal mountains along the Ganges.

Day 2: Kalyani – Dodital

A gradual uphill trek through beautiful landscapes and thick forests past the Asi Ganga and steep cliffs leads up to the Dodital Lake, surrounded by dense forests. This trail is used regularly by the Gujar shepherds on their way to Uttarkashi. There is a substantial Gujar settlement at Majhi (3,150m) about 5km before Dodital, on a ridge that affords a glimpse of the Bandarpooch.

The lake itself is about half-a-km wide and is set in a forest with a temple on its southern edge. Accommodation is available in the form of a Forest Rest House. There are camping sites next to the rest house and at the far side of the lake.
Enroute is the settlement of Agoda, which is a small village with about 20-30 houses. There is a tourist bungalow at one end of the village and also a few dhabas / hotels run by the local villagers, where meals are available.

**Day 3: Dodital - Darwa Dhar**

The ascent to the Darwa Dhar ridge (4,115m) - the watershed of the Ganga and Yamuna river valleys - passes along the edge of the lake. It crosses the stream flowing into the lake several times before the valley widens. The trail then follows the true valley towards the pass. It is a pleasant climb through flowered meadows with rows of rhododendrons remaining in bloom till mid June. The final climb up the alpine meadow to the Pass is short and steep. The walk to Darwa Pass (4150m) can be completed in 2-3hours. However, an early start enables views of the range of peaks stretching beyond Gangotri as far as Nanda Devi. To the north of the pass, the Bandarpoonch peak dominates the upper part of the valley, while further to the northwest the Swargarohini Range rises above the Har Ki Dun valley.

From the pass, there is a further climb along the ridge to the south. This is under snow till mid-June. The narrow trail continues along the ridgeline for 3-4km with commanding views of the Bandarpoonch and the main Himalayan range. For the remainder of the trek, the trail is up and down across the alpine ridges just above the tree line. A number of camping sites can be observed from the high trail. This includes a campsite in a meadow with rhododendrons at Seema.

**Day 4: Darwa Dhar - Hanuman Chatti**

The trail from Darwa Dhar to Hanuman Chatti falls steeply, past a number of meadows and a few settlements. The trail is well maintained and about 1km before Hanuman Chatti, crosses a bridge over a tributary of the Hanuman Ganga before joining the pilgrim trail into the main bazaar. Accommodation is available in the form of a Forest Rest House

**Day 5: Hanuman Chatti - Yamunotri**

Gradual climb to the source of the river Yamuna. This is nominated as the first of the four main pilgrimages undertaken every season by Hindu pilgrims. After completing the trek to Yamunotri, the pilgrims drive to Uttarkashi and Gangotri for the trek to Gaumukh. The pilgrimage to the temple at Kedarnath also involves a trek, before a final drive to Joshimath and Badrinath (the other components of the ‘Char Dham’).

From the main bazaar at Hanuman Chatti, the pilgrim trail crosses the bridge over the Hanuman Ganga to lead to the Yamunotri Valley. The first stage of the trek is usually to the village of Janki Chatti (2,650m) where there are many hotels, dhabas and rest houses. There is also a campsite at the far side of the valley.

The second stage of the trek involves a climb to Yamunotri (many pilgrims return to Hanuman Chatti the same day). From Janki Chatti, the trail begins to become steeper and the passes through a number of gorges in the upper sections of the valley. It takes about two hours to complete the 5km stage to Yamunotri (3,185m). The temple is in the centre of the valley, enclosed by high, snow capped ridges.

**Awareness / popularity**

Is considered one of the more popular trekking trails in the region.
Master plan for development of trekking routes in Uttaranchal

Uttarkashi – Dodital – Yamunotri

Logistical support
All logistics including porter and mule-hire is available either at Uttarkashi or Hanuman Chatti. Both centres are thriving towns for trekkers and expeditions requiring staff and porters and are well organized for trekking facilities.

While basic foodstuff can be acquired at these two road heads, processed food needs to be procured at Delhi or Dehradun.

Local authority assistance
High degree of assistance available due to the presence of a number of experienced guides in the region. The Institute at Uttarkashi is also a highly reputed centre for mountaineering, and equipment can be hired from there. The staff at both the GMVN guesthouse and Forest rest house are very helpful and can be approached for assistance.

Infrastructure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Accommodation</th>
<th>Eating facilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kalyani</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agoda</td>
<td>TB, C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dodital</td>
<td>FRH, C</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darwa Dhar</td>
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<td>N.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanuman Chatti</td>
<td>FRH</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yamunotri</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Signage
Not available except as painted signs on rocks during the trekking season. These signs are generally painted onto the path by trekkers / trekking associations.
Master plan for development of trekking routes in Uttaranchal

Uttarkashi-Dodital

AREA
Near Bandarpunch Peak, Uttarkashi District, Garhwal Himalayas

GRADE I SOFT

OPERATIONAL
Mid-April to Mid-June
Mid-August to Mid-November

DURATION
2 Days (Hanuman Chatti-Yamnotri-Return)
3 Days (Uttarkashi-Dodital-Return)

Key
- LODGING
- CAMPING GROUND
- TEMPLE
- DISPENSARY
- PEAK
- ROAD METALLED
- TREK ROUTE

NORTH
Gangotri – Gaumukh

Location Near Uttarkashi, Uttarkashi District, Garhwal Himalayas

Access Road access is available till Gangotri, 99km from Uttarkashi. The Gangotri - Gaumukh stretch can be trekked.

The best route to Gangotri is Rishikesh – Uttarkashi – Harsil – Bhairoghat – Gangotri.

Length 21km trek from Gangotri to Gaumukh

Duration 3 days round trip

Altitude 3,140m

Type Pilgrimage route

Season April – August

Difficulty and grading Hard Grade I

Brief description The shrine at Gangotri, built by Amar Singh Thapa, a Gorkha commander, in honour of the River Ganga, is one the most popular pilgrimage shrines in India. It is now easily accessible to pilgrims, as there is a motorway right up to the shrine at Gangotri. The more intrepid pilgrims travel to Gaumukh, the source of the Ganges.

Gaumukh named so because it resembles the mouth of a cow, a holy deity for Hindus, is just 21km above Gangotri and is believed to be the origin of the River Ganga.

The route to Gaumukh serves as an ideal trekking route for avid adventurers. The springs of the river Bhagirathi prevail here. The route is embedded with deodar, birch and the padma trees. 10km from Gangotri is Cheedvasa, a local market and 4km further is the Bhojvasa camp. A brief trek plan is presented below:

Day 1: Gangotri - Bhojbas (average walking time 6 - 7 hours)

Past Gangotri, the trail crosses the temple on the right of the valley. A series of concrete steps just beyond the temple lead up to the main trail. The trail is well defined by stone markers every kilometre. At Rajaghat (3,250m), 4km down the trail, are a few dhabas serving tea and basic snacks. The present trail has been upgraded in the last 20 - 30 years. Beyond Rajaghat, the glacial valley begins to widen and just before Chirbasa, one can view the Bhagirathi peaks at the head of the valley.

At Chirbasa (3,600m), 9km from Gangotri, dhabas line the trail. A campsite below the trail is located close to the river and can be used if trekkers are unable to reach Bhojbas by nightfall.

Beyond Chirbasa, the trail passes the last silver birches, framing the Bhagirathi Range and the upper section of Shivling (6,543m). The trail gradually ascends the next 5km to Bhojbas (a two-and-a-half hour climb). Once above the tree line, juniper bushes speckle the otherwise barren hillside. Just below Bhojbas, an extensive field of boulders has to be traversed. Bhojbas (3,790m) consists of a crowded GMVN hotel and a dharamshala recently destroyed by fire. A temple and a few camping spots mark the remaining area.
**Gangotri – Gaumukh**

**Day 2 - Bhojbasa to Gaumukh (average walking time of 2 hours to Gaumukh and 6 hours return to Gangotri)**

The trek from Bhojbasa to Gaumukh involves a one-hour walk to the dhabas below Gaumukh. This is as far as the mules and porters travel. The trek to Gaumukh (3,890m) is another 2km through moraine and boulders deposited from previous landslides. The trail follows the riverbank for the last 500m to the source of the Ganges, where the river emerges abruptly from the glacier wall.

Nandanvan and Tapovan are at a short distance from Bhojbasa. A 4km climb through the steep rocks leads to a very serene and peaceful Tapovan, situated on the Shivling peak. Nandanvan can be reached through a steep pass from Gaumukh. There are no accommodation facilities at either spot. A route from Tapovan can lead to Vasukital, Kalindhikhal (5,590m) as well as Badrinath.

**Scenic quality**  
Monotonous till Chirbasa but has spectacular views of the Bhagirathi peaks

**Awareness / popularity**  
One of the more popular pilgrimage routes, sees at least 600,000 pilgrims a year

**Logistical support**  
Porters and horses available at Lanka, a small village just above the Gangotri road head. Currently has the ‘mate system’, a form of a union for the local porters which is well organized, with revenues going to the shrine board and government

**Local authority assistance**  
Available through either the local Forest officials or dharamshalas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infrastructure</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Accommodation</th>
<th>Eating facilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gangotri</td>
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<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chirbasa</td>
<td>C</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bhojbasa</td>
<td>TB, C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gaumukh</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Signage**  
While the trail is not marked by signage, it is well demarcated by steps along the trail.
## Gangotri – Tapovan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Near Uttarkashi, Uttarkashi District, Garhwal Himalayas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Road access is available till Gangotri. The Gangotri - Gaumukh stretch can be trekked. The best route to Gangotri is Rishikesh – Uttarkashi – Harsil – Bhairoghat – Gangotri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length</td>
<td>40.5km (This is an extension of the Gangotri Gaumukh trek)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>10 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altitude</td>
<td>4,463m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Pilgrimage / Adventure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Season</td>
<td>April – October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty and grading</td>
<td>Grade II Hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief description</td>
<td>This trek requires experience of mountain climbing, rock climbing and glacier traversing. The trek is vigorous but is negotiable by non-climbers as well. It passes through orchards of coniferous pine trees at Chirbasa and Bhojbasa. From Gaumukh to Tapovan, one traverses along the Gangotri and Chatturangini glaciers. Across the Nandanvan, the views of the Shivling, Bhagirathi, Sudarshana, Thelu and Kedar peaks are spectacular.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenic quality</td>
<td>Spectacular views of peaks enroute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness / popularity</td>
<td>Is a popular trek as it is an extension of the Gaumukh trek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logistical support</td>
<td>Porters and horses available at Lanka, a small village just above the Gangotri road head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local authority assistance</td>
<td>Available through either the local Forest officials or dharamshalas.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Infrastructure

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<th>Accommodation</th>
<th>Eating Facilities</th>
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<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chirbasa</td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
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<td></td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaumukh</td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
<td>N.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tapovan</td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
<td>N.A.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Signage | While the trail is not marked by signage, it is well demarcated by steps along the trail |
Gangotri-Gaumukh-Tapovan

AREA
Uttarkashi District, Garhwal Himalayas

GRADE I HARD
OPERATIONAL
April to August

DURATION
03 Days (Gangotri to Gangotri)
Kedarnath

Location  Near Rudraprayag, Tehri Garhwal range, Garhwal Himalayas
Access  This trek is generally combined with a visit to Badrinath
        The best route to the road head is Rishikesh – Srinagar – Rudraprayag – Soneprayag – Kedarnath (225km)
Length  14km (Gauri Kund to Kedarnath)
Duration  2 days
Altitude  3,581m
Type  Pilgrimage
Season  May - June, September – October
Difficulty and Grading  Grade II Hard
Brief description  Considered one of the tougher pilgrimage routes, second only to Kailash-Mansarover, Kedarnath is one of the 12 jyothirlingams held in reverence by the Hindu faith. The temple itself is associated with the Pandavas, who ostensibly built it in honour of Shiva in atonement for the sins of war. In the background of the temple are the snow-clad Chaukhamba peaks, believed to be the beginning of the Himalayas, and the path to Heaven.

Motorable access is available up to Gauri Kund (14km from Kedarnath), with buses and private taxi services available during the pilgrimage season. The motor road follows the Badrinath-Rishikesh route up to Rudraprayag, where the Mandakini flowing from Kedarnath joins the Alaknanda flowing from Badrinath. Prone to landslides, this State Highway is long and difficult.

Passing through the Mandakini Valley, the landscape is gentle and forested. Till recently, Gauri Kund was approachable only by trekking a few kilometres but now the extension of the motor road has resulted in the development of dhabas and hotels. Traffic snarls are frequent in the area.

The 14km trek, covered either by foot or by mule, is pristine despite the masses of pilgrims on the route. While Gauri Kund is a motley group of restaurants and rest houses, mixed with a set of parking facilities, toilets, rain shelters and bridges across streams, the trek itself climbs through waterfalls and alpine forests, with the Kedarnath peaks in the distance.

The route from Gauri Kund passes through Rambara, past a number of settlements and a modern ashram and then a further 2.5km to the Kedarnath valley. Lines of pilgrims snake down the mountain path, on mules, palanquins and at different paces. The trail follows the Mandakini throughout. Roadside tea stalls, thatched with straw and black plastic sheets speckle the trek, along with wildflowers and boulders. Some of the teahouses even have attached dormitories, with sacking on the floor and piles of woollen blankets.
### Kedarnath

Rambara, 7km from Gauri Kund is a shanty town with a bazaar that has pilgrims, mules and porters all jostling down the central passage. Tea shacks cover the bazaar.

Past Rambara, the mountains unfold. Between the two glacial moraines sits the temple complex of Kedarnath. At the far end is an iron bridge across the Mandakini. The town of Kedarnath lies in a valley surrounded by snow clad peaks.

#### Scenic quality

While the trek is extremely picturesque with spectacular views of Chaukhamba peak, it is marred in the earlier stages by the crowds of Gauri Kund and stables along the first kilometre of the trail.

#### Awareness / popularity

The trek is relatively popular, especially in the pilgrim season, as Kedarnath is one of the char dhams.

#### Logistical support

Ponies/mules, porters and food can be organized at Gauri Kund. Teashops along the route as well as at Rambara provide refreshment for weary pilgrims.

#### Local authority assistance

Officials at Rambara as well as locals at the village are helpful.

#### Infrastructure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gauri Kund</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rambara</td>
<td>PWD, H, TB</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kedarnath</td>
<td>TB, FRH, H</td>
<td>D</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

#### Signage

While signage is poor along the route and almost non-existent, the route is well-worn and easy to trace.
Kedarnath – Vasukital

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Beyond Kedarnath, Tehri Garhwal range, Garhwal Himalayas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Access is either from Kedarnath or Khatling glacier, with Gauri Kund as the road head. Best access route is Rishikesh – Srinagar – Rudraprayag – Soneprayag – Kedarnath (225km)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length</td>
<td>21km; the trek is an extension of the trek to Kedarnath (a 13km trail)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>4 days</td>
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<td>Altitude</td>
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<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Adventure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Season</td>
<td>April – October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty and grading</td>
<td>Grade II Hard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Brief description**

The trek to Kedarnath starts at Gauri Kund, which is easily approachable by car or bus. Gauri Kund is well known for its sulphur springs, a favourite with the pilgrims to Kedarnath. The trek to Kedarnath basically involves two parts, with the initial part of the trek from Gauri Kund to Rambara following the river Mandakini. This section is slightly steep but later becomes a gradual climb through the forest. The second stage of the trek, from Rambara to Kedarnath is much more gradual.

The trek to Vasukital, a clear water lake, is 6km long. Kedarnath to Vasukital is a continuous ascent along a goat trail with spectacular views of the Chaukhamba peaks and the Mandakini valley. The last stage of the trek is downhill for almost a kilometre. The lake itself is 1km in radius and has clear glittering water.

**Scenic quality**

Scenic vistas topped by a spectacularly clear lake

**Awareness / popularity**

This trek, due to its proximity to Kedarnath, is quite popular with the pilgrims who are more fit. It is also popular with trekkers due to the alternate treks in the region.

**Logistical support**

All logistics including porter and mule hire is from Gauri Kund. Gauri Kund is a small town and not very organized and consequently it is preferable to organize food supplies from the larger towns.

**Local authority assistance**

Available at Gauri Kund

**Infrastructure**

<table>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Kedarnath</td>
<td>TB, H</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vasukital</td>
<td>C</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Signage**

While signage is non-existent, the presence of sadhus and pilgrims on the route precludes getting lost.
Kedarnath-Vasukital

AREA
Near Rudraprayag, Tehri Garhwal

GRADE II HARD

OPERATIONAL
May to June
September to October

DURATION
2 Days (Gaurikund-Kedarnath-Return)
4 Days (Gaurikund-Vasukital-Return)

Key
- LODGING
- CAMPING GROUND
- TEMPLE
- DISPENSARY
- PEAK
- ROAD METALLED
- TREK ROUTE
- NORTH
Master plan for development of trekking routes in Uttaranchal

Panch Kedar

| Location | Located in the Garhwal region, the Panch Kedar trek is a series of treks interspersed by motorable sections. It includes the following treks - Kedarnath, Tungnath, Rudranath, Madhmaheshwar, Kalpeshwar |
| Access | Due to the existence of five different locations, the temples are accessed from various routes. The best access is either via Joshimath and Gauri Kund. |
| Length and duration | The length and duration of the route is variable based on the routing and climatic conditions. Generally the typical routing for this road-trek combine is: |
| Altitude | Kedarnath (3,584m); Madhmaheshwar (3,289m); Tungnath (3,810m); Rudranath (2,286m); Kalpeshwar (2,134m) |
| Type | Pilgrimage |
| Season | April – October |
| Difficulty and grading | A series of hard treks |
| Brief description | The Panch Kedar are considered to be the five different forms of the Hindu god Shiva. According to legend, the Pandavas, guilty at having killed their own brothers, the Kauravas, sought penance from Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva eluded them and when detected, transformed into a bull. Apparently, Bhima, one of the Pandavas, tried to hold on to the bull but it disappeared into the earth leaving only its hump behind. The remaining parts of the bull appeared in Tungnath, Rudranath, Madhmaheshwar and Kalpeshwar. These four shrines, along with Kedarnath, are worshipped as the Panch Kedar. Kedarnath A separate trek, described elsewhere. The shrine, located in Chamoli District, is the most important of the Panch Kedar. It lies on the river Mandakini and requires a 13km trek from Gauri Kund. Tungnath: The Tungnath shrine involves a 3km trek up from Chopta. Located at an elevation of 3,680m, the route to the temple is pleasant and shrouded in varieties of rhododendrons, flowers and shrubs. Rudranath: 23km from Gopeshwar, the shrine is the location of the ‘mukh’ or face of Shiva. The temple provides splendid views of Hathi Parvat, Nanda Devi, Trishul and other peaks. |
Panch Kedar

**Madhmaheshwar:**
The shrine is 30km from Guptkashi and is approached by a trek through the famous Sidha Peeth of Kalimath. Unparalleled scenic beauty and incredible landscapes distinguish the distance from Kalimath to Madhmaheshwar. Chaukhamba, Kedarnath and Neelkanth are visible enroute.

**Kalpeshwar:**
Joshimath to Helong is a short 13km or 45 minute bus drive. A motley group of shops and houses mark Helong, the road head to Kalpeshwar. From here, Kalpeshwar is a day-long trek with a halt at the Urgam Village. The trail to Urgam is a moderately steep 8km climb from the bridge at Helong, on a well-trodden village trail. A few villages are encountered along the trail with terraced landscapes. The trail mainly passes along a hillside and passes into a light forest of pine.

Urgam is a small village with a few teashops and village lodges, houses and rest houses, a few of which are basic, but neat and clean and can be used for an overnight halt.

Kalpeshwar, a cave, is only a few kilometres away from Urgam, across a bridge on a neighbouring hill beside a sheer waterfall.

### Scenic quality

- **Awareness / popularity:** This pilgrimage trek is not very popular, as it is considered a tough trek
- **Logistical support:** Available at Gauri Kund; though not well organized
- **Local authority assistance:** Is available at Gauri Kund

### Infrastructure

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<tr>
<td>Chopta</td>
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<td>D</td>
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<td>Guptkashi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mandal</td>
<td>PWD</td>
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### Signage

- Not Available
Panch Kedar

AREA
Beyond Kedarnath, Tehri Garhwal Range

GRADE
Series of hard treks interspersed with motorable section

OPERATIONAL
April to October

DURATION
10 to 15 Days (exclusive of motoring)

Key
- LODGING
- CAMPING GROUND
- TEMPLE
- DISPENSARY
- PEAK
- ROAD METALLED
- TREK ROUTE
- NORTH
Badrinath

Location Near Rudraprayag, in the shadow of the Neelkanth Peak, Garhwal Himalayas

Access 42km from Joshimath, Badrinath is well connected to Rishikesh and Dehradun.

The best route to the road head is Rishikesh - Srinagar - Rudraprayag - Chamoli - Joshimath - Badrinath

Length 297 Km from Rishikesh; the closest railhead (motorable)

Duration Not applicable, as Badrinath is motorable and does not involve trekking. The treks around the shrine are of various durations and described later in the section

Altitude 3,133m

Type Pilgrimage

Season May - June, September – October

Difficulty and grading Not applicable, since Badrinath is accessible via a motorable route and involves no trekking. However, a few treks/hikes around the shrine include a 4km easy hike to Manna, the last village on the Indo-Tibetan border.

Brief description The holy town of Badrinath is located on the banks of the Alaknanda river about 24km from its source. The Hindu god Badrinath is worshipped here and it is considered the most important pilgrimage centre for Vaishnavites. Adi Shankaracharya, the 8th century reformer, is responsible for the great importance the shrine is given even today. The present temple was built by the Raja of Tehri in the 15th century and it was in the mid-1960s when the motor road to Badrinath was completed.

Badrinath is one of the char dhams in the Uttarakhand region. In addition to this, it is also considered to be among the four most holy places in India - the other three being Rameshwaram in the south, Dwarka in the west and Puri in the east.

The Neelkanth peak dominates the Badrinath Valley. Although seemingly very accessible, the Neelkanth remains an elusive peak for mountaineers, having been scaled only a handful times.

The shrine closes in early November and most people come down to Joshimath. Road access is usually prohibited till May the next year.

Scenic quality The road to Badrinath has some of the most attractive views of the region. Furthermore, the treks in and around Badrinath, the Valley of Flowers trek, the Govindghat trek and the trek to Neelkanth are all some of the most naturally beautiful trails in the region.

Awareness / popularity Considered one of the 4 major pilgrimage dhams for Hindus

Logistical support Not Available

Local authority assistance Not Available

Infrastructure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Accommodation</th>
<th>Eating Facilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Badrinath</td>
<td>TB, FRH</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Trekking in Uttarakhand 46
### Badrinath

While accommodation in the area is basic, it is generally considered some of the best in Uttaranchal and includes a PWD Guest House, Forest Rest House, lodges, temple guest house, tourist bungalow, and a few dharamshalas, Hotel Devlok, Hotel Dronagiri and Hotel Udai Palace. Eating places abound in the form of numerous vegetarian restaurants enroute.

**Signage**

Old carved milestones mark the routes around Badrinath
Master plan for development of trekking routes in Uttaranchal

Badrinath

AREA
Bhuyandar Valley, Garhwal Himalayas

GRADE

OPERATIONAL
May to October

DURATION
Motorable

Key

LODGING
CAMPING GROUND
TEMPLE
DISPENSARY
PEAK
ROAD METTALLED
TREK ROUTE

NORTH
## Kailash – Mansarovar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>While the Kailash Mansarovar trek is technically in Tibet (China), access to the trek is through Kumaon, Uttaranchal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Accessible either from Nepal or via Lepulekh on the Kumaon - China border and is organized by KMVN (Kumaon Mandal Vikas Nigam)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length</td>
<td>104km pilgrimage circumference around Mount Kailash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>10 - 15 day trek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altitude</td>
<td>4,540m (Lake Mansarovar), 6,858m (Kailash)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Pilgrimage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Season</td>
<td>June – September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty and grading</td>
<td>Grade III Hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief description</td>
<td>Kailash (6,740m) is situated to the north of the Himalayan barrier, wholly within Tibet. It is the spiritual centre for four great religions: Tibetan Buddhism, Hinduism, the Jain religion and the pre-Buddhist animistic religion – Bonpo.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Devi Darshan

**Location**  
Located in Garhwal, this trek involves a series of short treks between three major temples

**Access**  
All the three shrines are connected by roads that are motorable year round.

The typical routing includes Rishikesh to Chandrabadni via Deoprayag (112km) for the 2km trek to Chandrabadni temple, followed by travel to Khadukhal (87km) for a 2km trek to Surkanda Devi, followed by travel to Hindolakhal (67km) via Dhanaulti (7km from Khadukhal) for a 3km trek to Kunjapuri. Anasuya Devi, a 6 km trek from Mandal, is also sometimes included in the darshan.

**Length**  
Includes 270km of motoring and 10km of trekking divided between the three temples

**Duration**  
Including motoring covers 3-4 days with overnight halts at Chandrabadni and Dhanaulti

**Altitude**  
3,030m

**Type**  
Pilgrimage

**Season**  
April – September

**Difficulty and grading**  
Grade I Soft

**Brief description**  
This trek is for pilgrims that wish to see the Himalayas but cannot cope with harder treks. The three Siddh Peeths – Chamba (at Chandrabadni, 2,756m), Surkanda Devi (3,030m) and Kunjapuri (1,645m) are hills in a triangular location and are all named after the Goddess Durga.

All the temples are visible from each other and involve only a short hike of about an hour from each other. The views from the temples include that of the Himalayas and the Dun valley.

**Scenic quality**  
Relatively unspectacular drives compared to landscapes encountered on the more prominent treks

**Awareness / popularity**  
Enjoys low level popularity and is not considered very important either in terms of pilgrimage or trekking

**Logistical support**  
Not available

**Local authority assistance**  
Temple priests and local villages are the best source of assistance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infrastructure</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Accommodation</th>
<th>Eating Facilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chandra Badni</td>
<td>C, Dharamshala</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kunjapuri</td>
<td>C, Dharamshala</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surkanda Devi</td>
<td>C, Dharamshala</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhanaulti</td>
<td>C, TB, FRH</td>
<td>D, R</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Signage**  
Not available
Devi Darshan

Area
Garhwal Himalayas

Grade I Soft

Operational
April to September

Duration
03 to 04 Days (With motoring)
Master plan for development of trekking routes in Uttaranchal

**Rishikesh – Pauri Binsar**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>In the Pauri District, Garhwal Himalayas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>This trek is closer to the foothills of Uttaranchal and is easily accessed. The route includes a motor drive from Rishikesh to Pauri to Thalisain (road head) followed by the trek. The best route to follow is Rishikesh - Pauri - (motorable) - Thalisain - Binsar – Gairsain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length</td>
<td>42km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>4 - 5 day trek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altitude</td>
<td>2,480m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Adventure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Season</td>
<td>April – October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty and grading</td>
<td>Grade II Hard (steep climb)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief description</td>
<td>Binsar is situated at an altitude of 2,480m and is at a distance of 114km from Pauri. Set amidst dense forest of oak, deodar and rhododendron, it is a celebrated place of worship. The temple located here is dedicated to Shiva and is of archaeological significance. The central room of the temple is beautifully adorned by the idols of Ganesh, Har Gauri and Mardini. This trek, one of the few treks in the Pauri District, starts from Thalisain via Pauri, an enchanting hill station with a panoramic view of the Garhwal Himalayas. Thalisain, 100km from Pauri, is the last bus stop. From Thalisain, the trek winds along a 22km bridle path to Binsar through a rich forest of deodar, silver, fir, pine and oak. Day 1 includes a 13km trek from Thalisain to Piersain Day 2 includes a 7km trek to Binsar Day 3 includes a 20km trek to Gairsain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenic quality</td>
<td>Thick vegetation and panoramic views of the Himalayas all along the trek.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness / popularity</td>
<td>Is not considered very popular and this is in part due to the low awareness about the trek.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logistical support</td>
<td>All logistical support has to be obtained from Thalisain or Gairsain. However, these villages are not geared to supporting treks and provisions need to be procured at major urban agglomerations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local authority assistance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td><strong>Location</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thalisain</td>
<td>FRH, C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gairsain</td>
<td>FRH, PWD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signage</td>
<td>Needs to be improved by developing sensitive signage along the route</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Master plan for development of trekking routes in Uttaranchal

Pauri Binsar

AREA
Pauri District, Garhwal Himalayas

GRADE II HARD

OPERATIONAL
April to October

DURATION
05 Days (Thalisain-Gairsain)

Key
- LODGING
- CAMPING GROUND
- TEMPLE
- DISPENSARY
- PEAK
- ROAD METALLED
- TREK ROUTE
- NORTH
# Chandrasilla

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>In Chamoli District, above Chopta and Tungnath, Garhwal Himalayas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Best accessed from Chopta. The route involves travelling to Okhimath or Chopta and starting the trek. The route used is Rishikesh - Rudraprayag - Okhimath – Chopta Access is from Dugal Bitta in winter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length</td>
<td>4km from Chopta to Chandrasilla; the distance increases by 4km in the winter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>4 - 5 days in the winter and a day hike in the summer, inclusive of summit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altitude</td>
<td>3,700m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Adventure / Winter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Season</td>
<td>Year round</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty and grading</td>
<td>Grade II (summer); Grade III (winter)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief description</td>
<td>The Chandrasilla trek is unique in that the peak can be summited relatively easily in the winter and also acts as a day trek from Chopta via Tungnath in the summer. The summer trek to the peak is a short and pleasant trek and is often extended into a longer trek with an overnight halt at Chopta. The climb in the winter involves scaling and trekking on a rich route of flora and fauna, through meadows full of fresh snow. Relatively difficult, it requires mountaineering experience and requires a certain degree of skill. Day 1 includes a 16km trek to Dugal Bitta from Deoria Tal, through dense forests ascending from 1,500m to 2,000m Day 2 includes a 9km trek to Chopta on winter snow slopes Day 3 involves an attempt on the Chandrasilla peak (3,679m) via Tungnath; trek of 7km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenic quality</td>
<td>High visual quality, especially in the winter from the peak. The summer trek is pleasant and not very arduous.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness / popularity</td>
<td>Is one of the lesser-known trails in the region and is generally climbed by locals rather than outsiders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logistical support</td>
<td>Chopta is the road head for the region and is the centre for all porters and mule hire for the trek in the summer. However, arrangements need to be made from Okhimath or Deoria Tal in the winter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local authority assistance</td>
<td>Local forest officials and villagers are helpful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chopta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Okhimath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deoria Tal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tungnath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signage</td>
<td>Not available</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chandrasilla

AREA
Chamoli District, Above Chopta

GRADE II/SUMMER, III/WINTER

OPERATIONAL
Year round

DURATION
4 to 5 Days
Pindari Glacier

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>In the Pindar Valley, Bageshwar District, Kumaon</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Can be accessed by rail from Kathgodam followed by road till Loharkhet. The best route to the road head is Kathgodam - Almora - Kapkote - Loharkhet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length</td>
<td>35km trek to Phurkia, plus a 7km trek into the glacier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>7 days round</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altitude</td>
<td>3,820m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Adventure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Season</td>
<td>April – October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty and grading</td>
<td>Grade II Hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief description</td>
<td>The most easily accessible glacier in the Kumaon region, the Pindari Glacier is situated between the snow-capped Nanda Devi and Nanda Kot Mountains. Pindari is a large and steep glacier measuring 3km in length and 0.25km in breadth. The river Pindar originates from this Glacier and flows down to confluence into the river Alaknanda. The trekking route to the glacier traverses along the southern wilderness of the Nanda Devi Sanctuary, offering some beautiful views of peaks like Panwali Dwar (6,683m) and Maiktoli (6,803m). A trek to the Pindari Glacier is a soft adventure experience and well within the capacity of any trekker, who is then amply rewarded by the magnificence and grandeur of the towering Himalayas. A short day-by-day schedule for the trek is placed below:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Day 1 - Kathgodam - Loharkhet**

Bageshwar is a day's drive and easily accessible by road from Tanakpur or Kathgodam, the railhead. Another 35km from Bageshwar, the road head for Pindari is Song, where porters and mules can be hired for the trek. Night halt is usually at Loharkhet, 3km from Song.

**Day 2 - Loharkhet - Khati**

This section involves an 11km trek up to Dhakuri (2,680m), through open meadows, rolling hills and dense woods to the edge of an oak forest. Khati, another village 8km further, is also sometimes used as a night halt. Accommodation is available at the PWD guesthouse.

**Day 3 – Khati - Dwali**

This section involves trekking along the Pindar Ganga through a dense, insect-ridden forest to reach Dwali, 14km away.

**Day 4 – Dwali – Pindari**

This section involves tracing a route to Phurkia, at the base of the glacier over patches of melting snow. A few kilometres into the glacier, the view is starkly barren with ice-covered land and peaks for miles around. Mountain streams flow into the Pindar Ganga along the glacier. The Pindari valley, 7km from Phurkia, is suddenly lush green between the snows. From here, the glacier stretches upwards.
### Pindari Glacier

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenic quality</th>
<th>High scenic quality with views of the glacier</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Awareness / popularity</td>
<td>One of the most popular treks in the Uttaranchal, Kumaon region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logistical support</td>
<td>To be organized at Song</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local authority assistance</td>
<td>Forest officials along the route are helpful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infrastructure</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Accommodation</th>
<th>Eating facilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Khati</td>
<td>PWD</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dwali</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phurkia</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Signage: Not available
Master plan for development of trekking routes in Uttaranchal

Pindari Glacier

AREA
Pinder Valley, Bageshwar District, Kumaon

GRADE II HARD

OPERATIONAL
April to October

DURATION
07 Days (Song-Pindari-Return)

Key
★ LODGING
★ CAMPING GROUND
★ TEMPLE
★ DISPENSARY
★ PEAK
— ROAD METALLED
— TREK ROUTE
★ NORTH
Milam Glacier

Location  
North of the Pindari Glacier, Kumaon

Access  
Can be accessed from the closest railhead, Kathgodam, followed by a drive till Munsiyari, the road head.

The best route to the road head is Kathgodam - Almora - Munsiyari

Length  
64km one way

Duration  
12 day trek

Altitude  
3,962m

Type  
Adventure

Season  
May – October

Difficulty and grading  
Grade III

Brief description  
The people of Johar, as the Milam valley is locally known, were traders whose caravans crossed from India into Tibet by the high passes of Unta Dhura and Kungribhingri La. Once the trading season was over the entire population of Milam and the surrounding areas migrated to Munsiyari or lower, during winter. Trade stopped with the Indo-China conflict of 1962 and these once prosperous villages are now deserted. However the trail still exists, linking the villages and beckoning trekkers.

Munsiyari is on the arterial water body of the Goriganga, which emerges from the Milam glacier system on the eastern flanks of the Nanda Devi Sanctuary, fed also by the Kalabandar glacier and Panchuli from further east. The Milam glacier is the nodal point for a variety of high-grade routes and peaks.

A short description of the trek is placed below:

**Stage 1: Munsiyari to Lilam (Average walking time 4 hours)**
From the main bazaar in Munsiyari (2,290m), a motorable road heads northeast towards the Johar valley. From Darkot (1,800m) the road head, there is a steady descent to the Goriganga. A well-defined path passes a series of villages before ending in the village of Lilam (1,850m). Enroute, the bamboo houses and tea stalls provide succour to tired trekkers.

**Stage 2: Lilam to Bogdwar (Average walking time 6 to 7 hours)**
From Lilam, the main trail follows the Goriganga. In parts the trail also winds up the open hillside and provides impressive views of Munsiyari. An alternate trail, longer than the Goriganga trail, passes the Lilam ridge, from which there are panoramic views of the Panchuli range and the steep gorges on the sides of the Goriganga. The trail from here descends through rhododendron and conifer forests to a small meadow overlooking the Goriganga river just before Lilam. From here one ascends the impressive gorge where the Goriganga thunders through a series of rapids. The trail through the gorge continues for 4-5km to the meadow of Bogdwar (2,500m), where some shanty huts, a PWD Rest House and an ITBP post are located.
**Milam Glacier**

**Stage 3: Bogdwar to Martoli (Average walking time 5 to 6 hours)**

From Bogdwar, the trail follows the Goriganga through a series of narrow gorges. 3km past Bogdwar, there is a Hindu temple under a rock overhang, following which the trail crosses a series of snow bridges and waterfalls cascading down cliff walls. After about 4-5km the gorge widens and after a small meadow, the trail splits for a kilometre or so. Trekkers generally use the lower trail, carved out of the rock face. This marks the upper limit of the Goriganga Gorge. Hereafter, the trail crosses a series of open meadows to the settlement of Railkot (3,100m). 2km from Railkot, the valley opens out onto spectacular views of the mountain peaks beyond Milam. Beyond, the trail reaches Martoli (3,430m), a grassy plateau above the Goriganga. This village, which was once a thriving settlement, is today deserted. Just above the small Nanda Devi temple overlooks the Lwandl Gad to the top of the Nanda Devi East. To the north the Hardeol and the Trisuli can also be seen. Beyond the temple lies a large conifer plantation.

**Stage 4: Martoli to Milam (Average walking time 4 hours)**

A short and easy stage, this section has some of the most spectacular views of the high Himalayas, including the main Nanda Devi peak. The path descends from Martoli to the bridge over Lwandl Gad and follows the valley for about 2km till the settlement of Burphu. After this the path passes through a series of settlements, which are mainly occupied by shepherds from Munsyari. Pacchu, one of the settlements, is framed by the Nanda Devi and Nanda Devi East Peaks, a magnificent sight in the early morning. Beyond this point, the trail to Milam continues past the settlement of Beiju and from here a further 4km to Milam.

Milam (3,450m) is the last major settlement before Tibet. From Milam, it is only one stage up the Goenka Valley to the base of the Unta Dhura and the following day, after a series of three pass crossings (the Unta Dhura, the Jainta Dhura and the Kangri Bingra La), the trekker is in Tibet. Beyond Milam, one has to trek 3km to the Milam Glacier. The trail passes through high meadows of sage and juniper high above the terminal moraine.

**Scenic quality**

Spectacular views of the Milam Glacier

**Awareness / popularity**

Less publicized trek

**Logistical support**

Has to be organized at Munsyari

**Local authority assistance**

Due to the sparse population is difficult to find

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infrastructure</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Accommodation</th>
<th>Eating facilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Milam</td>
<td>C, KMVN, PWD</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martoli</td>
<td>C, FRH</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bogdwar</td>
<td>PWD, C</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lilam</td>
<td>PWD, C</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Munsyari</td>
<td>PWD, H</td>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Signage**

No signage along the route
Milam Glacier

Area
North of Pindari, Kumaon

Grade III

Operational
May to October

Duration
12 Days (Munsyari-Milam-Return)
Roop Kund

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Below the Trishul Peak, Chamoli District, Garhwal Himalayas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Access to the trek is from the small village of Mundoli.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The best route to the trek is Rishikesh - Tharali / Ghat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length</td>
<td>There are essentially two routes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tharali - Debal - Mundoli - Wan : 62km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tharali - Debal - Mundoli - Wan - Lohajang - Roop Kund : 92km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>or the Ghat – Nandprayag route : 88km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>10 - 15 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altitude</td>
<td>5,029m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Pilgrimage/Adventure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Season</td>
<td>April - October - Summer Trek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty and grading</td>
<td>Grade II Hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief description</td>
<td>Set amongst the towering cliffs of the Trishul in the Garhwal Himalayas, Roop Kund is a curiously shallow lake set in a snow circle for the majority of the year. Located in Chamoli District, this trek is one of the most difficult treks in Uttaranchal. The lake also has a mysterious past with a number of partially decomposed human skeletal remains found around the lake.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Day 1 of the trek begins from Mundoli with a short 4-5 hour walk through a wooded valley to the village of Wan. Accommodation is available at Mundoli in the form of a guesthouse or camps. The trek is a comfortable day’s walk through the natural beauty of the valley and through mixed forests of rhododendron and deodar. The village of Wan sits high above terraced fields. A guesthouse is available at Wan.

Day 2 of the trek climbs from Wan, to the high altitude grasslands of Bedni Bugyal. These alpine meadows are lush green undulating pastures and rhododendron and primula cover the ground. Golden eagles and griffon vultures are some of the fauna in the region.

Bedni is also an important site for Hindus and the focal point of the Nanda Jat Rath festival (September), where thousands of pilgrims come to bathe in the lake and offer prayers at the Nanda Devi festival.

The Trishul and the Nanda Ghunti tower over the Bedni meadow, marking the path towards Roop Kund. Short treks to Ali Bugyal are possible to get a breathtaking panoramic view of the glaciers and peaks of the main Indian Himalayan range. From the east to the west, from the Chaukhamba to Mrigtoli, a spectacular view expands.

From the Bugyls, the climb starts towards Bugwar Bassa. First a short ascent to Patthar Nachni followed by a steep zigzag to the Ganesh temple at the climax of the climb at Kulu Vinayak.
Roop Kund

The following days are a set of challenging climbs leading to the climax of the trek at Roop Kund and the Jora Gali pass. The ascent to Roop Kund from Bugwar Bassa is a tough 8-10 hour climb. From the snows and waters of the Roop Kund lake, the ascent to the Jora Gali Pass offers unequalled views of Trishul (7,120m), Nanda Devi (7,816m) and Nanda Devi East (7,434m).

From here the path drops steeply to Shila Samundar, an ideal camping site, following which one gradually descends through the forests of Sutol and the tiered farmlands of Sitel.

| Scenic quality | Breathtaking views of the Nanda Devi and Trishul ranges; especially around Bedni Bugyal |
| Awareness / popularity | Very popular due to the Nanda Rath Yatra |
| Logistical support | Poor availability at road head; provisions need to be organized at Rishikesh or Haridwar |
| Local authority assistance | Poor availability; poor quality of information |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infrastructure</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Accommodation</th>
<th>Eating facilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mundoli</td>
<td>TB, H, C</td>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wan</td>
<td>TB, C</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedni</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Signage | Not available |
Har ki Dun

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Within the Govind National Park, Garhwal Himalayas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Is best accessed via the Dehradun - Mussoorie - Purola road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length</td>
<td>30km (Mori – Netwar – Sankari – Taluka – Osla – Har ki Dun)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>4 - 5 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altitude</td>
<td>3,566m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Adventure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Season</td>
<td>April - October - Summer Trek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty and grading</td>
<td>Grade II Soft</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Brief description

Situated at an elevation of 3,566m, the Har ki Dun valley, the Hanging Valley of the Gods, is surrounded by peaks and dense forests.

Lush forest cover, abundant wildlife and a long winding trail make for a difficult but worthwhile trek. Located in one of the remoter parts of Garhwal, the trek is moderately difficult. The best time to travel is June - July or October. The region is either too cold or shrouded in mist for the rest of the year. The Har ki Dun falls in the Govind National Park and consequently wildlife viewing is a possibility.

The trek starts at Netwar, the entry to the Govind National Park, passes through Seema, Osla and ends at Har ki Dun. The trek from Netwar to Osla is through dense forests of chestnuts, walnuts, willows and chinars and the second stage of the trek, from Osla to Har ki Dun, is through terraced mountain fields, meadows and conifer forests. Today the trailhead for the trek is at Taluka or at Sankri. Osla, one of the most beautiful villages in the Fateh Parvat region has a temple dedicated to Duryodhana, the Kaurava prince, an unusual occurrence. The villages along the trek have a distinctive wooden architecture with carvings adorning the houses. The route is also associated with the Mahabharata, whose heroes are said to have roamed this area during their 14 years of exile.

The Har ki Dun meadow affords spectacular views of the Swargarohini and Garhwal peaks and the Jamudar glacier. The trail can also be taken to Ruinsara Tal, a high lake nestled in the mountains.

Day 1: Trek from Taluka to Osla

This stage involves a rather long and steep series of steps due to the disrepair of a bridge on the lower route that follows the river. The trail rejoins the river after a few hours at Seema, where one can stop for a break. The rest of the route to Osla is pleasant but steadily uphill. Accommodation can be found at Seema at the tourist and forest guesthouse.

Day 2: Osla to Har ki Dun

This stage of the trek is a full day's walk and involves trekking through terraced and cultivated fields on the northeast of the Tons river, climbing steadily. Cultivation gives way to open hillside and then to rough scrub and open forest before reaching the meadows around Har ki Dun.

Scenic quality

Scenic views of valley of the mountains along the route
### Har ki Dun

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness / popularity</th>
<th>One of the most popular routes in Uttaranchal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Logistical support</td>
<td>Has to be commissioned at Taluka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local authority assistance</td>
<td>Unavailable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infrastructure</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Accommodation</th>
<th>Eating facilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taluka</td>
<td>TB, FRH, H</td>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seema</td>
<td>TB, FRH</td>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Har ki Dun</td>
<td>TB, FRH</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Signage**

While no formal signage is available, trekkers paint directions onto rocks at strategic locations, every season.
Har Ki Doon

AREA
Gobind National Park, Garhwal Himalayas

GRADE I SOFT

OPERATIONAL
Mid-April to Mid-June
Mid-August to Mid-November

DURATION
4 to 5 Days (Sankri-Har Ki Doon-Return)
## Valley of Flowers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>In the Bhuyandar Valley, Garhwal Himalayas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Is best accessed via the Rishikesh - Joshimath - Govindghat road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length</td>
<td>41km; can be extended to Hemkund Sahib (another 6km)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>5 –10 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altitude</td>
<td>3,962 m (Valley of Flowers, Hemkund Sahib)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Adventure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Season</td>
<td>April - October - Summer Trek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty and grading</td>
<td>Grade II Hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief description</td>
<td>Commonly known to the locals of Bhuyandar Valley as the Nandankanan, this valley was discovered by T.G Longstaff and Frank Smyth in 1931. More than a thousand varieties of flowers, ferns and Himalayan herbs grow in this valley. According to legend, the Valley of Flowers is also associated with Lord Lakshman. It is believed that when Lakshman was wounded by Meghnath, the Sanjeewani Buti or medicinal plant that revived him is said to have been found in this valley. Govindghat, the road head for the Valley of Flowers trek can be accessed by road. The trek from this point on can be traversed either by foot or mule back. Day 1 includes a steep trek up to Ghangria, where an overnight halt is required. Ghangria also serves as the overnight halt for trekkers going to Hemkund, a holy Sikh shrine (where Guru Govind Singh is said to have meditated). Since overnight camping is not permitted in either Hemkund or the Valley of Flowers, Ghangria is overcrowded with people and dhabas. Accommodation is also available at the GMVN guesthouse and several private hotels. Day 2 involves a walk down the cobblestone path out of Ghangria, which divides into two about 400m out of Ghangria. The right fork travels to Hemkund and the left to the Valley of Flowers. A little further up is a tollgate to enter the valley. The main floral portion of the valley is about 5km from the tollgate. Mules are not allowed into the valley and the hike in the valley is pleasant. The valley itself is only a few kilometres wide and 10km long. While it is impossible to trek its entire length within a day, much of the four hundred varieties of the flowers can be seen in the initial section. Early August is the best season for the valley. The most famous species found in the valley include the Cobra Lily and the Himalayan Blue Poppy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Scenic Quality       | High scenic quality due to variety of flora and fauna          |
| Awareness / popularity | Is considered one of the more popular treks in the region, and is often combined with the Hemkund trek |
| Logistical support  | Is well organized and is procured at Govindghat               |
## Valley of Flowers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local authority assistance</th>
<th>Is available from the local forest officials and villagers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location</strong></td>
<td><strong>Accommodation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Govindghat</td>
<td>FRH, H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghangria</td>
<td>TB, FRH</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signage</th>
<th>Not available</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Valley of Flowers

AREA
Bhuyan Valley, Garhwal Himalayas

GRADE II HARD
OPERATIONAL
April to October

DURATION
5 to 10 Days (Can be combined with Hemkund)
### Hemkund

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>In the Bhuyandar Valley, Garhwal Himalayas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Is best accessed via the Rishikesh - Joshimath - Govindghat road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length</td>
<td>15km</td>
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<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>3 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altitude</td>
<td>4,320m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Pilgrimage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Season</td>
<td>July - October - Summer Trek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty and grading</td>
<td>Grade II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief description</td>
<td>Often combined with the Valley of Flowers trek, this trek is popular with Sikh pilgrims, due to the gurdwara at Hemkund Sahib. The shrine is a 15 km trek up from Govindghat, bifurcating from the Valley of Flowers trek route at Ghangria. The trek passes through pine and rhododendron forests and follows the Lakshman Ganga till Ghangria. The 7km trek from Ghangria to Hemkund entails a steep climb. Hemkund Lake is 2km in circumference and its clear waters mirror the image of the Saptashringa peaks. The shores of the lake are covered with moss and flowers. The shrine is an imposing star shaped stone and concrete structure on the shores of the lake. A small temple located nearby is dedicated to Lakshman, who according to legend practiced penance at this location. Accommodation is available at Ghangria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenic quality</td>
<td>High scenic quality due to variety of flora and fauna and of the lake.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness / popularity</td>
<td>Is considered one of the more popular treks in the region, and is often combined with the Valley of Flowers trek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logistical support</td>
<td>Is well organized and is procured at Govindghat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local authority assistance</td>
<td>Is available from the local forest officials and villagers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Accommodation</th>
<th>Eating facilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Govindghat</td>
<td>FRH, H</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghangria</td>
<td>TB, FRH</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Signage**: Not available
Hemkund

AREA
In Bhuyandar Valley, Garhwal Himalayas

GRADE II HARD
OPERATIONAL
July to October

DURATION
3 Days (Return)
**Nanda Devi Sanctuary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Partly in the Chamoli District, Garhwal Himalayas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Best accessed via the Rishikesh - Joshimath - Lata road but can also be accessed from Kumaon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length</td>
<td>35km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>15 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altitude</td>
<td>4,500m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Adventure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Season</td>
<td>April - October - Summer Trek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty and grading</td>
<td>Grade III Hard - includes a section of mountaineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief Description</td>
<td>The Nanda Devi sanctuary is situated in the Chamoli District and is surrounded by seventy colossal white peaks, many yet unnamed. The most famous of them is the Nanda Devi. The sanctuary is shaped like a cup and has several lush green meadows and large waterfalls. Herds of blue mountain goat (bharal) graze in the sanctuary. The starting point for this trek is Joshimath, which is easy accessed by road from the foothills of the Garhwal Himalayas. Porters and mules need to be organized at Joshimath. Joshimath to Lata is a 25km road and the trek starts after this point. Lata to Lata Kharan is a long and arduous trek but is redeemed by the views of the snow covered peaks of the Runti Nanda Devi, Nanda Ghunti and Berhartoli across the river Rishi Ganga. Lata Kharan is an open wide grass hilltop, which is usually windy and chilly. The trek from Lata Kharan to Dhransi Pass is long and features regular ascents and descents. Nanda Devi is visible after the Dhransi Pass. The trek continues along the ridge across a rocky moraine up to the Malatuni pass after which it descends almost 750m through alpine grasslands. Along the way are the wide meadows of Debrugheta, dense forestland and some spectacular views. Debrugheta to Ramni is another long trek, which starts with a steep ascent after crossing the Rishi Ganga before reaching Deodi. Deodi to Ramni is through dense forest of juniper and rhododendron. After this one enters the sanctuary, the Trishul base camp can be approached from Deodi via Bethartoli and Tridang. The Nanda Devi Sanctuary has been closed to climbers for the last two decades for environmental reasons and is only occasionally opened to environmental clean-up expeditions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenic quality</td>
<td>Spectacular views of the Nanda Devi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness / popularity</td>
<td>This is one of the most popular treks; especially due to the presence of one of the highest peaks in the world.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Nanda Devi Sanctuary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Logistics support</th>
<th>Can be procured at Joshimath</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local authority assistance</td>
<td>The trek has been closed for the last two decades</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Infrastructure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Accommodation</th>
<th>Eating facilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joshimath</td>
<td>TB, FRH, H</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lata Kharan</td>
<td>FRH</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramni</td>
<td>FRH</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signage</th>
<th>Not available</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Khatling – Masartal

Location
Located enroute to Kedarnath, Garhwal Himalayas

Access
Can be approached either via Kedarnath or via the Bhilanganga river valley.

The most popular access is from Rishikesh - via Gadolia, Ghansali and finally reaching the road head Ghuttu. Tehri is the closest urban agglomeration in the region.

Length
The Masartal - Sahasratal trek is the abbreviated version of the trek that stretches from Ghuttu to the Khatling Glacier and then extends further on to Kedarnath.

An alternate trek, the Ghuttu - Sahasratal trek can be made from Reeh. Both the Masartal and the Sahasratal lakes are considered holy and are revered by Hindus. While the trek to the lakes is not very difficult and can be performed by amateur trekkers, the Khatling glacier can only be traversed by experienced climbers. The trek to Masartal extends from Ghuttu - Reeh - Gangi - Kalyani - Bhelbagi – Masartal, a total of 51km, and then extends into the Khatling Glacier.

Duration
6 - 7 days to reach Masartal lake.

Altitude
3,675m

Type
Adventure Trek

Season
April – October

Difficulty and grading
Grade II Hard

Brief description
The Sahasratal trek is along an old pilgrimage route to the holy lakes. According to legend, the Bhilanganga river was created when Shiva transformed a celestial nymph into the river. The Khatling Glacier itself is a lateral glacier, at the source of the river Bhilanganga. Sahasratal and Masartal are to the west and the east of the glacier. The trek passes through thick forests and lush green meadows. In the monsoons, the meadows abound with flowers and a number of streams mushroom out of the valley. The Bhilanganga valley affords a panoramic view of snow-clad peaks and glaciers such as the Jogin group, Kirti Stambha and Meru.

Day 1 - Ghuttu - Reeh: (Average walking time 6 to 7 hours)
Ghuttu can be reached by road from Rishikesh or Haridwar via Tehri. The village of Ghansali, 31km before Ghuttu is more developed than Ghuttu and acts as the road head for the trek. (The road connecting Ghuttu and Ghansali was metalled only in 1995). Accommodation at Ghuttu is available in the form of a GMVN guesthouse and a Forest bungalow. Both facilities are not in very good condition.

Ghuttu is also the starting point for the trek route to Kedarnath via Panwali and Triyugi Narayan, one of the more popular trekking routes in the region. In the past, the route was used to trek from Gangotri to Kedarnath and is still often used by sanyasis. While extremely difficult, the route is well worth travelling through the valleys and over ridges for the splendid panoramic view of the Garhwal Himalayas.

The trek to Reeh, a 10 km stretch, is a gradual descent and can be achieved in 5-6 hours. The Border Roads Organization is building a road from Ghuttu to Reeh. Currently, an unmetalled path exists to a village 5km halfway up the route. The trek passes through forests of rhododendron, bamboo and pine. Accommodation at Reeh is available in a tourist bungalow.
Master plan for development of trekking routes in Uttaranchal

Khatling – Masartal

**Day 2 - Reeh - Gangi: (Average walking time 6 to 7 hours)**

The uphill trek to Gangi is a steep ascent for the first 5km after which the climb is gradual. From Reeh, one route goes to Sahasratatal, another beautiful high altitude lake surrounded by snow covered mountains. This initial stretch of the trek (to Gangi) is along a barren hillside. Around midday, one reaches a small settlement, after which the climb is gradual.

Gangi can be reached in the evening and accommodation is available in the form of a rest house, the location from which one has a panoramic view of the beautiful Bhilanganga valley covered with mist and surrounded by snow covered mountains.

The village is also fairly large and accommodation can be found at the school or one can simply camp further up the valley.

**Day 3 - Gangi - Kharsoli: (Average walking time 6 to 7 hours)**

The trek to Kharsoli passes through some of the densest forest in the region. The initial stretch involves a downhill descent to the river, followed by the crossing of a lush meadow at Deokhiri. This meadow is used by many as a camping site. Thereafter, there is a gradual ascent through forests of rhododendrons and various forms of coniferous trees till Kalyani, the last settlement on the route. 2km thereafter, a wooden bridge crosses the river Bhilanganga to reach Kharsoli. Kharsoli is a small alpine meadow with a stream flowing through it and surrounded by stately cedars and oak trees.

**Day 4: Kharsoli - Bhelbagi**

After Kharsoli, the trail follows the river along a roller coaster path running over several streams to the grazing areas of Bhedikhar. One passes through a glacier and trekking through this region requires some experience, as most of the terrain is rocky and covered with snow and frozen rivers. Tree cover is sparse, as altitude (10,000ft+) is gained, giving way to rocky terrain full of boulders and landslides. Just before Bhelbagi is a large waterfall and the camping site is best at Tamkund.

**Day 5 - Bhelbagi - Masartal**

The view from Tamkund includes a panoramic view of Chauki and the Khating Phating peaks. Chauli is a flat meadow at the base of the Mayali Pass and is the last halt before one starts climbing towards the Mayali Pass.

Despite May - June being the best period to trek in the region, some skill is required to traverse the frozen streams and snow-covered terrain to reach Masartal.

**Scenic quality**
Includes spectacular views of the glacier valley and meadows along the trek.

**Awareness / popularity**
Due to the sheer difficulty of the trek, especially in the latter stages, this trek is usually only attempted by experienced trekkers and is popular with them. The river valley is fairly remote and sees few travellers.

**Logistical support**
Has to be organized in Ghuttu / Ghansali. Ghuttu is a small village and one can find basic food and accommodation here. While guides and porters are available in Ghuttu, they are better organized in Ghansali and therefore easier to hire. The Ghuttu - Masartal trek is not a very popular trek and hence few experienced guides are available in the region. However, the villagers are friendly and willing to help.

**Local authority assistance**
The closest access to local assistance is at Tehri.
## Khatling – Masartal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infrastructure</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Accommodation</th>
<th>Eating facilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ghuttu</td>
<td>TB, FRH</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reeh</td>
<td>FRH</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gangi</td>
<td>FRH</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kharasoli</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhebagi</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Signage: Not available
Khatling-Masartal

AREA
Enroute to Kedarnath, Garhwal Himalays

GRADE III HARD
OPERATIONAL
April to October

DURATION
6 to 7 Days (To Masartal)

Key
- LODGING
- CAMPING GROUND
- TEMPLE
- DISPENSARY
- PEAK
- ROAD METALLED
- TREK ROUTE

NORTH
## Kalsi – Lakhamandal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Location</strong></th>
<th>In the Jaunsar - Bhabar region in the foothills of the Garhwal Himalayas, Garhwal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Access</strong></td>
<td>Can be approached from either Mussoorie via Kuwa or via the Herbertpur - Dakpathar - Chakrata route</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The closest urban agglomeration in the region is Mussoorie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length</strong></td>
<td>The trek extends over the Chakrata region of Garhwal. The route between Kalsi and Lakhamandal is also motorable by rough roads.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kalsi - Biratkhoi - Ghurani - Magti - Dungyara - Baijnath - Barontha - Goraghati - Lakhamandal : 72km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duration</strong></td>
<td>10 days (across the Chakrata region).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Altitude</strong></td>
<td>790m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type</strong></td>
<td>Cultural / Historical Trek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Season</strong></td>
<td>April – October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Difficulty and grading</strong></td>
<td>Grade I Hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brief description</strong></td>
<td>The Kalsi Lakhamandal trek is a cultural and historical trek in the Jaunsar - Bhabar region of the foothills of the Garhwal Himalayas, between the Yamuna and Tons rivers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The region is known for the Jaunsari tribe, a tribe that practices both polyandry as well as polygamy, a practice entirely different from the rest of the Garhwal region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lakhamandal itself is a large village on the banks of the Yamuna and is known for the ruins of a temple. The trek is supposed to have cultural and historical significance. The rock inscriptions at Kalsi date back to the Asokan age and are in the Pali script. The fort at Biratkhoi is in ruins. According to the Mahabharata, this fort belonged to Maharaja Birat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The palace in Lakhamandal is believed to be the Lakshagriha (lac palace built by the Kauravas to burn the Pandava princes alive) that is described in the Mahabharata. The temple complex in the centre of the village is dedicated to Bhagwati and Shiva. The two life size statues in the temple are supposed to belong to a much older temple and are considered to be Dwarapalas or statues of Bhima and Arjun.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The villages along this trek are considered worth seeing for their architectural and cultural value. Rich in flora and fauna, the trek is also considered attractive for ornithologists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scenic quality</strong></td>
<td>Little known, this trek has some magnificent views of the Garhwal Himalayas and also has some attractive architecture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Awareness / popularity</strong></td>
<td>Since both the ends of the trek are accessible by road, and the road is not very easy to traverse, the Lakhamandal trek is not very popular in the trekking circuit.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Kalsi – Lakhamandal

Logistical support
Both Lakhamandal and Kalsi are small villages and while available, porters and mules have to be organized in advance. Food has to be organized from the larger towns in the region.

Local authority assistance
Only available in the form of the local Forest guards.

Infrastructure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Accommodation</th>
<th>Eating facilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kuwa</td>
<td>V, TB</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goraghati</td>
<td>TB</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dungyara</td>
<td>TB</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaurani</td>
<td>V, TB</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biratkhoi</td>
<td>V, TB</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalsi</td>
<td>V, FRH</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Signage
Not available
Kalsi-Lakhamandal

AREA
Jaunsar-Bhaba, Garhwal Himalayas

GRADE I HARD
OPERATIONAL
April to October

DURATION
10 Days

Key
- LODGING
- CAMPING GROUND
- TEMPLE
- DISPENSARY
- PEAK
- ROAD METALLED
- TREK ROUTE

NORTH

Master plan for development of trekking routes in Uttaranchal
Kuari Pass

Location  
To the west of the Nanda Devi Sanctuary, Chamoli District, Garhwal

Access  
Can be approached from either Tapovan via Khulara, or Joshimath via Auli, Gurson and Chitrakantha or from Ghat via Ramni. Both Ghat and Joshimath are accessible from Rishikesh by the Badrinath - Hemkund National Highway.

Joshimath is the closest urban agglomeration in the region.

Length  
Ranges from:
- 80km (Joshimath - Kuari Pass - Joshimath) to
- 78km (Tapovan - Kuari Pass - Tapovan) to
- 100km (Ghat - Ramni - Jhenjipatni - Panarani - Domabhiti - Kuari Pass - return)

Duration  
Ranges from 8-12days to the Pass (the Joshimath – Auli - Kuari Pass route can also be traversed in 4 days)

Altitude  
4,268m

Type  
Summer trek

Season  
April - October (May to June and mid September to November)

Difficulty and grading  
Grade II Soft

Brief description  
The Kuari Pass (Khal), also known as the Curzon Trail/Pass, lies to the west of the Nanda Devi Sanctuary and has an imposing view of the Garhwal Himalayas. Popularised by Lord Curzon when he was Viceroy of India, the Kuari Pass route to Joshimath was one of the treks he undertook in the Garhwal Himalayas.

The twin peaks of the Nanda Devi, Dunagiri Bethartoli and the Devathan are peaks that are visible from the Pass in clear weather. Enroute, there are spectacular views of the Kedarnath, Kamet, Neelkanth, Rishikot, Changabang and Chaukhamba peaks.

The trek itself traverses three passes, through dense forests of oak, pine, rhododendron and fir and through wide-open meadows called bugyals (including the Gurson Bugyal). These bugyals are typical to the region and act as high altitude summer grazing grounds for the village’s enroute.

The Kuari Pass itself is just a small col in a grassy ridge. Looking south from the pass, there are impressive views over the forest ridges and the small clearing at Dakwani is also spectacular. The ascent is difficult and steep in parts.

The Ghat route is the more favoured route for trekkers. It is the longest and has some of the more spectacular views. The Curzon Trail is one of the better-marked trekking routes in the region with directions and distances marked on old milestones carved out of stone and located strategically along the route. The route description for the Joshimath to Kuari Pass section are placed below

Day 1 - Joshimath – Chitranganta (Average walking time 6 to 7 hours)

From Joshimath a jeep can be hired for a 12km drive to Auli. Alternatively, the distance can be trekked. It encompasses a 2-3 hour trek rising 900m through forestland. Auli is a small settlement, which recently has developed into a thriving ski resort.
Kuari Pass

From Auli, the distinctive summit profile of Nanda Devi can be appreciated at the head of the sanctuary. The trail from Auli heads up the hillside beyond the ski lift, before reaching a small oak and holly forest. Through the forest, the trail passes a small temple before emerging at the base of an extensive series of meadows known as the Gurson Bugyal. The shepherd trails are at times hard to follow but the local shepherds are helpful.

There are a number of vantage points to appreciate the classic route up the Rishi Ganga into the Nanda Devi Sanctuary, and the trail via Lata and Lata Kharak to the Durashi Pass (4,260m) can be appreciated from the far side of the valley.

The trail beyond Gurson Bugyal is steep in places, before an ascent over and around a rocky outcrop to a small lake along a well-constructed trail coming from the Tapovan village. From the lake, the trail continues through a mixed pine and oak forest for 2-3km before a short descent to the meadow at Chitraganta (3,310m). From the meadow, the snow-capped ridge, including Chaukhamba I (7,138m), II (7,068m), III (6,974m) and IV (6,854m) can be seen beyond Joshimath. Camping sites abound in the valley.

Day 2: Chitraganta to Kuari Pass (Average walking time 4 to 5 hours)
The trail ascends the ridge above Chitraganta. Some cairns mark the track, which is at present being upgraded by the villagers from Tapovan.

Just below the pass, the trail leads through a meadow affording spectacular views of the Himalayan and Zanskar ranges. North of Joshimath is the Chaukhamba Range, Neelkanth (6,596m) and Narayan Parbat (5,965m) while the peaks of the Zanskar range including Mana Peak (7,272m), Kamet (7,756m) and Abi Gamin (7,355m) extend to the Tibet border. In the middle foreground, the main Himalayan chain in the vicinity of the Bhuyandar Valley and Hemkund includes Nilgiri Parbat (6,474m), Ghori Parbat (6,708m) and Hathi Parbat (6,727m). Dunagiri (7,066) dominates the peaks to the north of the Nanda Devi Sanctuary, which also include Changabang and Kalanka.

There are many campsites nearby and a short stage from Chitraganta could be combined with a trek along the adjoining ridge that heads towards the Nanda Devi Sanctuary. Here there are possible vantage points to view Nanda Devi’s distinctive profile including the twin peaks of the main summit and the east summit.

Awareness / popularity Kuari Pass, due to its proximity to Auli as well as Joshimath, is one of the more popular treks in the region. However, due to the longer duration of the preferred Ghat route, the trek does not attract as many visitors as the Har ki Dun and Pindari treks.

Logistical support All logistics including porter and mule hire is from Joshimath and Ghat. Joshimath was once a thriving town for trekkers and expeditions requiring staff and porters before entering the Nanda Devi Sanctuary. However, with the closing of the Sanctuary in 1983, activity in the town has subsided considerably. Ghat is a smaller town and less organized than Joshimath.

While basic foodstuff can be acquired at Joshimath, processed food needs to be procured at Delhi or Dehradun.

Local authority assistance Apart from the staff at the GMVN guesthouses at Auli, there is little governmental assistance in the region. The Forest rangers are helpful and can be approached for assistance.
### Kuari Pass

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infrastructure</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Accommodation</th>
<th>Eating facilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ghat</td>
<td>FRH, V</td>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramni</td>
<td>V, N.A.</td>
<td></td>
<td>N.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jhenjipatni</td>
<td>V, N.A.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panarani</td>
<td>V, N.A.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domabhiti</td>
<td>V, N.A.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuari Pass</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tapovan</td>
<td>C, N.A.</td>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auli</td>
<td>TB, H, C</td>
<td></td>
<td>D, R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joshimath</td>
<td>TB, H</td>
<td></td>
<td>D, R</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Signage**
Not available except as painted signs on rocks during the trekking season. These signs are generally painted onto the path by trekkers / trekking associations.
Kuari Pass

AREA
Chamoli District, Garhwal

GRADE II SOFT
OPERATIONAL
April to June

DURATION
4 to 8 Days

Key
- LODGING
- CAMPING GROUND
- TEMPLE
- DISPENSARY
- PEAK
- ROAD METALLED
- TREK ROUTE

NORTH

Trekking in Uttaranchal 84
Kalindikhal

Location | In the Garhwal Himalayas
Access | Can be accessed from either Gangotri or Badrinath
Length | Extends from Gangotri to Badrinath - 73km
Duration | Ranges from 8-12 days depending on weather conditions
Altitude | 5,590m
Type | Adventure
Season | Summer
Difficulty and grading | Grade II Hard

Brief Description
This trek is one of the more difficult treks in the region and requires a basic understanding of mountaineering.

An extension of the Nandanvan trek, it runs eastward to Ghastoli and Badrinath via the Kalindikhal pass (5,967m). This trek requires special permissions.

The trek from Nandanvan to Vasukital must be done only after due acclimatization. There is a gradual ascent of a few kilometres and thereafter, the trek negotiates Kharapathar before a camp at Kalindi base (5,590m). Crossing the Kalindi Pass, one treks down to Arwa glacier and Arwatal (3,980m) to Badrinath via Ghastoli with two rivers crossing the way. From Manna, the trek falls into the Inner Line region.

Day 1 - Nandanvan to Vasukital
This stage involves trekking from Nandanvan (4,500m) to Vasukital (5,300m) and acts as acclimatization for the rest of the trek. The stage is about 10km long.

Day 2 – 3 – Vasukital to Kalindi Base Camp
Ascent to Kharapathar (8km, 5,590m) before descending to Kalindi base (5,546) a further 6km below.

Day 4 – 5 to Arwatal
Cross the Kalindi Pass and trek 14km to Arwatal (3,980m)

Day 5 – 6 to Ghastoli
18km trek to Ghastoli with a halt in between

Day 7 – 8 to Badrinath
Trek 17km to Badrinath

Scenic quality
With views of the Arwa glacier, the trek has some of the most spectacular sights in the region. Other views include that of the Neelkanth and the Vasuki Parbat.

Awareness / popularity
Considered one of the tougher treks, the Kalindikhal trek is not very popular except with die hard adventure trekkers.
Master plan for development of trekking routes in Uttarakhand

### Kalindikhal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infrastructure</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Accommodation</th>
<th>Eating facilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gangotri</td>
<td>TB, FRH, PWD, H</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nandanvan</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vasukital</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kharapathar</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kaliendi Base</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arwa Tal</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ghastoli</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Badrinath</td>
<td>TB, PWD, H</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Logistical support: Has to obtained at either Joshimath or Uttarkashi

Local authority assistance: Available at Badrinath or Gangotri

Signage: Not available
Khalindi Khal

Area
Garhwal Himalayas

Grade II Hard

Operational
April to June

Duration
08 Days (Delhi to Delhi)

Key
- LODGING
- CAMPING GROUND
- TEMPLE
- DISPENSARY
- PEAK
- ROAD METALLED
- TREK ROUTE
- NORTH
### Lata – Panveli

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Near Badrinath and Kedarnath, Garhwal Himalayas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Best accessed via the Rishikesh - Uttarkashi - Belak (road head) route</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length</td>
<td>The Belak - Budhakedar - Bhaironghati - Ghuttu - Pan Triyugi Narayan - Gauri Kund trek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>Ranges from 8 - 10 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altitude</td>
<td>3,500m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Adventure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Season</td>
<td>Summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty and grading</td>
<td>Grade II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief description</td>
<td>This trek provides one of the rarest views of the entire Yamunotri - Kedarnath - Badrinath range. The trek passes through several parts of Panwali Kantha. It is a part of the ancient pilgrim’s trail from Gangotri to Kedarnath.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lata Panveli

AREA
Near Badrinath and Kedarnath, Garhwal Himalayas

GRADE II HARD

OPERATIONAL
April to October

DURATION
8 to 10 Days

Key
- LODGING
- CAMPING GROUND
- TEMPLE
- DISPENSARY
- PEAK
- ROAD METALLED
- TREK ROUTE

NORTH
**Nagtibba**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>At the foothills of the Tehri Garhwal Himalaya ranges, north east of Mussoorie</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Best accessed from the Rishikesh - Pantwari via Nainbagh route. The trek can also be accessed from Thatyur, which is connected to Mussoorie.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length</td>
<td>8km trek to Nagtibba from Pantwari or 21km from Thatyur to Nagtibba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>2-3 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altitude</td>
<td>3,048m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td>All year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Season</td>
<td>Summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty and grading</td>
<td>Grade II Hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief Description</td>
<td>Nagtibba, as the name suggests is the abode of the Nag Devta (Snake God). Located just off Mussoorie, it is located in the Aglar Valley on the north of the Mussoorie hills. The trek to Nagtibba is from two sides. Most trekkers prefer the Pantwari side, which has a beautiful village symbolizing the culture of Jaunpur. The trek from here involves a climb to the top of Nagtibba. The descent is from the other side to Devalsari. From there the redhead to Thatyur is close by. Thatyur is about 66km from Mussoorie. Accommodation is available at Devalsari at the forest rest house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenic quality</td>
<td>Is considered one of the more attractive trekking routes around Mussoorie with views of the Nagtibba Peak.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness / popularity</td>
<td>Is popular with locals in Tehri Garhwal and Mussoorie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logistical support</td>
<td>All provisions need to be organized at Mussoorie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local authority assistance</td>
<td>Can be obtained from the local villagers and forest officials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>Only accommodation is at the Devalsari forest rest house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signage</td>
<td>None available</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Nagtibba

AREA
Foothills of Tehri Garhwal Himalayas, NE of Mussoorie

GRADE II HARD

OPERATIONAL
April to October

DURATION
2 to 3 Days
### Darma Valley / Panchchuli

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>In the eastern border of Kumaon behind the Panchchuli range.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Is best approached via the Kathgodam - Dharchula - Tawaghat road from where the trek starts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The trek route follows the Tawaghat - Sobla - Sela - Duktu and return route.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length</td>
<td>Ranges from 90-104km (round trek)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>5-10 days with 6-7 days of trekking and 3 days of travelling by road.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altitude</td>
<td>3,968m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Adventure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Season</td>
<td>Monsoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty and grading</td>
<td>Grade II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief Description</td>
<td>Also called the Panchchuli trek.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Still untouched by tourists, the Darma Valley is pristine and maintains its charm. The Dhuliganga river cuts through this valley, which is scattered with remote villages and alpine meadows. The villages around the base of the Panchuli have a distinct culture based on the gods and goddesses of the Panchuli massif. The region also has one of the more famous monsoon festivals.

The trek passes from the village of Duktu to the base camp of the Panchchuli massif.

### Scenic quality
Incorporates a pleasant trek through scenic countryside with spectacular views of the Panchchuli massif.

### Awareness / popularity
Not very popular

### Logistical support
All arrangements for the trek need to be made either at Delhi or at Tawaghat.

### Local authority assistance
Limited but available from the local forest officials at Tawaghat

### Infrastructure
No infrastructure along the trek route

### Signage
Not available.
Darma Valley

AREA
Behind Panchchuli Range, Kumaon

GRADE II

OPERATIONAL
Monsoon

DURATION
5 to 10 Days (Tawaghat-Sela-Return)

[Map of Darma Valley with key]

Key:
- Lodging
- Camping ground
- Temple
- Dispensary
- Peak
- Road metalled
- Trek route
- North
Assessment of trekking routes

The previous section has provided a factual inventory of the 27 key trekking routes in Uttaranchal. This following section now provides an analytical assessment of the trekking routes across a variety of dimensions such as visitation, popularity, duration, terrain, quality, infrastructure, historical value as well as grading/rating.

Suitability of routes for ‘development’ and promotion – attempt at a “Rating Index”

Current absence of objective ratings

From a potential traveller’s perspective, there is a wide diversity in sources of information on the trekking routes in Uttaranchal. In some instances, the extant literature available to a tourist also provides qualitative assessments and ratings about specific treks. These assessments, however, are subjective and personal in the sense that they represent a certain individual’s opinion. Further, they are not holistic in that they neither rate all the routes, and nor do they objectively rate all the aspects that might be of interest or importance to a potential trekker.

Accordingly, in the approach to this master plan, it was determined that an attempt should be made to arrive at an objective rating index, that rated all the treks on a set of common factors deemed significant for the ‘development’ and promotion of trekking routes in Uttaranchal for tourism purposes.

The rating index

A rating index was formulated and further refined on an iterative basis using expert input from experienced trekkers/mountain climbers and tour operators specialising in adventure travel. Essentially the index was a matrix containing weights for the relative presence or absence of any particular factor (see below). The weights were assigned a score based on the importance or significance of that factor to the development and promotion of trekking in Uttaranchal. The final index sought to rate each trek on the factors presented in Table 6 overleaf:

The rating process

As stated earlier, the objective of the rating index was to achieve an impartial and universal rating of individual trekking routes. Accordingly, a questionnaire containing the index (and a listing of individual routes) was circulated to a carefully selected body of experts across India that included climbers, adventure tour operators, individuals associated with institutions related to mountaineering, and other specialists associated with trekking and mountaineering in different capacities. In all, over 60 individuals were invited to rate the trekking routes.

Regrettably, only 20 completed rating questionnaires were received (despite repeated follow up) and even within these, not all questions had been answered (most often for reasons of recall). As a result, the attempt to arrive at an objective rating for each trekking routes on a common basis had to be

18 Source: Guidebooks such as Lonely Planet, Across Peaks and Passes in Garhwal Himalayas, Great Treks of the World etc.
19 For example, ‘scenic quality of the trek’ might be given a high weight, while ‘number of check points’ might be given a low weight.
20 See Appendix 3 – Mailing List
abandoned as it was believed that using these limited responses might introduce a bias into the rating. Instead, building on the insight gained from the individual ratings, a generic assessment of all trekking routes on a collective basis was made by interviewing over 20 leading climbers and institutions. The result was a comprehensive assessment of the trekking routes, which while not quantitative and specific to individual routes, was insightful and holistic.

Table 6 - Factors for rating index

| Quantum of visitation (to determine popularity) | Trek grading (as defined earlier) |
| Trek gradient | Trek duration |
| Overall quality of terrain | Altitude achieved |
| Temperature conditions | Quality of the access road |
| Distance from key access points (such as airstrip or road head) | Level of local hospitality |
| Number of villages en route | Basic infrastructure at the road head (accommodations, provision shops, etc.) |
| Aesthetic qualities of the local settlements | Scenic quality of the trek |
| Historical / heritage values | Uniqueness of social and cultural features of local communities |
| Diversity of flora / fauna along the trek | Availability of local produce/ food along the trek |
| Trail marking | Availability of porters/ logistical support |
| Availability of guesthouses along the trek | Assistance from local authorities |
| Crowding of trails | Institutional support |
| | Safety and rescue facilities on the trek |
| | Checkpoints enroute |

The section below provides a generic assessment of the trekking routes across the most salient common factors. Specific mention is made of any particular trekking route, where relevant.

**Micro level – assessment of routes**

The assessment of trekking routes in Uttaranchal is presented below, according to the most salient factors:

**Altitude**

The average altitude of the treks researched in this study was approximately 3,700m. However, being spread over the lower and upper Himalayas, the trekking routes range from the lowest altitude of 3,048m at Gangotri to the highest altitudes of 5,590m at Kalindikhal Pass. However, all the treks are characterised by views of snow-capped peaks of great height (the 6,540m Shivling along the Kalindikhal trek, the 7,120m Trishul peaks along the Roopkund trek and the 7,816m Nanda Devi along the Kauri pass trek), many of which are often attempted as mountaineering expeditions. With altitudes in the range of 3,700m and above, the treks in Uttaranchal are some of the highest in the world and are comparable to those in Nepal.

---

21 Defined as the highest point achieved on the route
Gradient

The majority of treks in Uttaranchal are a series of walks through scenic valleys, over ridges, through mountain passes and snow-covered glaciers. A few however, are notable, in that they have steeper inclines and are accordingly more difficult to traverse. Based on the assessment carried out in this study, the trek with the highest average incline is the Hemkund trek and the lowest is the Yamunotri-Dodital trek. The gradient for treks in Uttaranchal varies between an 868m rise in incline over a period of one and a half days for the Gangotri-Tapovan trek (an average rise of 235m per day) to a 2,501m incline over 2 days for the Hemkund trek (an average rise of 1,251m per day). Even within this, there are variations - the Roopkund trek is short but includes steep climbs, while the longer Kalindhikhal trek involves long spells of short inclines. However, gradient or rise per day is only an indication of the steepness of the climb and factors such as duration and the consistency of the incline add to the difficulty, or lack of it, of a trek. It can be said that Uttaranchal offers an adequate diversity of treks to potential visitors – from relatively ‘tame’ treks to more challenging ones.

Duration

The treks within Uttaranchal can range between 1.5 days and 16 days. The Kedarnath and Kunjharak treks are the shortest treks in Uttaranchal, with a walking time of about a day and a half. The Chandrasilla trek also falls in this category during the summer but extends to 5-6 days during the winter. The longest trek in Uttaranchal is the Nanda Devi trek that takes 16 days to complete. Other treks in the vicinity of 15-16 days include the Khatling-Masartal trek and the Panch Kedar trek. The average duration of treks in Uttaranchal is in the vicinity of 8 days of actual walking. (While the Mansarovar trek extends to a 30-day period inclusive of travel to the road-head, this trek does not involve any physical activity within the State of Uttaranchal and has therefore not been considered). The wide spread in the duration of the treks in Uttaranchal creates a range of treks that can cater to the hard core adventure trekker to the casual trekker out for a weekend/ 2-3 retreat.

Terrain

The treks of Uttaranchal present the best diversity of the Himalayan terrain. Most of the treks run along the route of rivers and pass through patches of dense jungle of sub tropical flora such as chestnut, willow and walnut to open out into the more thinly populated coniferous pine forests and rhododendron scrublands before opening out into alpine meadows just below the snowline. The typical trek, hugging the edges and ridges of mountains, alternates between dense forest and undergrowth to the banks of rivers to rocky stretches of trail, depending on the altitude. They include such diversity as glacial trails through ice-filled morasses to the snouts of the Pindari and Milam Glaciers, and to boulder-strewn beds of rivers and glaciers. The treks of Har ki Dun and Kalindhikhal meander through flower-laden alpine meadows (the bugyals of Uttaranchal). The Kalindhikhal and Gangoetri-Tapovan treks pass through a wide range of terrain and are most remembered for the variety of the experience. The Middle Himalayan terrain of Uttaranchal creates some of the best climbing conditions in the world.

22 The Nanda Devi trek is currently closed to trekkers
Temperature conditions

While the weather conditions along individual routes is dependant on factors such as elevation and location, the greater Himalayan region of Uttaranchal is characterised by extremely cold winters and a short summer followed by a swift monsoon. The eastern part of the Himalayas receives heavy rainfall while the western part is drier. At elevations above 5,000m, the climate is below freezing temperature and areas are permanently covered with snow and ice. As a result, the treks of Uttaranchal are predominantly summer treks. An exception is the Chandrasilla trek, which is a year long hike and includes a winter ascent to the peak. The Darma Valley trek, in the east of the State, is best undertaken in the monsoon due to the monsoon festival in the region.

Civic infrastructure

In general, the level of infrastructure available along the trekking routes is primitive. While electricity and water connections are available at most road heads, sewage treatment is negligible. Communications facilities are still being developed and in many regions are still not available at the road head (for example, the village of Mori, approximately 20 km away from Taluka, the road head, is the closest STD centre for the vastly popular Har Ki Dun trek).

On the trek routes, the villages have few basic amenities. Electricity and piped water supply are mostly unknown. A few rare villages have developed indigenous water mills (used for irrigation and in some cases to supply water to the villages) have invested in solar panels to generate domestic electricity for a few hours. While the lack of infrastructure is detrimental to the development of the villages, the quality of the trek is enhanced due to the lack of infrastructure. However, the lack of communication facilities at the road heads is problematic for trekking in Uttaranchal.

Number of villages enroute

Once trade and migratory routes, the trekking routes of Uttaranchal are evenly scattered with rural settlements, with the average number of villages enroute being 5-6. It is observed that the villages are more-or-less evenly spaced along the route, with approximately 6-7km between any two settlements. This is also the typical distance that can be covered in either half-a-day by locals or in a day by a trekker. Only in the more remote treks such as Milam, Nanda Devi, Darma Valley and Gangotri-Tapovan is the distance between settlements far greater, especially as they climb further into the mountains. The Hemkund and Valley of Flower treks are relatively densely populated till Ghangria, after which there is a complete lack of settlements. Despite the lack of accommodation along the trail, the presence of regularly interspersed villages along the routes creates an atmosphere of safety and security for the itinerant trekker.

Level of local hospitality

Simple and humble, the villages of Uttaranchal have long been accustomed to pilgrims and trekkers. Often, a schoolhouse or a village house acts as a shelter for the trekker. Given the small numbers of visitors and seasonality of trekking, the villages of the region are not equipped for formalised commercial advantage from the tourist trade. The inhabitants of the villages tend to keep to themselves, and mix with strangers only if necessary. Trekkers in the region, consequently, have little interaction with the locals.

23 For climatic conditions of the State, please see the section entitled Regional Context
Aesthetic qualities of local settlements

The traditional settlement layouts and architecture are manifest in an aesthetic and well-proportioned reference to the natural context. The distinctive wood and stone layered construction is the hallmark of many of the villages en route. Most of the traditional architecture is pleasing to view and blends easily into the natural surroundings. Often houses are distinguished by distinctive woodcarvings adorning the doors and porches. While much of the construction in the region continues in the traditional style, some of the newer architecture has adopted the more recent concrete and galvanised iron sheet construction methods and stands out in stark contrast to the traditional attractiveness of the villages.

In the recent past, shanties and plastic sheet covered shacks have started sprouting along trekking routes, marring the beauty of the trek. While the adventure routes are relatively sparsely populated with such structures, pilgrim routes are crammed with such teashops during the season.

Overlooking the rushing waters of the river, the traditional houses of the beautiful village of Osla on the Har Ki Dun trek forms a scenic foreground to the mountains and alpine meadows further along the path. The unique architecture of the Pantwari village on the Nagtibba trek is also well known in the region.

Unusual in altitude and terrain, the region is also well known for its characteristic architecture and attractive village; a feature that could be enhanced for further development, while eliminating the less attractive shanty construction along the route.

Scenic quality of the trek

While all the treks of Uttaranchal are attractive, each trek is distinguished by a distinct set of scenic experiences - snow-capped peaks of great height, complex geological structures visible on the faces of mountains, river beds, large valley glaciers, deep river gorges and rich vegetation. The diversity of experiences is rich – for example, the more remote treks of Milam, Darma Valley and Gangotri-Tapovan are characterised by sparse vegetation and high altitude glacial swaths, while the Har ki Dun and the Khatling-Masartal trek are characterised by a change in vegetation from lush forests to green and alpine meadows. Renowned for the wide variety of scenic views in the region, both Garhwal and Kumaon have distinctive characteristics, and are attractive to both the thrill taker as well as the spiritual seeker.

Historical / heritage value of the trek

Traditionally associated with some elements of Hindu mythology and the Mahabharata, all treks in Uttaranchal have, at some level, a degree of historical and heritage value associated with them. Some of the treks, such as the Har ki Dun trek are supposed to have been the tramping grounds of the Pandavas when they were in exile. The banks of the Hemkund are associated with the penance of Lakshman and the legend has it that herbs of medicinal value from the Valley of Flowers were used to revive Lakshman. The Kuari Pass trek, also known as the Curzon Trail, is known for its association with Lord Curzon. While Uttaranchal is strongly associated with history, heritage and pilgrimage, most of the treks, including the adventure treks are associated with history and heritage and can be promoted as more than just adventure tourism.
Availability of local produce/ food along the trek

On an average, with the exception of a few villages on the pilgrimage routes and the Valley of Flowers trek (such as Ghangaria) that have developed a capability to cater to the tourist trade over the last few years, the more remote villages in the region are ill-equipped to make food or local produce available to trekkers. Traditionally settlements for herdsmen, these villages have the barest of provisions for their inhabitants and have little to spare. The pilgrimage trails such as the Kedarnath and Yamunotri, in contrast, are better equipped to deal with the food requirements of trekkers, with teashops and dhabas lining the entire route and providing basic vegetarian fare. Dhabas and teashops along some routes have also started catering to the tastes of the trekkers.

Diversity of flora/ fauna along the trek

Most of the treks in Uttaranchal traverse the region just below the snow line, where the vegetation consists of forests of spruce, fir, cypress, juniper and birch, together with rich pastures and meadows. Treks that cross the snow line encounter alpine vegetation that includes mosses, lichens and wildflowers such as blue poppies and edelweiss.

Well known for the diversity of flora and fauna, the Darma Valley, Gangotri-Tapovan and Milam treks run through the entire gamut of flora and fauna in the region. The Valley of Flowers trek is also internationally renowned for the variety of wildflowers and has been converted into a national sanctuary to preserve the quality of the trek. Most of Uttaranchal is still relatively pristine and consequently popular with avid trekkers.

Uniqueness of social and cultural features of local communities along the route

There are certain treks within the region that are particularly known for unique cultural or social qualities. The Kalsi-Lakhamandal trek is associated with the Jaunsari people, who practice both polygamy as well as polyandry: the region around the Roopkund trek is associated with the Nanda Rath Yatra, an important festival in the State, while the Darma valley trek has villages that are associated with a distinctive culture based on the Panchchuli massif. Despite, the existence of unique characteristics of certain societies in the trekking region, the villages tend to maintain their distance from trekkers and trekking expeditions can participate/ observe the festivities of the villages, only if they respect the difference in cultures.

Trail marking

Trek routes in Uttaranchal mostly follow ancient trade and winter migration or pilgrimage routes. While the pilgrimage trails continue to be well used, the migratory routes are slowly but steadily dying out. Consequently, as trek routes, the pilgrimage routes are well worn and relatively easy to follow even without any physical signage enroute. Most of the migratory routes lack any form of physical signage. Amongst the pilgrimage routes, the Gangotri-Gaumukh section of the Gangotri-Tapovan trek has been demarcated by stone stairs along the trail. Amongst the migratory routes, the Kuari Pass trail and the Badrinath route are best marked with stone-carved milestones along the route. While the regular traffic into the hills is necessitating the need for trail markers along the route, an important prerequisite should be the preservation of the natural integrity of the trails. Consequently, it is important to design marker products along the route that blend into the natural setting.
Master plan for development of trekking routes in Uttaranchal

Assistance from local authorities

There is no designated nodal authority for trekking in the State, however, GMVN and KMVN act as the de facto nodal agencies for most matters concerning trekking in the State. Together with them, forest department officials are able to field most queries specific to any trek routes. Other agencies, such as the Mountaineering institutes, are also helpful. Documentation and marketing materials are generally limited (typically to literature printed by GMVN and KMVN, as well as the occasional private publication), in particular trekking maps, which are mostly unavailable. Most trekkers depend on international and Survey of India maps to chart a route. The GMVN and KMVN also organise treks to the region, as does the Youth Hostel Association of India and local mountaineering clubs. However, due to the lack of an organised structure for the dissemination of information on trekking and mountaineering in the State as well as the ad hoc nature of the availability of officials in the region, assistance from local authorities is typically erratic and not dependable.

Availability of guesthouses along the trek

Accommodation along the trek routes is basic and limited to guesthouses owned by the GMVN, KMVN, the Forest Department or the Public Works Department. Most of the treks noted herein do have guesthouses available at a minimum of two of the night halts along the route, however, these are not always available and many need significant upgradation. Accordingly, camping is the preferred option for most independent trekkers. Long treks such as the Milam and Dharma valley treks have particularly poor accommodation options. While the need for a permanent structure, i.e. guesthouses, at every night halt, is not of the utmost importance, it is essential that at least 2-3 camping locations are earmarked at each night halt. Furthermore, the upgradation of the existing facilities should be of utmost importance.

Availability of porters/ logistical support

In the last few decades, with the increase in the numbers of trekkers and pilgrims, villagers on the more popular routes such as Pindari glacier and Har Ki Dun have started supplementing their agricultural income by working as porters and cooks. However, the porters are not organised despite the existence of ad hoc unions and need to be better trained.

Crowding of trails

Assessing the treks in terms of crowding is a difficult task given the absence of data. Estimates indicate that while the pilgrimage routes are the most crowded, some adventure trails are slowly becoming more crowded. According to statistics available, during the six month pilgrimage season, the Kedarnath shrine sees an average of approximately 9,000 pilgrims walking the 13km stretch between Gauri Kund and Kedarnath every day. Similarly, the remaining 3 major shrines also suffer from such overcrowding during the summer months. The lesser pilgrim trails such as the Panch Kedar and Hemkund too are relatively crowded in this period, despite being more arduous.

Adventure trekking too has become increasingly popular and trails such as Har ki Dun and Pindari are relatively crowded during the trekking season. Personal descriptions indicate that the 30km Har ki Dun trek may see almost 50 people per day, and this detracts considerably from the trekking experience. Off late, crowding has become a problem in the region and is compounded on the pilgrimage routes, by the adverse climatic conditions and landslides. In order to preserve the quality of the treks, measures such as those adopted on the Valley of Flowers trek (where overnight camping is not permitted and photography is restricted), may need to be applied to more treks.
Safety and rescue facilities

Officially, safety and rescue facilities are not available for trekking in Uttaranchal. However, the army is occasionally called in to operate air rescues, if necessary. While most trekkers are either part of an organized tour with trained guides or are part of an expedition, and are aware of the physical dangers associated with trekking, there is a need to create a more organized institution for search and rescue in the State.

Quality of the access roads

There are certain roads that are vital to accessing key trekking routes in the State. These are:

- The Haridwar-Chamoli-Badrinath road, with an offshoot to Gauri Kund below the Kedarnath shrine - acts as the main access road for the Badrinath, Kedarnath, Vasukital, Auli, Valley of Flowers, Hemkund, Lata Kharak, Nanda Devi, Kuari Pass and Panch Kedar and Pauri Binsar treks. As a State highway, it is one of the better maintained roads in the State and acts as the most important access route to trekking in Uttaranchal.
- Dehradun-Mussoorie-Tehri-Uttarkashi road - that acts as the base for the Har ki Dun, Gangotri-Gaumukh- Tapovan and Lakha Mandal treks. Average in quality, it has been upgraded till Mussoorie.
- Nainital-Almora-Bageshwar road - is the access road for the Chandrasilla, Milam and Pindari treks in Kumaon. It is poorly maintained.

All these access roads are two-lane highways but need to be improved to handle the current traffic flow in the region.

Distance from airstrip / railhead

Due to the unique mountainous terrain of the State, the closest railheads to the trekking routes in Uttaranchal are those at Dehradun, Rishikesh (Garhwal) and Kathgodam (Kumaon). Being an average of 200-300km away from the main trekking road heads of Uttarkashi, Okhimath, Joshimath, Bageshwar and Pithoragarh, it often takes a whole day to reach the start of the trekking routes. The closest airstrip to the trekking routes in the Garhwal region is the Jolly Grant airfield at Dehradun, 163km away from the road head at Yamunotri, and only has limited flights to the region. The operation of the erstwhile airport at Pant Nagar and the proposed airstrips at Chinyalisaur, Pithoragarh and Naini Saini should ease traffic flow in to the region.

Checkpoints enroute

Checkpoints along trekking routes could serve a variety of functions (for example, regulatory, statistical, rescue, etc.) in the overall development of trekking as a tourism activity in Uttaranchal. Today, however, checkpoints are mostly non-existent. In support of departmental functions, the Uttaranchal Department of Revenue as well as the Forest Department do have check-posts at certain locations – for example, the Forest Department check post at the entry to the Govindghat Sanctuary (to access the Har Ki Dun trek and the Ruinsara trek) and the check post at the mouth of the Valley of Flowers National Park. The Nanda Devi Sanctuary as well as the Binsar Sanctuary is also protected by Department of Forest check posts. Despite being understaffed, these check posts could be upgraded to ensure better data collection and communication within the trekking region.
**Attempt at estimating popularity of routes**

The popularity of a trekking route is subjective and difficult to assess. Due to the informal nature of the trekking industry, the lack of licences and fees, the interconnectivity between the treks and the ever-changing itineraries of trekkers, visitation numbers are almost impossible to document. While statistics are tabulated for the international trekking market, the domestic trekker is not adequately documented. In Uttaranchal, trekking is divided between pilgrimage and adventure trekking.

Based on the statistics available and the opinions of the experts, the most popular adventure treks in Uttaranchal are the Valley of Flowers and Kedarnath Vasukital treks. Listed below is an indicative list of the adventure treks in Uttaranchal, in order of popularity (based on available visitor numbers in 2001):

1. Valley of Flowers
2. Kedarnath-Vasukital
3. Gangotri- Tapovan
4. Har ki Dun
5. Roop Kund
6. Hemkund

(As statistics are not available for the remaining treks, they are ordered based on majority opinions)

1. Uttarkashi- Dodital
2. Pindari Glacier
3. Kuari Pass
4. Milam Glacier
5. Khatling- Masartal
6. Rishikesh Pauri Binsar
7. Nanda Devi

**Grading**

On the basis of the grading system devised in a previous section, the majority of treks in Uttaranchal fall in the Grade II Hard or Grade II category. This indicates that the majority of treks lie at altitudes of 3,000m – 4,000m, have reasonably good access, a slight incline and range in duration between 3-7 days.

**Table 7 - Treks by Grade**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Trek</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade I Soft</td>
<td>Yamunotri, Badrinath, Devi Darshan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade I Hard</td>
<td>Kalsi Lakhamandal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade II</td>
<td>Kedarnath, Chandrasilla, Milam, Lata Panveli, Nagtibba, Darma Valley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade II Soft</td>
<td>Har ki Dun, Kuari Pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade II Hard</td>
<td>Dodital Yamunotri Uttarkashi, Gangotri Gaumukh- Tapovan, Kedarnath-Vasukital, Panch Kedar, Pauri Binsar, Pindari, Roopkund, Valley of Flowers, Hemkund, Khatling Masartal, Kalindhikhal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade III Hard</td>
<td>Nanda Devi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Accordingly, the trekking routes in Uttaranchal offer diversity in terms of difficulty level, ranging from Grade I Soft to Grade III Hard treks and are comparable with the best in the world.

**Conclusion**

Trekking in Uttaranchal can be categorized as either that related to adventure trekking or pilgrimage. While pilgrimage travel is more related to mass tourism, it constitutes the larger segment of trekking tourism to the State. While many of the pilgrimage routes don’t require physical trekking, of the 27 popular and predominant treks identified for this study, at least 7 (Gangotri, Kedarnath, Yamunotri, Badrinath, Chandrasilla, Devi Darshan and Panch Kedar) are pilgrimage treks or extensions of pilgrimage treks.

Most of the adventure treks in Uttaranchal are popular both in the domestic and the international circuit. The majority of treks are located in Garhwal but the more remote and pristine treks are found in Kumaon. While mountains have been categorized based on difficulty there exist various personal ratings for treks. The rating used for this study is based on a comparative assessment of a number of experts. The treks in Uttaranchal offer diversity in difficulty levels as well as character and are comparable to the best in the world.
The Master plan

Introduction

The tourism policy of the State of Uttaranchal has defined the direction for tourism development in the State. The key policy objectives are an enhancement of the GDP and holistic development of human resources, with a special focus on employment generation. The policy also prescribes that there must be balanced development within a comprehensive planning framework, with adherence to principles of sustainable development, and investment by the private sector. These policy principles have served as the guiding framework for the formulation of this master plan.

Conceptual approach to the master plan

In conceptualising this master plan, we have attempted to consolidate our planning approach with that of a marketing strategy, for ultimately, trekking is a ‘product’ that has to be ‘created’ in a manner that is desirable to its defined target markets, so that it brings increasing economic benefit to its ‘producer’ (the State of Uttaranchal and its people). If the product is created correctly, the ultimate success of a marketing strategy will have been achieved; namely, a product that is so powerful in its appeal that it does not have to be ‘sold’ – it finds a ready market and it is the markets that seek it out.

Every product needs a ‘marketing platform’ – simplistically put, a theme based on certain ‘core values’ when it has a long term perspective, or a ‘campaign’ when it has a short term view - on which it is marketed. It is our belief that “sustainability” can be this platform for the marketing of the Uttaranchal trekking product.

The ‘tourism system’

Tourism is considered a functioning system that consists of a demand side (markets) and a supply side (development). Successful tourism is born from successful matching of this demand and supply – providing potential visitors to a region what they need, want and desire. In order to achieve this matching, a ‘gap analysis’ is recommended. Our approach to this master plan follows this methodology, whereby we analyse the ‘gaps’ that exist on the supply (development) side of the tourism system and attempt to prescribe measures whereby consumer expectations may be met. Our assessment of consumer expectations is derived from the extensive research undertaken for this study, the experience of other trekking destinations internationally, and our experience.
The ‘tourism product’

It is understood that the tourism product is not a simple one, but rather a complex one that is an amalgam of a number of elements. The tourism product, ultimately, is meant to be a satisfying visitor ‘experience’. This definition means that the product is influenced not only by the physical setting but also by the variety of facilities, services, activities and experiences that a visitor goes through while visiting a region. These experiences, in turn, are delivered by a number of constituents belonging to the private sector, government, and the local community. All of these factors and players in the tourism product are interdependent on each other and accordingly, success in tourism development is dependent on successful performance by each of these.

In the context of trekking, the trekking product is an amalgam of the five key factors – Existing Trekking Routes set in Scenic Settings, Transportation and Access, Information, Promotion and Support Services – the interrelationship between which is best expressed in the diagram below:

**Figure 5 – The trekking tourism product**

While an assessment of trek routes and their scenic settings has already been undertaken in previous sections of this master plan, the sections that follow will undertake an assessment of the other components of the tourism product (gap analysis) and recommend measures for enhancement of the product along these dimensions.
External influences on the tourism product

While the five elements defined above can be said to ‘intrinsic’ to the tourism product, the tourism system is also influenced by a number of external factors that impact the product or the experience. In the context of trekking, these external factors are expressed in the diagram below:

The master plan that follows will address each of the above external influences that will impact the trekking tourism product, assessing the current context and making recommendations for improvements.
Outline of the master plan

Based on the context of the trekking tourism product defined above, both in terms of the intrinsic product and the external influences on it, this master plan has been formulated as defined in the flow chart below:

Figure 7: Structure of master plan for trekking

Policy level

Currently, the State government has a well-defined policy for tourism development as detailed earlier in this report. However, for the activity of trekking to be developed as a tourism product and to be promoted in a sustainable manner, we believe it is necessary for the State government to notify a special policy on trekking. This policy should base itself on the assessments and recommendations made in this report, as related to various aspects of the trekking experience. In particular, the policy should prescribe the ethos for the following principles and practices:

- Leadership
- Sustainability
- Community participation
The policy should have a long-term perspective (20-30 years) and should provide the philosophy and skeleton around which all government, private sector and community agencies can build their strategies, action plans, and operational practices. It is important that the framework of the policy should envisage the potential demands and impacts that trekking can have on the local community and the State. The policy should in particular address issues of sustainability in the changing international atmosphere of the Rio Earth Summit and Agenda 21 for the Travel and Tourism Industry by the World Tourism and Travel Council (WTTC), the World Tourism Organization (WTO) and the Earth Council.

Organisations and leadership

There is today no designated organisation that provides leadership to trekking within Uttaranchal, at a policy, strategy or administrative level. However, on a de facto basis, the GMVN and KMVN act as the nodal agencies for most matters concerning trekking in the State.

While it cannot be quite said that KMVN and GMVN provide leadership to this function, they do play a variety of significant roles. They play a vital role in disseminating information on trek routes and trekking in the State through electronic (websites) and published materials (brochures, maps, etc.) and also organise treks for interested parties both on a scheduled and customised basis. They have played a key role in the development of tourism infrastructure especially in terms of creation of accommodation facilities and campsites, particularly in areas where the private sector has been unwilling to venture.

There is, nevertheless a multiplicity of roles and agencies that needs to be rationalised if trekking in Uttaranchal has to be responsive to the needs of the market. In addition to KMVN and GMVN, the Forest Department (as well as the Forest Development Corporation) has a central role when it comes to trekking, since most trekking occurs in remote regions administered by the Forest Department. Often, it is they who provide information, accommodations, issue permits and restrict access into conservation zones.

In most countries, there is one nodal authority that provides leadership to such an activity. While marketing is generally handled by the local tourism authority, tourism related to trekking and other ecotourism activities fall under the purview of the local park service (the more popular trekking routes are largely located in protected areas, e.g. ACAP in Nepal, Yellowstone in the United States)

We recommend that:

- The creation of a cell made up of TDB/ Forest Department/ GMVN/ KMVN, (in a suitably re-christened, non-regional, non-parochial form) be given the leadership role in the development and promotion of trekking throughout the State
- The Forest Department be given regulatory responsibility for trekking in the State (described elsewhere in this report but mostly related to access control and adherence to environmental guidelines for the usage of trek routes in the State)
- The creation of a ‘standing committee’ of TDB/GMVN and a senior official of the Forest Department (Deputy Chief Conservator of Forests) be established, that can meet from time to time to discuss and resolve any matters requiring coordination. This ‘standing committee’ should have a nominee from the UP (now Uttaranchal) Van Vikas Nigam, as they too are keen to develop alternate revenue sources from ecotourism. The standing committee should be chaired by the
Chairman, Tourism Development Board and should meet on at least a bi-annual basis, or more frequently if required on a case-to-case basis.

- The creation of a board comprising of both the TDB as well as the Ecotourism cell of the Forest Department, with the Director of the Ecotourism cell designated as Product Manager/Comptroller of Trekking related activities.

**Institutions**

Uttaranchal is potentially in a position of leadership in the arena of trekking and mountaineering because it already has some of the most respected institutions in this field. The Nehru Institute of Mountaineering is located at Uttarkashi, while the ITBP Mountaineering Institute is located at Auli. In the area of environmental studies, forestry and especially Himalayan studies, the State boasts of the following leading institutes that have national international recognition:

- Forest Research Institute, Dehradun (a deemed university)
- Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy
- Forest Survey of India
- Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun
- Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology, Dehradun
- GB Pant Institute of Himalayan Environment and Development, Koi-Katarmal, Kumaon
- GB Pant Kumaon University, Nainital
- HNB Garhwal University, Srinagar
- Indian Institute of Remote Sensing, Dehradun

Many of these institutions are doing pioneering research work in the areas of Himalayan ecology, geology and socio-cultural aspects of the Garhwal and Kumaon peoples.

Thus, at an institutional level the State is actually very well equipped to undertake the development of trekking in a sustainable manner, following the best practices in the field. The challenge, here again, is to harness and synergise these institutions towards the common objective of the sustainable development of trekking.

The prime areas in which these institutions can support the sustainable development of trekking are in the area of information and interpretation.

- Specific ‘special interest’ maps can be produced of specific flora and fauna or geological formations along key trek routes so that the trekking experience is that much more enriching and serves to attract the growing segment of special interest travellers.
- Accurate maps for priority trek routes based on remote-sensing data
- Monographs on unique socio-cultural communities in various parts of the State, or social and lifestyle aspects of local communities
- First person accounts/guides of trek routes
- Monographs highlighting unique aspects of the trek routes in Uttaranchal, for example, historical reviews of the erstwhile trading routes with Tibet and China, the religious significance of the pilgrimage trek routes, etc.

The availability of such information and interpretative sources would enrich the trekking experience multi-fold and can be used effectively in promotion, especially through the electronic media.
Another key area where these institutions can play a key role is in environmental conservation:

- Conservation studies of various trek routes, especially those that are being impacted by over-popularity
- Prescription of environmental guidelines based on their unique knowledge and understanding of local conditions

Yet another area where these and other institutions located within the State can make a contribution to the sustainable development of trekking is in the area of education, training and enhancement of skills and hospitality values of the local community. There are already numerous education and training institutions available within the State that could perhaps take on this responsibility. This subject is dealt with in greater detail in the section below entitled sensitisation, education and training.

**Regulatory mechanisms**

The tourism industry has often been held responsible for the degradation of environments and this charge is often correct. It is this very factor that has, in fact, given rise to the movement towards environmental protection, restoration and sustainability. The intrusive nature of tourism and the fact that trekking occurs in some of the most fragile environments on the planet necessitate the regulation of such activities.

In approaching the subject of regulation, it is vital to remember that trekking by its very nature is free-spirited and adventure oriented and this essence should never be lost through regulation. This view has been repeatedly conveyed to us in interviews with stakeholders. At the same time, there is a general acceptance that controls are required.

Currently, the State of Uttaranchal has a highly limited framework for the regulation of either adventure or pilgrimage trekking, and while environmental degradation cannot be blamed solely on a lack of regulation (social, economic and other factors playing a key role), the ill effects are already visible.

In Uttaranchal, in general, there has been massive deforestation due to population and economic pressures. Land encroachment, increased terrace farming, over-grazing and the demand for wood for fuel and house-building has all lead to decreasing forest cover and consequent environmental impact. Most of all, water resources have been severely depleted. This in turn has resulted in increased soil erosion, loss of productive land and landslides.

Trekking in particular has unwanted impacts. The popularity of some trek routes has resulted in their degradation. Increased trekking activity has increased the number of teahouses, shops and accommodation units (or expansion of existing homes), resulting in increasing land encroachment into sensitive wilderness area, especially on the pilgrimage routes. Whole new settlements have appeared. Wood consumption has increased greatly to cater to the increased visitors, not only for firewood but also for guesthouses. In the process, the architectural character of local settlements is also changing and historic cultural values are being lost. The consumption nature of these visitors too is higher than that of the local community (foods that take longer to prepare, hot showers, etc.). The sanitation and aesthetic qualities along trekking trails is often affected, with human waste, toilet paper and other waste spread carelessly in forests and fields. With this developing situation, clearly some controls are called for.
One of the primary means often employed to control environmental damage and to ensure adherence of environmental guidelines (where they may exist) is access control, exercised through permits. Such a practice exists in Uttaranchal as well, in parts, as detailed below:

- Mountaineers, if part of an international expedition, need to register with the Indian Mountaineering Federation, New Delhi and obtain an approval after paying a peak booking charge. However, Indian expeditions are not forced to comply with this registration.

- For treks up to 4,900m AMSL, international trekkers need no permission; however, for treks above this range, prior permission of the IMF is required. Indian nationals need no permission for trekking above this altitude. This excludes certain restricted areas, defined below.

For any visits by foreign nationals inside the earlier ‘Inner Line’ (for reasons of national security, certain parts of the country, usually border districts, have been declared 'Restricted and Protected Areas' and foreigners need special permits before they can visit places under this category. In the State of Uttaranchal, following areas fall under the restricted and protected area category: Nanda Devi Sanctuary, Niti Ghati, Kalindi Khal (in Uttarkashi district) and the adjoining areas of Milam glacier and the Chakrata region). The local District Magistrate's permission or that of the Central Home Ministry is necessary. Camera permits are also necessary in all such controlled areas for foreign nationals.

- A key area of overlap; that of access to national parks and sanctuaries being controlled by the Forest Department, while at the same time these are often prime trekking/tourism areas. The Department of Tourism has no role to play in this regulation and with opposing agendas of tourism promotion versus conservation, this situation is often adversarial or at best problematic. For example, the Nanda Devi, Binsar Sanctuary and Govindghat (access the Har Ki Dun trek and the Ruinsara treks) Sanctuaries are protected by Department of Forest, camping by pilgrims in the Valley of Flowers is prohibited by the Forest Department. Access to or through these national parks and sanctuaries require permission of the Divisional Forest Officer, who is often located at the closest urban agglomeration.

- For white water rafting by commercial operators, a permit is required from the Forest Department. A user fee is levied for camping on the banks of the river for the year. User fees vary by river and region.

- One of the most necessary but problematic areas of regulation, that of regulation for pilgrimage tourism, is non-existent and needs to be addressed at a policy level.

As is evident, there are access controls extant in Uttarakhand. Also, as stated earlier, there is general consensus amongst the trekking community that controls are necessary, while they should not be overbearing, be irritants or in any manner curb the spirit of trekking.

Internationally, as well, access control is one of the primary means employed to protect environmentally sensitive areas from negative impacts. Bhutan practices a policy of high value tourism by restricting inbound travellers through pricing strategies, while Antarctica has restrictions on the number of visitors. The Annapurna Conservation Zone is often cited as a best example of control on overcrowding and degradation through creation of a conservation zone. Similarly, while not in the context of trekking, the Maldives and several other regions actually have areas entirely closed to tourism.
Another practice internationally is to achieve regulation through regional and spatial planning. This is the case in France, where the 1985 Mountain Law (La Montagne) specifies spatial and regional planning and also regulates protection of natural areas. Under this law, all development in mountain regions has to be approved by a committee comprising representatives of the local municipality, the tourism department, as well as the forest department.

In conceiving possible regulations for safeguarding the State of Uttarakhand from any ill effects from the future growth in trekking, the trekking community was extensively polled for suggestions. Specific recommendations made by them were access control by methods such as pricing or defining new conservation zones in the State, and perhaps developing a lottery system to control trekking on certain over-crowded routes.

We recommend that a primary means to limit any negative impact of trekking in Uttarakhand, the State must promulgate a comprehensive system of regulation that includes the following key components:

- **Access control**
- **Certification and labelling**
- **Guidelines**

It must be understood that all of these components necessarily operate in tandem. Access control not only allows control over visitor numbers but also ensures that they agree to adhere to specified guidelines. Certification provides a medium for control (as many trekkers would use one or another intermediary, service provider or facility), ensures that all service providers and intermediaries follow the specified guidelines and introduces a competitive element where adherence to environmental best practices is a commercial imperative. Finally, user guidelines must be specific and be amenable to enforcement.

**Access control**

We recommend that a sequential process be adopted for access control in Uttarakhand:

- In the first instance, we recommend a review of the conservation zones that exist in Uttarakhand. These might be national parks, sanctuaries, special conservation zones and even ‘reserve forests’ (excluding ‘van panchayats’). The final list of conservation zones should be classified into “conservation zones” (reserve forests), “special conservation zones” (national parks and sanctuaries) and “restricted areas” (highly sensitive areas such as the Nanda Devi Sanctuary, for example, which are only open to people of proven bonafides such as scientific expeditions, conservationists or accomplished trekkers/climbers).

- Thereafter, a system of permits should be promulgated that is applicable to trekking in all these conservation zones. The system of permits should require that any trekking party intending to pass through or stay overnight in any conservation zone require to register with the closest Divisional Forest Office. A reasonable permit fee should be levied on a per person per night basis, but only in the event that the visit requires an overnight stay within any conservation zones (this will ensure that day hikers are not restricted in any manner). While it is not the place of this plan to recommend the magnitude of such fees, we believe a fee of say Rs. 15 per person per night for a conservation zone would be in order, while a fee multiple of four times that amount (say, Rs 60 per person per night) would be valid for special conservation zones. For restricted areas, we would recommend a substantial fee levied as a lump-sum regardless of the size of the group, say Rs 1,000 per night.
We recommend that all proceeds from these permits go into a specially-established conservation fund that is applied exclusively towards the maintenance of trekking routes.

It should be required that trekking groups must carry this permit with them at all times and be able to produce it for inspection when / if asked by any functionary of the Forest (including forest guards) or Revenue Department (typically the patwari) or representative of the local self-government institution or Gram Panchayat (typically the gram pradhan). It is recommended that ex defence personnel be hired to operate under the aegis of the Forest Department to maintain and regulate the trails as well as act as inspectors. Absence of a valid permit should attract a penal levy of twice the applicable amount and failure to pay this should result in eviction from the conservation zone. We do not recommend any legal action on trekkers where valid permits are not available, as that would appear draconian considering the very nature of trekking.

The permit system is the foundation for several other aspects vital to trekking, such as capacity control, search and rescue (discussed later) and planning. With the issuance of permits, it will become feasible to control the number of trekkers in a particular area / route. This can be done through a variety of means, depending on the particular requirements or sensitivity of a region / route – through quotas and the first-come-first-serve principle, or the suggested lottery system. The popularity of routes can also be tracked over a period of time.

This brings us to the absolutely vital need for accurate data on the number of trekkers visiting a particular region. In addition to capacity controls, this is necessary for planning – whether regional, spatial or marketing. While the issuing office will serve as the primary statistics collection centre, various check posts within the conservations area / along the routes should provide additional data as to the actual areas visited / routes traversed by trekkers with permits.

While we appreciate that government resources are limited and constrained, we do recommend that existing check posts be reviewed for their relevance / efficacy and rationalised where necessary. In areas of increasing popularity, it may be necessary to introduce new check posts in the event of the creation of more protected regions.

Certification and labelling

Certification and labelling can be a primary means of ensuring quality and excellence in all aspects of the trekking experience. We recommend that a “Trekker Friendly” label be created by the State government, to be administered by the designated leadership body for trekking, GMVN, or its new avatar. This label can be applied for by any of the following service providers and intermediaries:

- Tour operators and trek organisers
- Trekking equipment suppliers
- Tourist transport agencies
- Hotel and other lodging establishments
- Restaurants and other boarding establishments
- Guest houses or bed-and-breakfast places

Creative conception, introduction and promotion of this label can almost raise it to the level of a sought-after brand, where even tea shops and dhabas along trekking routes can proudly display the “Trekker Friendly” if they meet the minimum standards specified.
The leadership entity should also encourage service providers to obtain international certifications such as the PATA ‘Green Leaf’. While other international certifications, such as ‘Green Globe’, will perhaps be too expensive for individual trekking-related organisations, it would be worthwhile for the Department of Tourism of the Government of Uttaranchal, or GMVN itself, to investigate this certification as it would provide an umbrella to all its future activities and practices. The ‘Green Globe’ certification symbolises better business and better sustainable environments to consumers, companies and communities. The program asks tourism businesses and destinations to make a commitment to improving their environmental performance across a range of indicators and is achieved after an intensive programme of assessment. It has been adopted by regions and districts in an attempt to achieve more effective marketing.

Guidelines

Finally, at the very core of any regulatory mechanisms must be a set of comprehensive guidelines that provide the framework within the boundaries of which all trekking activities must be undertaken – whether planning, development, promotion or monitoring. Appendix 4 of this report provides a tentative set of guidelines in the following areas:

- Trail marking
- Trail maintenance
- Regional planning
- Facility siting and design
- Sanitation
- User practices

Infrastructure

While in general, infrastructure requirements for trekking are limited, infrastructure is a key ‘enabler’ for participation in trekking, as well as for the development and promotion of trekking as a key tourism activity.

Accessibility to trek routes

One of the primary requirements is for trek routes to be accessible. This requires that there be adequate means of mechanical transport (air, rail or road) links to ‘road-heads’ that act as the staging areas for particular trekking routes. Thereafter, of course, pony trails or walking routes might lead to the actual ‘base camps’ as it were for that particular route.

Currently, Uttarkashi and Joshimath in the Garhwal region and Pithoragarh and Munsiyari in the Kumaon region act as the base stations for most treks in the State. Access to these locations, however, typically takes two days of travel time from the closest national or international gateway of New Delhi. Clearly, four days to get to and from the base station for a trek is an impediment in today’s ‘time poor’ lifestyle.

The following section examines the current transport infrastructure available in the State of Uttaranchal to support trekking and makes certain recommendations for improvements.
Air access

Air access to the State is currently restricted to Dehradun, 163km from the road-head at Yamunotri, and this too has limited flights. While there are airfields at Naini Saini and Chinyalisaur in Garhwal and Pithoragarh in Kumaon, these are not operational as yet. Their commissioning will clearly provide a fillip to the trekking ‘industry’. Further, it will bring a significantly higher income profile of tourists to the region. Other locations identified for the development of smaller airstrips include Uttarkashi/ Barkot, Tehri, Rudraprayag, Pant Nagar/ Nainital, Bageshwar/ Almora and at Munsiyari.

One of the primary reasons for Nepal’s success as a trekking destination is in fact, its air infrastructure. For decades now, Nepal has had a network of high-altitude airstrips linked by both unscheduled and charter services comprising of small aircraft such as the Avro, Twin Otter and Pilatus aircraft. For example, even the Everest base camp at Sagarmatha is linked by air.

Rail

As is understandable for a mountain region like Uttaranchal, rail links are limited and only the base towns of Dehradun/Haridwar and Haldwani/Kathgodam in Garhwal and Kumaon regions respectively have train services. Being an average of 200-300km away from the main trekking road heads of Uttarkashi, Okhimath, Joshimath, Bageshwar and Pithoragarh, it often takes a whole day to reach the start of the trekking routes. There is no possibility of extending these links; however, what is feasible is upgradation and enhancement of frequency and seat availability. While Dehradun has an adequate number of trains including a daily Shatabdi service, access to the Kumaon region is constrained by one daily overnight train that has limited capacity.

Roads

In general, road access to road-heads for trekking needs improvement, as is seen from the assessment below of key roads that are vital to accessing trekking routes in the State. These roads are:

- **The Haridwar-Chamoli-Badrinath road**, with an offshoot to Gauri Kund below the Kedarnath shrine - acts as the main access road for the Badrinath, Kedarnath, Vasukital, Auli, Valley of Flowers, Hemkund, Lata Kharak, Nanda Devi, Kuari Pass and Panch Kedar and Pauri Binsar treks. As a State highway, it is one of the better maintained roads in the State and acts as the most important access route to trekking in Uttaranchal. However, prone to regular landslides, it requires constant repair and needs to be upgraded in the higher passes.

- **Dehradun-Mussoorie-Tehri-Uttarkashi road** - that acts as the base for the Har ki Dun, Gangotri-Gaumukh- Tapovan and Laka Mandal treks. This road can be described as being average in quality, although it has been upgraded till Mussoorie. It is recommended that the road be upgraded beyond Mussoorie, especially up to Uttarkashi.

- **Nainital-Almora-Bageshwar road** - is the access road for the Chandrasilla, Milam and Pindari treks in Kumaon. While adequate for the region, it is prone to landslides and is poorly maintained. It is recommended that the road be surveyed for appropriate repairs as well as landslide prevention measures.

All of these access roads are two-lane highways but need to be improved to handle the current traffic flow into the region.
Infrastructure at road-heads

Currently, Uttarkashi and Joshimath (in Garhwal) and Pithoragarh (in Kumaon) act as the base towns for trekking in the State and support facilities and services at these centres are relatively organized. However, when it comes to road-heads for specific trekking routes, much improvement is required in the availability of communications, accommodations, food supplies, porters and ponies. These road-heads also need to be equipped to act as nodal points for search and rescue missions as may be required (dealt with elsewhere). Further, the level of environmental awareness at these road-heads is considerably less-than-optimal and initiatives need to be taken to enhance these standards. Other road heads identified for improvement include Sankri, Chakrata, Kharsali, Gangotri, Ghuttu, Gauri Kund, Thalisain, Badrinath, Malari, Dhakuri, Munsiyari, Tawaghat and Loharkhet.

Civic infrastructure

Civic infrastructure here refers to the aspects of communications, water, power and fuel, and sanitation. While it is somewhat beyond the scope of this master plan to address infrastructure issues, we comment briefly on the current state of infrastructure in the region as it impacts trekking and make some suggestions for improvements.

In general, the level of civic infrastructure in towns in the region is poor, at road-heads it is marginal, while on the trek routes it can be said to be primitive. The lack of civic infrastructure in towns in the region is evident from the high levels of civic pollution in the key towns and road heads of the region - Dehradun, Haridwar, Rishikesh, Joshimath, Tehri, Pithoragarh and Uttarkashi. Most of these towns have not had the benefit of town planning and lack sewerage, sanitation and other municipal services. Population growth and vehicular pollution have compounded the problems.

While the improvement of civic infrastructure is not imperative to the development of trekking in the State, it will improve the conditions for the higher end traveller. It is recommended that initiatives be started to coordinate the spread of existing civic infrastructure development projects operating in the State to road heads and regions more popular with trekkers.

Water

Currently, municipal areas such as the Mussoorie, Nainital and Dehradun are supplied by piped water. Other smaller towns and villages do have a system of piped water connections provided by the Jal Sansthan, however, these are expensive to obtain and most village-folk cannot afford them today. As a result mostly illegal connections exist or natural water sources are tapped and piped into homes or to a central location close to the settlement. With much of Uttaranchal having severe water shortages, especially in summer months, water supply is a key infrastructure constraint.

Some initiatives have, however, been taken. The transfer of the responsibility of water supply from the Uttar Pradesh State to the new Uttaranchal State has resulted in more focused attention to this problem. Further, the World Bank-sponsored Swajal Scheme for developing a community-based, demand- driven, rural water supply and sanitation programme, which is widely regarded as having achieved considerable success in the State.

At a macro-level, the State needs to hasten the process of integrated watershed management in the natural drainage basins of the region, as it the best, if not the only way of managing this resource over the longer term, while at the same time having beneficial effects on the overall environment of the region, such as prevention of soil erosion, landslides and desertification, while enhancing forest cover.
Various departments such as the Watershed Management Directorate and the Uttaranchal Vikas Vibhagh are already working on this process in the State.

At a micro-level, despite considerable rainfall, there is a surprising lack of rainwater harvesting in the region and this needs to be encouraged through a dynamic movement spearheaded by the government. Perhaps the first initiatives to be taken by the government for this purpose should be construction of one rainwater harvesting and storage system in each village, followed by encouragement of personal rainwater harvesting systems through subsidies and / or micro-credit schemes.

**Sanitation**

Sanitation and sewage are utilities that are non-existent in the State. Municipalities are responsible for garbage disposal in certain towns but rural and pilgrimage areas have little in terms of sanitation procedures. While creation of sewage and sanitation utilities and municipal services in the State is an ambitious task and is perhaps several years away, the State government can take interim measures through the propagation of innovative ecological sanitation systems.

Sanitation on trek routes is addressed under the guidelines placed in Annexure 4

**Power**

Uttaranchal is a power surplus State in terms of power generation24 and the State is endeavouring to achieve 100% electrification of the 15,671 villages by 2007. The actual distribution and delivery systems in the State, however, need much improvement, especially at key trekking road-heads.

The State has taken considerable initiatives in promoting solar power, through the availability of subsidies, however, solar power has still not be embraced to any substantial extent.

**Fuel**

Both on the trekking routes as well as in the rural areas, wood is used as fuel. In this context, the introduction of subsidised efficient wood burning stoves in rural areas and greater availability of cooking gas in the larger settlements will greatly help reduce the demand for wood.

**Support services**

Trekking is a unique activity in that it is highly individualist, requires little infrastructure save for accessibility, and being primarily outdoors as well as ‘back to nature’ in its ethos, requires few physical facilities as are typically required by other tourists. While infrastructure is an ‘enabler’ for trekking, there are certain support services that fulfil certain basic human needs, such as food, or may be required by certain segments of trekkers depending on their profile or on the terrain they are traversing, such as porterage and accommodations. In addition, trekking as an adventure activity that often tests the limits of human endurance is conducted in remote regions, and often carries an element of risk in terms of getting lost, illness and accidents, and accordingly, search and rescue services are necessary.

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24 http://powermin.nic.in/uttaranchal.htm. According to the 2001 MoU between the State and Central governments, 12,384 or 79 % of the total number of villages in the State stand electrified.
This section of the master plan assesses the current state of trekking support services in Uttaranchal and makes recommendations in five specific areas:

- Trail marking
- Food availability
- Accommodation
- Search and rescue services
- Security

Trail marking

Trek routes in Uttaranchal mostly follow ancient trade and winter migration or pilgrimage routes. While the pilgrimage trails continue to be well used, the migratory routes are slowly but steadily dying out. Consequently, as trek routes, the pilgrimage routes are well worn and relatively easy to follow even without any physical signage enroute. Most of the migratory routes lack any form of physical signage. Amongst the pilgrimage routes, the Gangotri-Gaumukh section of the Gangotri-Tapovan trek has been demarcated by stone stairs along the trail. Amongst the migratory routes, the Kuari Pass trail and the Badrinath route are best marked with stone-carved milestones along the route.

Trail marking is important if the activity of trekking has to be popularised. At the same time, it must be remembered that any signage in pristine natural settings such as trek routes is an imposition on nature. It is necessary therefore that any trail marking be designed and use materials that is in complete consonance with the setting.

We recommend that sensitively designed and timeless signage be developed in stone. Alternately etched wooden boards could be used, although they will tend to decay with time and will tend to get pilfered for firewood.

Food

On an average, with the exception of a few villages on the pilgrimage routes and the Valley of Flowers trek (such as Ghangaria), that have developed a capability to cater to the trekkers over the last few years, the more remote villages in the region are ill-equipped to make food or local produce available to trekkers. Traditionally settlements for herdsmen, these villages have the barest of provisions for their inhabitants and have little to spare. The pilgrimage trails such as the Kedarnath and Yamunotri, in contrast, are better equipped to deal with the food requirements of trekkers, with teashops and dhabas lining the entire route and providing basic vegetarian fare. Dhabas and teashops along some routes have also started catering to the tastes of trekkers.

There is perhaps little that can be done institutionally to improve these conditions, for they will develop in keeping with demand. However, ensuring adequate supply to provision stores in remote areas will help meet the basic needs of most trekkers.

Accommodation

Trekkers typically do not require buildings to spend the night in, since camping out is very much the norm for outdoors-people. However, it is beneficial to have some locations along a route that are permanent structures, as these can serve as shelters in the event of inclement weather, act as beacons during search and rescue missions and certain segments of trekkers (older age groups, for example) may wish to have relatively more comfortable accommodations at certain points. Long treks such as
the Milam and Darma valley treks have particularly poor accommodation options towards the farther edge of the trek.

This section examines the current state of both permanent guesthouses along trekking routes, as well as the status of campsites.

Most of the treks identified herein have guesthouses available at a minimum of two of the night halts along the route. These are owned and operated by the GMVN, KMVN, the Forest Department or Public Works Department. Those operated by the Forest and Public Works departments are not always available and are made available only if not required by departmental or other government officials. Many of these guesthouses are very basic in nature. Some are devoid of bedding and food service, or even cooking facilities. Due to the remote nature of the locations, much of the staff is unavailable. In general, hygiene levels are low.

The following measures are required vis-à-vis the existing guesthouses along trekking routes:

- Existing Forest and PWD guesthouses must be integrated with the tourism booking system and made available to trekkers on a first-come-first served reservation basis through GMVN offices. Currently, usage of the forest and PWD guesthouses is on an ad hoc basis, depending on availability. Where available, they must be upgraded to meet at least the very basic of standards in terms of physical upkeep and maintenance, the availability of bed and bath linen and cooking facilities.

- Wherever new guesthouses are to be created, or existing ones are to be renovated, this should be done in an environmentally and aesthetically-sensitive manner using local materials and local architectural and constructions styles that are endemic to the region, such as stone and wood, with sloping roofs. The interiors should use local fabrics, tapestries and floor matting. Currently, all guesthouses (except for those constructed during the British Raj) are typical PWD brick and concrete box-like structures.

- Typically, the guesthouses are run by local persons (in many cases, the government appointed managers of the guesthouses desert their posts soon after they are appointed). Due to the lack of adequate education, awareness and training, these local persons operate the premises to minimal standards. A programme of sensitisation, education and training is essential to develop skills amongst these caretakers in aspects such as housekeeping, cookery, and basic service skills. They could also be trained to guide treks in the region. The subject of capacity building amongst the local community is dealt with later in this master plan.

- Accordingly, camping is the preferred option for most independent trekkers. Currently, campgrounds are in existence along most trekking routes. However, many trails such as the Khatling–Masartal, Tapovan, Vasukital, Nanda Devi, at Ghangria, Pauri-Binsar, and Dodital are routes that require specific siting of camps so as to avoid environmental damage due to random siting of camps. This should be undertaken by the forest department in response to overcrowding on these trails.
It is also desirable to have two-three camping locations at each night halt. The basic requirements for camping sites include the following:

- Proximity to a water source, although the site should be a slight distance away from the stream to avoid pollution
- Adequate distance from the trekking route, to allow for privacy of both trekkers as well as campers
- Flat terrain, preferably in a forest clearing / alpine meadow
- Proximity to source of fuel wood (though stripping of wood for fuel wood is banned in some parts of the world)
- Sanitation facilities can be provided in the form of pit toilets

**Maintenance of trekking routes**

Despite guidelines and controls, trekking routes do require a certain degree of maintenance in terms of both cleanliness, as well as restoration and repair of routes due to climatic damage. An institutional mechanism will be required for this purpose, and based on experience elsewhere, most particularly in Nepal, community-based models have been found to be the most efficacious. In fact, both trail maintenance and security (personal safety and security) of trekkers is best administered by the same institutional mechanism.

**Personal safety and security**

While trek routes in the State have generally been safe for trekkers, in the past two years, there have reportedly been fatalities and as a result there is some concern amongst the trekking community about the state of security in the region as it impinges on personal safety. This concern is especially valid for international visitors.

The recommended institutional mechanism for both trail maintenance and security is to appoint retired Indian Army jawans, of which there are numerous in this region, on a retainer, with designated responsibility (and accountability) for a certain length of trail (day length trek). These retainers can be labelled ‘trail custodians’ (or similar appropriate terminology). The retainer, which can amount to say Rs. 500 per month, should be borne out of permit proceeds charged by GMVN. The Trail Custodian will be the recipient of ‘first information’ of any event or incident that threatens the personal safety of a trekker, (this role will be provided where a police station is not in the immediate vicinity), and this information will immediately be forwarded personally by the custodian to the nearest police station, after taking any emergency action on a discretionary basis (for which guidelines can be drawn up by the Uttaranchal Police as required). The custodian should ideally be trained in first aid.

For purposes of trail maintenance, the retainer should cover basic trail cleanliness (such as clearance of garbage and other ‘evidence of human use’). For any repair, restoration or alternate trail marking (in the event of landslides, etc.), the custodian will be required to have this executed through casual labour supervised by him as per a pre-determined budget, approved after inspection by the nearest GMVN officer. Ideally, this inspection of trails should be done prior to the commencement of the trekking season and after the conclusion of the monsoon.

**Search and rescue**

Efficient and timely search and rescue mechanisms are critical to success in the development of ecotourism and trekking in any region, for despite the risk-seeking nature of trekking, personal safety and emergency aid are of paramount importance to a trekker and his kin.
Officially, safety and rescue facilities are not available for trekking in Uttaranchal, although the army is called in occasionally to operate air rescues. In the Indian Himalayas in general, mountain rescue on trekking routes as well as for mountaineering expeditions is co-ordinated by two agencies - Indian Mountaineering Foundation (IMF), and a private organization, East West Rescue, based in New Delhi. Both organisations also co-ordinate search and rescue operations with the Indian Air Force, the primary rescue operation. The rescue co-ordination of the IMF is largely restricted to mountaineering expeditions, since all mountaineering expeditions ascending peaks higher that 4,900m need to register with the IMF. East West Rescue co-ordinates search and rescue for all persons that can afford the rescue fee, which is generally very expensive. East West caters predominantly to the international trekkers and climbers, who are generally insured by international travel and adventure insurance packages. (Indian trekkers and climbers do not have access to such insurance cover, an institutional issue that needs to be addressed by financial bodies operating within the country.).

There are several international models for search and rescue establishments available. One of the better models is the New Zealand Alps SAR Search and Rescue operation. The basic structure of this search and rescue organisation is a ‘regional management group’, headed by the Department of Police. It has representatives of the police, NZ Land SAR regional representative, the Tourism Industry Federation, NZ Guides Association, Regional Aircraft Users Group and local Area Committees. The actual search and rescue teams consist of 2-3 people, with both helicopter operation and medical abilities. A dedicated team is allotted to an area within a region; for example, the Mt Cook area has four such teams. Lately, the search and rescue operation is being handed over to the local community, as this is now considered a better approach.

In some North American Mountain areas, trekkers and hikers are required to lodge their trekking plans at trailheads. Cellular and satellite phones are recommended.

During the interviews with stakeholders, several suggestions were made by the trekking community for improvement in the existing conditions for search and rescue in Uttaranchal. These include:

- Encouraging Indian and international insurance agencies to provide trekking and travel insurance to Indians
- Open restricted airspace to licensed search and rescue operators (East West still has to obtain permission from the Indian Air Force)
- Train the local population in local level search and rescue methods

For Uttaranchal, we recommend that a State Government-level permanent Search and Rescue Management Group (SRMG) be established, headed by the Police Department, with representatives of GMVN/ KMVN, the Defence, Police, Revenue, Forest, Public Works, Roads and Tourism Departments. The SRMG should have two regional SRMGs, one each for the Garhwal and Kumaon regions, and these in turn should have District-level search and rescue teams for each high altitude District. The teams should comprise individuals selected carefully for their intimate knowledge of the remotest regions of their territory, trekking/climbing experience, and medical training (to the extent possible). Since this facility will be created at a State level, it will be available for more that basic search and rescue for trekking and mountaineering expeditions but can also be available for other State level calamities such landslides, floods, earthquakes etc.

On occurrence of an incident, the first information is likely to come to the nearest Trail Custodian, or in his non-availability, the nearest Police or Forest post, Gram Pradhan or Revenue office (Patwari, etc.). In any event, a standard operating procedure should be established that the recipient of first
information should immediately inform the closest District-level SRMG rescue team (by the best means available), as well as the central SRMG.

In order to operationalise this search and rescue mechanism and ensure timely response, a central control room / help line should be established at the central GMVN office (the nodal agency for all trekking related aspects in Uttaranchal), which should be manned on an all day basis (twenty four hours a day, seven days a week). Immediately on receipt of an incident report from the field, the control room should immediately inform the head of the SRMG, and thereafter, it will be the SRMG’s responsibility to coordinate action through its regional and district-level establishment.

In order for any search and rescue establishment to be successful, timely response is crucial and this in turn is dependent on efficient and fail-proof communications. While we are unaware of Uttaranchal State government plans for upgrading State (or police) communications, we are aware that considerable effort is being put into the establishment of state-of-the-art public communications infrastructure throughout the State as a vital ingredient to development. This includes fibre-optic cable links. The recent expansion of cellular services by agencies is also revolutionising communications in even remote regions of India. The SRMG mechanism in Uttaranchal must invest in such state-of-the-art technology as available, linking the central control room, central SRMG unit and all District-level rescue teams on a real-time basis.

In addition to the above, comprehensive and systematised procedures (‘standard operating procedures’ or SOPs) must be implemented by the SRMG for filing of incident reports and follow up action.

**Conclusion**

The master plan has been based on the existing tourism guidelines and policy of the State of Uttaranchal. Based on the key policy enhancement of GDP and the holistic development of human resources, with special focus on employment, the master plan conceptualises trekking as a product, with a need for a marketing platform. With tourism as a system, the master plan attempts to analyse the gaps between demand and supply between the tourism set-up and the potential visitation. In the context of trekking, the product is indicated as an amalgam of five key factors- the existing trekking routes themselves, transportation and access, information, promotion and support services. The support services in turn are identified at a policy level, as a product, as components of leadership and organization, as regulatory issues as well as local community issues. All these factors finally build up into a marketing strategy.
Host community issues and capacity building

Chapter 13 of Agenda 21- Managing Fragile Ecosystems: Sustainable Mountain Development states that the fate of mountains may affect more than half of the world's population, and that particular attention must be paid to mountain resources, especially water and biodiversity. It recognises that mountain tourism is an important component in sustainable mountain development and conservation. Consequently, it is essential that the local community of the Uttaranchal Mountains be consulted during the course of any development in the area.

Host community issues

Current local participation in the operation of the trekking industry

Although trekking (and tourism) has been a key activity in Uttaranchal for many decades, there is in fact, little association or participation by the local community with trekkers. This can perhaps be explained by a number of factors. First, the fact that the trekking industry is largely centred out of Delhi and most trekking is organised through Delhi-based tour operators, with the involvement of the local community being limited to the hire of porters and horses. The still relatively small numbers of trekkers has also not provided enough economic or commercial incentive to the local community to participate more actively in the operation of the industry. Often the closest interaction with the local community comes when a schoolhouse or village house is used for a night halt on a non-commercial basis.

Measures to enhance the local participation in the operation of the trekking industry are therefore urgently called for and can be created can improving awareness levels about tourism.

Hospitality of the local community

In general, the inhabitants of remote villages in Uttaranchal tend to keep to themselves and mix with strangers only when necessary. There is no overt display of hospitality, or inquisitiveness, as seen elsewhere in India. At the same time, they are forthcoming when approached. However, in some of the villages on the more popular trekking routes in the State, trekkers are sometimes approached for medicines and cash, a phenomenon that has started only in the last few years.

Accordingly, what is required is a two-pronged approach, through sensitisation, education and training in hospitality values on the one hand, and illustration of the potential commercial advantage through participation in the trekking industry on the other.

Commercial opportunities for the host community

As explained, the only economic benefit the local community today enjoys is the renting of pack-horses to trekkers, or acting as porters. In some instances, there are ‘hotels’ that are used by trekkers. Of course, teas shops and dhabas en route do benefit from some usage by trekkers. Yet there are considerable economic benefits that can accrue to the local community, especially in the form of employment opportunities and entrepreneurship, provided these opportunities are first explained to the local community, and an enabling environment then provided for either education and training, or through credit schemes.
Equity issues

During the development of the trekking industry, and the attendant requirement for access controls, regulations and environmental guidelines, it must never be forgotten that these lands 'belong' to local communities and have served as sources for fodder and firewood, as pasture and food-collection grounds since times immemorial. Controls that, therefore, limit local community access to these lands are thus inequitable.

Where certain hard decisions are required on the introduction of controls, structured compensation in some form must be considered – e.g. a certain proportion of proceeds from permit revenues to be deployed into provision of basic civic infrastructure at the village level, or for primary healthcare clinics, or even schools.

Participation in local planning

Concomitant with the issue of equity is the issue of local participation in decision-making. In arriving at any decisions that impact the livelihood or lifestyle of local communities, local participation in decision-making must be ensured.

Formal techniques of participatory planning and action methodology must be implemented as a policy. Such techniques must adopt the ethos that such planning is dealing with community assets, and must therefore use the communities themselves as project sites. To the extent possible, future development plans in the region must be created in conjunction with local communities and encourage activities that can be co-financed by community members. Some of the local level participatory activities include improved garbage management, tree plantations in local settlements, visitor education and promotional materials, and conducted trail repairs.

Capacity building

Capacity building is the business of equipping all actors to perform effectively in their respective spheres of operation, and in working in partnership with others. It is an essential component of both empowerment and enabling and should be a continuous process that involves all stakeholders. Capacity building is generally considered to comprise largely of human resource and institutional development and typically needs to be undertaken at various levels of government as well as non-governmental agencies.

Sensitisation, education and training

In terms of employment, there are specific skills that are required by trekking groups / expeditions. These are, for example, high-altitude porterage (HAP), cooking for high altitude climbing, mountain and trekking guides, nature interpreters/naturalists, safety and rescue, etc. In addition to these specific skills, training is also required in such basic aspects as hospitality, service skills, hygiene, language and basic civic/social skills. Extreme sensitivity to environmental issues and awareness of environmental guidelines is also required.

Vocational skills’ training is required in each of these areas. While the subject of tourism is taught at two universities at Uttaranchal, there are few vocational skills training available. Accordingly, we recommend that two regional skills training centres be established, one each in Garhwal and Kumaon, and ideally located at Uttarkashi in Garhwal and Pithoragarh in Kumaon. Ideally, these should be dovetailed into any existing institution such as the Nehru Mountaineering Institute. These centres
Master plan for development of trekking routes in Uttaranchal

should conduct well-designed skills training courses aimed at the trekking industry lasting two-weeks each, with one session being held every three months. Publicity of these courses can be ensured through the activity of NGOs, which is dealt with later.

Alongside skills training, it is essential that the local host community along trek routes is oriented and sensitised in host community values. These values include recognising trekkers as contributing economically to the region and hence being welcoming to them, and being hospitable. Basic orientation to the needs of trekkers in areas such as food habits, cleanliness and hygiene would perhaps encourage both trekkers to use facilities offered by the local community, as well as encourage the local community to offer facilities of appropriate standards to trekkers for commercial advantage. Similar initiatives are being operated in Ladakh, Nepal and Bhutan, in which local non-government organizations are conducting awareness trips for locals in neighbouring countries.

Entrepreneurship and micro-credit schemes

Simultaneously with the process of orientation and sensitisation by the government / NGOs, much effort must be put into awareness creation for entrepreneurship opportunities, for projects and facilities as outlined above.

The nature of many of the potential project opportunities is such that they are micro projects in many respects – PCOs, provisions stores, teashops, dhabas, home stay or bed-and-breakfast type accommodations, small hotels and lodges, etc. Such projects are best funded through micro-credit schemes. We appreciate that a micro-credit scheme cannot be formulated for trekking routes alone. However, it would be advisable for there to be a State-wide scheme for micro-credit, and especially for the tourism sector.

Investments into infrastructure

In order to improve and conditions for trekking in the State, it is imperative that additions and improvements be made to existing infrastructure. However, in the current financing scenario in the country, less funding for infrastructure is available from governmental agencies and increasingly funding is being sourced through a variety of either private, joint public-private structures, or user-charges based mechanisms. The lack of government funding for a non-priority sector such as trekking will be a barrier to the future development of this sector. Yet, the identification of potential sources for development of this sector is vital for the long-term, sustainable development of this sector. This in turn will attract additional private sector investment into specific commercial projects.

Funds for investment into trekking infrastructure can be raised initially and on an ongoing basis from certain direct revenue sources that include:

- Privatisation of guesthouses
- Privatisation of wayside amenities
- Parking Fees
- Access Fees
- Expedition fees

A model should be devised whereby a certain proportion of the direct revenues / fees collected from the above sources goes back into development of infrastructure and facilities for trekking. One of the best examples of such a scheme is the ‘pathkar’ scheme of the Agra Development Authority that uses a certain proportion of the gate collection to the Taj Mahal for the maintenance and upgradation of the environs of the Taj Mahal and Agra Fort.
Networking

In order to create a better understanding and appreciation of tourism and trekking, as well as the needs both of the industry as well as of conservation, it is essential to promote study/exchange tours for the local community and other key stakeholders to neighbouring Nepal and Bhutan. Such exposure tours will also serve to foster alliances and relationships with international agencies and individuals and create a kinship that transcends borders. It is also essential to promote policy dialogue within neighbouring nations and states as well as to encourage biological monitoring and conservation in neighbouring regions. Such alliances result in a cross-fertilisation of successful ideas, concepts, best practices, as well as of business itself.
Marketing strategy

As has been noted earlier, this master plan for the development of trekking in Uttaranchal has been conceived as an institutional plan. As such, in itself it is a marketing plan since it seeks to achieve enhanced revenues for the State from increased tourism, through the creation of a product that finds a ready market. The creation of a product that meets the needs of defined market segments in terms of quality, convenience and environmental best practices is at the very core of this plan.

Background

This master plan has already defined the ‘specifications’ of the trekking product for Uttaranchal in all its dimensions. This section seeks to establish a marketing vision and positioning for this product in the world market, and provides a broad direction for the marketing and promotion of this product in a competitive environment.

Situation analysis

It would be pertinent to begin the definition of the marketing strategy with a recapitulation of the strengths and weakness of the Uttaranchal trekking product.

Strengths

According to experts, despite the lack of seven of the eight highest peaks in the world, the natural resources and attractions of Uttaranchal are on a level, if not superior, to those of Nepal and Himachal Pradesh. While the region may not today be as popular as Nepal has become for trekking, it has long been a destination for mountaineering and trekking. Further, it is popular with both international and domestic visitors, and for adventure as well as pilgrimage trekking. The particular natural features and strengths of the region – in terms of peaks, glaciers, rivers, valleys and biodiversity regions - have already been defined elsewhere and do not need to be repeated.

A further strength, however, is the fact that vast regions of the State, being underdeveloped and underexposed, are still pristine. This is particularly true in the Kumaon region. This factor allows for relatively more exclusive trekking in remote, untouched regions.

A key strength of the region is the presence of institutions such as the Nehru Mountaineering Institute, together with a diversity of research and academic institutions associated with the environment. The Forest Department of Uttaranchal, with their interest in ecotourism, itself is a key strength.

Basic human resources experienced in the trekking industry too are available, be they guides or porters. Similarly, basic infrastructure and facilities are available at road-heads and along trek routes. While much development needs to be done to achieve satisfactory standards, facilities do exist and provide the seeds for a growing industry.

There is generally a high degree of awareness of trekking opportunities in Uttaranchal amongst key market segments that would be interested in trekking. For example, even school groups would know of Valley of Flowers or the Pindari glacier, while people with a spiritual inclination clearly know the pilgrimage routes.
The State has seen no political or security instability since independence and hence is perceived as being safe.

**Weaknesses**

The greatest weakness in the region is environmental and civic degradation due to excessive use, lack of sensitivity and guidelines and population pressure. This is greatly exacerbated by pilgrimage trekking itself.

There are vast gaps between current conditions and aspiration standards in the areas of institutional mechanisms, human resources, infrastructure, facilities and accessibility in particular, and these too have been explained elsewhere with measures for improvement.

**Competition**

As a destination, Uttaranchal is most attractive as a trekking destination. Consequently, its largest competitor will be Nepal. As compared to other trekking destinations, the most famous being neighbouring Nepal, Uttaranchal does not have peaks and regions of iconic stature – such as Mt. Everest or Kunchenjunga and its only ‘brand name’ asset is the Nanda Devi, together with the Ganga River and perhaps the Valley of Flowers.

In general, despite its qualities, the region does not receive as many accolades as other Himalayan regions, for its trek routes from a competitive perspective. Based on the literature search conducted, it was ascertained that while many of the treks of Uttaranchal are mentioned in various documents as high quality treks, only a few are actually considered comparable to world class treks in Pakistan and Nepal. The only trek in Uttaranchal that receives mention in an independent listing of the best treks in the world is the Gangotri-Tapovan trek or the ‘Source of the Ganges’ Trek. Some of the treks mentioned are:

- Base of Tirich Mir, Pakistan
- Around Nanga Parvat, Pakistan
- On the Baltoro glacier to K2, Pakistan
- Source of the Ganges, Garhwal, India
- In the Annapurna Sanctuary, Nepal
- Mustang
- Khumbu valley, Nepal
- Base of Chomolhari
- Kafir Valley, Pakistan- Afghanistan
- Through the Biafo and Hispar Glaciers, POK
- Zanskar, Ladakh, India
- Around Mount Kailash, Tibet, China
- Around Annapurna, Nepal
- Langtang and Helambu valley, Nepal
- Rongbuk and Khabshung valley, base of Everest, Nepal

At the same time, there is near unanimous opinion amongst experts that the treks of Khatling Masartal, Milam Glacier and the Roopkund match many of the treks cited above, especially the acclaimed Annapurna sanctuary trek above.

It should be remembered that as an ecotourism pastime, trekking in Uttaranchal would receive competition not just from trekking around the world, but also from other ecotourism types. In this context, it will face competition particularly from destinations such as Belize, Galapagos Islands, Kenya and others.

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25 Source: Steve Razzetti, Top Treks of the World
Opportunities

Given this assessment, certain opportunities present themselves.

Nepal as a trekking paradise is currently threatened due to the Maoist uprising and the negative perception following the royal massacre. Prior to 2000, the nation received 160,000 trekking visitors, 43% of its international tourists (in comparison, Uttaranchal receives only 54,000 international visitors). The region also saw high rates of growth, exceeding 8.8%. Similarly, the mountain regions of Pakistan are threatened by terrorism and counter-terrorism activities that are today receiving widespread coverage in the international press.

Himachal Pradesh in India receives approximately 91,500 international visitors; however, it is not known how many participated in trekking. Regardless, this is still higher than international visitation to Uttaranchal. Recent security issues in Himachal Pradesh might create a scenario in which Uttaranchal can attempt to capture a greater share of this market.

Pilgrimages are well established in Uttaranchal and the State is more than well placed to be the leader in this trekking type. With this, a market segment focus can emerge, with largely volume-driven pilgrimage trekking by the domestic market, and high-yield exclusive trekking by the international market.

The State’s location, bordered as it is with Nepal and Himachal Pradesh, provides a unique opportunity to promote trekking in an integrated trekking region.

Threat

The key threat to Uttaranchal is not competitive, but rather the risk of excessive damage to the environment and settlements due to excessive use, particularly by the pilgrim market. Access and transportation within the State is also a detriment to international tourism.

Conclusions on market opportunity

In conclusion, Uttaranchal can position itself as a safe, secure, pristine and naturally diverse destination for trekking (as against mountaineering) for both the volume domestic market and a high-yield international market.

Vision statement

Uttaranchal can adopt the following vision statement to guide its trekking strategy:

“To become the leading trekking destination in the Himalayas and in Asia”
Mission and strategy statement

The mission and strategy statement for the development and promotion of trekking in the State of Uttaranchal should be:

“To promote Uttaranchal as the leading trekking destination in Asia and in the Himalayas through providing the highest quality trekking experience that meets the expectations of visitors in a sustainable manner”

This would give the strategy a consumer-centric focus, while addressing the diverse requirements of both the key markets, domestic and international. It would provide focus to product development across all dimensions, while respecting the principles of sustainability.

Action initiatives

Setting goals

The first step in developing the marketing strategy should be the setting of realistic goals. We recommend that a goal be set to double the number of international trekkers visiting the State over a period of five years. (Current figures are unknown due to the absence of any data collection mechanism). While aimed at creating a niche market, the goals should be complementary to the India Product, emphasising the hospitality of the region in addition to the natural attractions.

Identification of market segments

Key to developing a marketing strategy will be the identification of market segments based on market research of both existing trekkers to the State as well as potential trekkers. Based on the limited data available, it would appear that the primary international markets to be targeted should be Western Europe, in particular Germany, Australia and USA, followed by UK, Japan and Italy.

Market research

Undertake selective and cost-effective research on consumers to find out their needs, wants and requirements from a trekking destination. This will be invaluable in meeting their product expectations. The research will have to be administered separately for the adventure and the pilgrim markets.

Product development

Product development in tourism touches the entire experience that a visitor perceives. In the case of trekking this will include not only the natural setting, but also facilities and services, infrastructure, as well as the hospitality of the host communities that they pass through.
This master plan contains several recommendations on product development, key amongst which are:

- Setting environmental guidelines
- Developing human resources and setting service delivery standards
- Establishing an institutional framework to regulate access
- Developing air and road access infrastructure to road-heads
- Developing communications, civic and support infrastructure at road-heads
- Upgrading accommodation facilities along routes
- Enhancing the hospitality values of the host community

**Promotional mix**

*Information*

- Develop a website dedicated to trekking in the State
- Prepare dedicated high-quality printed and electronic promotional collateral, including brochures, maps
- Create environmental awareness and an environmental ethic amongst visitors, the trade and the host community

*Promotion*

- Use Beacon/Smart marketing focusing only on crucial markets
- Developing packages to be marketed to tour operators in the top target markets

**Cooperative marketing**

Arriving at mechanism for the joint promotion of trekking through co-operation at three levels:

- Between regions – Uttaranchal, Nepal and Himachal Pradesh
- Between the Public and Private sectors – cooperative promotions
- Between operators of diverse yet specialised adventure travel experiences – for example white water rafting, hang-gliding, heli-skiing, etc.

*Data collection*

Establish a data-collection and tracking system for market and product planning purposes. This data collections system should include number of visitors, length of stay, demographic profile, and travel patterns at a minimum. Ideally it should also include activity participation and usage of services, together with feedback on satisfaction.
Master plan for development of trekking routes in Uttaranchal

Project profiles – trekking routes

Introduction

Based on the macro level assessment of the greater context of trekking routes as well as the inventory of the trekking routes of Uttaranchal, a number of recommendations have been made on a generic basis. These recommendations have been mentioned in the master plan section.

Listed below is a summary of the projects recommended to improve the facilities along the individual trekking routes in Uttaranchal. The development of such facilities will add to the improvement of the overall experience of trekking in the region while not detracting from the environmental conditions on the project sites. The projects are envisaged to involve the local population of the region as well as to encourage private enterprise. The projects should benefit the local economy of the region through the creation of new jobs and encouraging enterprise. The projects are both private as well as public sector led and have been chosen based on being the most likely to be successful in achieving the aims of the brief, i.e. the ensuring local benefit to both the local as well as to the State.

Projects identified

As mentioned earlier, the activity of trekking is essentially not highly dependent on service facilities such as hotels, restaurants etc. Camping out is preferred in most cases while trekking. Consequently, the need for and demand for implementable facilities is limited to the development and renovation of:

Communication facilities at road heads

Typically, communication facilities in the hills are restricted to a PCO at the nearest town. In Uttaranchal, the telecommunications department is upgrading communication facilities but there is still a need for both the maintenance and upgradation of existing facilities as well as the opportunity for the development of more private sector PCO booths.

Accommodation at road heads and night halts

Currently, accommodation for trekkers in Uttaranchal is limited to a combination of forest, PWD (Public Works Department) and Tourism guesthouses along the trekking routes. However, these guesthouses are located randomly and cannot be found at all night halts along the trek routes (these night halts generally correspond with villages, which are located at intervals of 7-8 hrs of fast walking). Ranging from 5 room bungalows at Lohaghat and Champawat to a 47-room unit at the road head of Uttarkashi, most of these units are in dire need of renovation. Additionally, there is a need for the development of new units at locations identified later on in the chapter.

Wayside amenities and dhabas/ chai shops

Currently, wayside amenities along the major roads are limited and as in the case of chai shops along the trekking routes as well as located at the road heads, open for service only during the tourist season. Typically small scale and temporary in construction, these facilities are dependant on demand and supply and reflect the lack of demand for new facilities in the region.
Project profiles

As part of the redevelopment process, a few projects have been identified in the section presented above. However, most of the projects are standard in nature and can be presented in a modular format. Consequently, the following section prescribes the basic structure of the projects identified for the trekking routes, in terms of both physical as well as financial terms.

Standard modules for guesthouses

Comprising of four to eight rooms inclusive of a dormitory, the typical guesthouse will be a single storey structure constructed in the traditional stone and mud architecture of the region. Low cost and based on alternative energy systems such as solar heating and rainwater harvesting, the guesthouses will be equipped with basic amenities such as running water and a kitchen. In the case of existing guesthouses, the basic structures of the buildings are relatively intact and sound but renovation is required of the interiors of the buildings including the plumbing, repairing the water connections, painting the interiors, repairing doors, windows and furniture, replacing bed linen etc.

Standard modules for campsites

While campsites vary from location to location and can range from well equipped caravan sites, that cater to American style caravans with access to electricity, water connections and sanitation facilities to the campsite with only basic sanitation facilities. In the case of campsites along the trekking routes of Uttaranchal, the components will be minimal and will include only two components; i.e. 5-10 stone pods marked out around a central bonfire zone for the pitching of tents and the construction of sanitation pits.

Based on the study conducted, a set of projects has been identified either for redevelopment, new development or facilitation. They are listed overleaf:
### Table 8 - Identification of projects by trek

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trek route</th>
<th>Upgradation/Renovation projects</th>
<th>New projects</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yamunotri Dodital</td>
<td>Renovation/ Upgradation of Forest Guesthouse at Kalyani</td>
<td>Tourist Guesthouse at Kalyani</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The 2,000-sft 4-room forest guesthouse at Kalyani is currently usable by trekkers but is basic in nature, and is in need of renovation. Upgradation of the existing rooms, plumbing, refurbishment of the kitchen as well as replacement of kitchen equipment is estimated to cost approximately Rs 6 lakhs</td>
<td>The development of a new tourist guesthouse at Kalyani, with approximately 15 rooms inclusive of a 6 person dormitory; constructed in the traditional architecture of the region is estimated to cost approximately Rs 20 lakhs</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tourist Guesthouse at Kalyani</td>
<td>It is anticipated that the property will be built and operated by private operators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upgradation of Forest Guesthouse at Seema</td>
<td>Upgradation of the existing rooms, plumbing, refurbishment of the kitchen as well as replacement of kitchen equipment is estimated to cost approximately Rs 4-5 lakhs</td>
<td>Tourist bungalow at Agoda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The development of a new tourist guesthouse at Agoda, with approximately 4 rooms inclusive of a 6 person dormitory; constructed in the traditional architecture of the region is estimated to cost approximately Rs 10 lakhs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upgradation of Forest Guesthouse at Hanuman Chatti</td>
<td>Upgradation of the 24 existing rooms, plumbing, refurbishment of the kitchen as well as replacement of kitchen equipment is estimated to cost approximately Rs 24 lakhs</td>
<td>Identification/ Development of campsites at Kalyani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The development of a camping site with 5-10 pods is estimated at Rs 5-10,000 only. The project work envisaged includes the development of sanitation facilities, soil compaction at pods and tree plantation.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tourist Guesthouse at Hanuman Chatti</td>
<td>Can be developed in lieu of upgradation of forest guesthouse at estimated cost of Rs 30 lakhs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Communication Set-up/ PCO at Kalyani</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Gangotri-Tapovan</strong></td>
<td><strong>Upgradation of Forest Guesthouse at Gangotri</strong></td>
<td><strong>Campsites at Chirbasas</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Upgradation of the 2,000-sft 4-room forest guesthouse at Gangotri; existing rooms, plumbing, refurbishment of the kitchen as well as replacement of kitchen equipment is estimated to cost approximately Rs 5-10 lakhs</td>
<td>The development of a camping site with 5-10 pods is estimated at Rs 5-10,000 only. The project work envisaged includes the development of sanitation facilities, soil compaction at pods and tree plantation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Upgradation of Tourism Guesthouse at Gangotri</strong></td>
<td><strong>Campsite at Bhujbasa</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Upgradation of the 23 room unit is estimated at Rs 23 lakhs</td>
<td>The development of a camping site with 5-10 pods is estimated at Rs 5-10,000 only. The project work envisaged includes the development of sanitation facilities, soil compaction at pods and tree plantation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kedarnath-Vasukital</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Camping ground at Vasukital</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The development of a camping site with 5-10 pods is estimated at Rs 5-10,000 only. The project work envisaged includes the development of sanitation facilities, soil compaction at pods and tree plantation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Badrinath</strong></td>
<td><strong>Upgradation of Forest Guesthouse at Govindghat</strong></td>
<td><strong>Tourist Guesthouse at Badrinath</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Upgradation of the 4-room forest guesthouse at Govindghat; existing rooms, plumbing, refurbishment of the kitchen as well as replacement of kitchen equipment is estimated to cost approximately Rs 10 lakhs</td>
<td>The development of a new tourist guesthouse at Badrinath, with approximately 20 rooms inclusive of a 6 person dormitory; constructed in the traditional architecture of the region is estimated to cost approximately Rs 30 lakhs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Upgradation of PWD guesthouse at Badrinath</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Upgradation of the PWD guesthouse at Govindghat is estimated to cost approximately Rs 10 lakhs</td>
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<td><strong>Pauri- Binsar</strong></td>
<td><strong>Renovation/ Upgradation of Forest Guesthouse</strong></td>
<td><strong>Campsite at Binsar Temple</strong></td>
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<td>Upgradation of the forest guesthouse at Pauri; existing rooms, plumbing, refurbishment of the kitchen as well as replacement of kitchen equipment is estimated to cost approximately Rs 4-5 lakhs</td>
<td>The development of a camping site with 5-10 pods is estimated at Rs 5-10,000 only. The project work envisaged includes the development of sanitation facilities, soil compaction at pods and tree plantation</td>
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<td><strong>Renovation / Upgradation of PWD guesthouse at Gairsain</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Upgradation of the PWD guesthouse at Govindghat; existing rooms, plumbing, refurbishment of the kitchen as well as replacement of kitchen equipment is estimated to cost approximately Rs 5 lakhs</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Chandrasilla</strong></td>
<td><strong>Upgrade/ Operationalise guesthouse at Chopta</strong></td>
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<td>Upgradation of the forest guesthouse at Govindghat; existing rooms, plumbing, refurbishment of the kitchen as well as replacement of kitchen equipment is estimated to cost approximately Rs 5-10 lakhs. It will also need to operationalised post litigation</td>
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<td><strong>Milam Glacier</strong></td>
<td><strong>Tourist rest house at Milam</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>The development of a new tourist guesthouse at Milam, with approximately 5 rooms inclusive of a 6 person dormitory; constructed in the traditional architecture of the region is estimated to cost approximately Rs 15 lakhs</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Table 8 - Identification of projects by trek

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<tr>
<th>Trek route</th>
<th>Upgradation/Renovation projects</th>
<th>New projects</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pindari Glacier</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Tourist guesthouse at Loharkhet</strong></td>
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<td>The development of a new tourist guesthouse at Loharkhet, with approximately 5 rooms inclusive of a 6 person dormitory; constructed in the traditional architecture of the region is estimated to cost approximately Rs 15 lakhs</td>
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<td><strong>Roopkund</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Campsite at Roopkund</strong></td>
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<td>The development of a camping site with 5-10 pods is estimated at Rs 5-10,000 only. The project work envisaged includes the development of sanitation facilities, soil compaction at pods and tree plantation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Har Ki Dun</strong></td>
<td>Upgrade Tourist Guesthouses at Seema, Osla and Har Ki Dun</td>
<td><strong>Campsite/ Guesthouse at Sankri</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Upgrade of the 10-room tourism guesthouse at Seema, Osla and Har ki Dun including existing rooms, plumbing, refurbishment of the kitchen as well as replacement of kitchen equipment is estimated to cost approximately Rs 10-15 lakhs each</td>
<td>The development of a camping site with 5-10 pods is estimated at Rs 5-10,000 only. The project work envisaged includes the development of sanitation facilities, soil compaction at pods and tree plantation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Panch Kedar</strong></td>
<td>Upgrade guesthouse at Gauri Kund</td>
<td><strong>Rafting on Mandakini river</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Upgradation of the forest guesthouse at Gauri Kund; is estimated to cost approximately Rs 4-5 lakhs</td>
<td>The development of a camping site with 5-10 pods is estimated at Rs 5-10,000 only. The project work envisaged includes the development of sanitation facilities, soil compaction at pods and tree plantation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Upgrade PWD guesthouse at Mandal</td>
<td><strong>Campsites at Sagar</strong></td>
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<td>Upgradation of the 4-room forest guesthouse at Mandala; is estimated to cost approximately Rs 9 lakhs</td>
<td>The development of a camping site with 5-10 pods is estimated at Rs 5-10,000 only. The project work envisaged includes the development of sanitation facilities, soil compaction at pods and tree plantation</td>
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</table>
## Table 8 - Identification of projects by trek

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Upgrade/ Operationalise guesthouse at Chopta</strong></td>
<td>Upgradation of the forest guesthouse at Govindghat; existing rooms, plumbing, refurbishment of the kitchen as well as replacement of kitchen equipment is estimated to cost approximately Rs 5-10 lakhs. It will also need to be operationalised post litigation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Valley of Flowers</td>
<td>Campsite at Ghangria</td>
<td>The development of a camping site with 5-10 pods is estimated at Rs 5-10,000 only. The project work envisaged includes the development of sanitation facilities, soil compaction at pods and tree plantation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khatling Masartal</td>
<td>Upgrade guesthouses at Ghuttu</td>
<td>Campsite at Kharsoli, Campsite at Bhelbagi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuari Pass</td>
<td>Campsites at Jhunji patni</td>
<td>The development of a camping site with 5-10 pods is estimated at Rs 5-10,000 only. The project work envisaged includes the development of sanitation facilities, soil compaction at pods and tree plantation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Campsite at Doma Bhiti</td>
<td>The development of a camping site with 5-10 pods is estimated at Rs 5-10,000 only. The project work envisaged includes the development of sanitation facilities, soil compaction at pods and tree plantation.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Table 8 - Identification of projects by trek

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Tourist guesthouse at Gohna Tal</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>The development of a new tourist guesthouse at Gohna Tal, with approximately 5 rooms inclusive of a 6 person dormitory; constructed in the traditional architecture of the region is estimated to cost approximately 15 lakhs</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Appendix 1 – Questionnaire for trekkers

Location: ____________________________________________
Name of Institution: __________________________________________
Name of Respondent (please attach card/ full address): ________________________________

On behalf of the Department of Tourism, Uttaranchal, we are conducting a study for preparing a new long-term tourism master plan for trekking in Uttaranchal.

As part of this study, we are trying to assess the quality of the trekking routes in Uttaranchal with respect to both the international scenario as well as other Indian States. This will be in terms of physical infrastructure, route difficulty/ grading visitor numbers/ trekkers, popularity of the route and the potential for additional routes/ circuits.

The results of the study will be based on the amalgamated responses of the various institutions (academic, governmental as well as market based such as tour operators) that will receive this questionnaire.

We would greatly appreciate your sharing with us your knowledge as well as experience of trekking in both the Uttaranchal region as well as other parts of the world, as this will assist us greatly in assessing and developing a master plan that is best suited to your needs and desires. Please attach any additional data that you believe will aid us in our endeavour.

We appreciate your time and effort in completing this questionnaire.

Thank you!

Shreya Pillai
Pannell Kerr Forster Consultants Pvt Ltd
516-517 World Trade Centre
Barakhamba Lane
New Delhi 110001
India
Phone: 011 341 1819
Fax: 011 341 3609
Email: shreyapillai@ambitpte.com
Association with Trekking

1. How long have you been associated with Trekking?

________________________________________________________________________

2. Where do you generally trek?

________________________________________________________________________

3. How regularly do you trek?

________________________________________________________________________

4. In your opinion, what regions do you consider the better trekking areas of the world?

________________________________________________________________________

Association with Trekking in Uttaranchal

5. What are the five things you like most about Uttaranchal as a trekking destination?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

6. What are the five things you do not like about Uttaranchal as a trekking destination?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

7. On an overall basis, how satisfied are you with potential of trekking in Uttaranchal?

☐ Highly satisfied
☐ Satisfied
☐ Neutral – neither satisfied not dissatisfied
☐ Dissatisfied
☐ Highly dissatisfied

8. How long have you been associated with Trekking in Uttaranchal? (Please give details)

________________________________________________________________________
9. Do you believe there is potential to develop trekking in Uttaranchal?

- Yes
- No

10. If yes, how do you compare trekking with that in the following regions?

- Nepal
- Himachal Pradesh
- Sikkim/ North East
- Western Ghats/ South India

Experience with Trekking in Uttaranchal

11. Where have you trekked in Uttaranchal previously?

- Garhwal
- Kumaon

12. Listed below are what we believe are the prominent treks in Uttaranchal. Please list any other you believe are important.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trek</th>
<th>Duration Of Trek</th>
<th>Number of Visits</th>
<th>Size of Group</th>
<th>Additional Comments</th>
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<td>Kedarnath- Vasukital</td>
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<td>Panch Kedar</td>
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</table>
Master plan for development of trekking routes in Uttarakhand

13. How would you rate the treks you have done?

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<tr>
<th>Trek</th>
<th>Duration (nights)</th>
<th>Grading/difficulty</th>
<th>Local Hospitality</th>
<th>Aesthetic quality of local settlements</th>
<th>Scenic quality of Trek</th>
<th>Historical/heritage features</th>
<th>Availability of Local produce/food</th>
<th>Quality/diversity of Flora/fauna</th>
<th>Uniqueness of Social and cultural features of local community</th>
<th>'Marking' of trail</th>
<th>Guidance/assistance from local authorities</th>
<th>Availability of Guest Houses</th>
<th>Availability of Porters/Support</th>
<th>Crowding/Popularity of Trek</th>
<th>Overall Rating</th>
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Appendix 1 – Questionnaire for trekkers
14. It would assist us greatly if you shared with us some specific comments / recommendations based on your experience of any of the treks above:

Trek 1: ___________________________

Comments:

(please add pages as required)

Trek 2: ___________________________

Comments:

(please add pages as required)

Trek 3: ___________________________

Comments:

(please add pages as required)
15. How do you compare trekking in Uttaranchal with other that in Nepal?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Access</th>
<th>Highly satisfied</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Neutral – neither satisfied not dissatisfied</th>
<th>Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Highly dissatisfied</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty Levels</td>
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<td>Tourism Infrastructure</td>
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<td>Trek Marking</td>
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<td>Availability of Information</td>
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16. How do you compare trekking in Uttaranchal with other that in Himachal Pradesh?

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<tr>
<th>Access</th>
<th>Highly satisfied</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Neutral – neither satisfied not dissatisfied</th>
<th>Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Highly dissatisfied</th>
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<td>Difficulty Levels</td>
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<td>Local Hospitality</td>
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<td>Scenic Quality</td>
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<td>Trek Marking</td>
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<td>Availability of Information</td>
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17. What are your five most important suggestions to improve trekking in Uttaranchal?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

18. On the whole, how attractive do you believe Uttaranchal is as a tourist destination?

- Highly attractive
- Attractive
- Neutral – neither attractive nor unattractive
- Unattractive
- Highly unattractive

19. What, in your opinion, are the greatest strengths of Uttaranchal as a Trekking product?
20. Are there any specific areas requiring change in Uttaranchal Trekking product in terms of:

- Improvements?
  
- Additions?

21. What is your opinion, is the overall quality of the marketing efforts of Uttaranchal as a destination?

- Excellent
- Very good
- Satisfactory
- Poor
- Very poor
- Note any specific comments

22. If you market Uttaranchal jointly with another destination, which are the destinations that you consider:

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<tr>
<th>Within India</th>
<th>Outside India (other countries)</th>
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23. Are there any other comments that you would like to make that would assist us in developing trekking in this destination?

Note - Please attach copy of literature on institution

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME AND EFFORT IN COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE!
Appendix 2 – Questionnaire for tour operators

TOUR OPERATOR SURVEY
Uttaranchal Tourism Development Report

Location of survey: __________________________________________
Name of tour operator: _________________________________________

SURVEY FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT REPORT,
UTTRANCHAL, INDIA

On behalf of the Department of Tourism, Uttaranchal, we are conducting a study for preparing tourism policy for Uttaranchal States.

We would appreciate your sharing with us your experience of these States and your client’s vacation interests, as this will assist us greatly in preparing the policy document for a tourism vision statement.

We appreciate your time in completing this questionnaire.

Thank you!

Uttam Davé
Chief Executive Officer
Pannell Kerr Forster Consultants
YOUR ASSOCIATION WITH TOURS TO UTTARANCHAL

1. Do you feature tours to India?
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No If No, terminate interview

2. Do you feature tours to Uttaranchal?
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No If No, go to Q.4

3. If Yes, approximately how many pax did you handle to Uttaranchal in the last year?
   - [ ] ______ pax for Uttaranchal

4. If No, do you plan to start promoting tours to Uttaranchal?
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No

5. If no, why not?

6. If you are promoting tours to Uttaranchal, could you tell us who your local tour operator / ground handler is in India?

EXPERIENCE OF UTTRANCHEL

7. Which of these types of destinations do your clients prefer to visit in Uttaranchal?
   - [ ] River Side
   - [ ] Historical / cultural heritage destinations
   - [ ] Religious destinations
   - [ ] Wildlife sanctuary / reserve
   - [ ] Lakes
   - [ ] High ranges / hilly regions
   - [ ] Wellness centres
   - [ ] Other (specify)

8. What, in your opinion, are the greatest strengths of Uttaranchal as a tourism product?

   [ ]
   [ ]
   [ ]
   [ ]
   [ ]

Appendix 2 – Questionnaire for tour operators 148
9. Are there any specific areas requiring improvement in the Uttarakhand tourism product in terms of:

- Improvements?

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- Additions?

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10. Changes in tour packaging? (the mix of interests / activities included within a tour package)

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11. What is your opinion, is the overall quality of the marketing efforts of Uttarakhand as a destination?

- Excellent
- Very good
- Satisfactory
- Poor
- Very poor

12. If you sell Uttarakhand jointly with another destination, which are the destinations that are co-sold:

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<td>Within India</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outside India (other countries)</td>
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13. What is the typical routing of a tour through Uttarakhand?

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14. What are the alternative destinations that your clients consider as the primary options to visiting Uttarakhand?

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<tr>
<td>Within India</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internationally</td>
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15. What, in your opinion, is the greatest opportunity for Uttarakhand to position itself as a tourist destination as that would set it apart from other tourist destinations in the world?

Note to surveyor - Please collect one copy of their collateral / tour brochures featuring Uttarakhand

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME AND EFFORT IN COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE!
Master plan for development of trekking routes in Uttaranchal

Appendix 3 – List of Individuals surveyed

Institutions

⊙ Col. Nath, Director, Indian Mountaineering Foundation, New Delhi
⊙ Col. A. Abbey, Principal, Nehru Mountaineering Institute, Uttarkashi
⊙ Rajiv Bhartari, Lecturer, Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun
⊙ Ajit Singh, Principal, Garhwal Mandal Vikas Nigam, Dehradun
⊙ N. Nabiyal, Principal, Kumaon Mandal Vikas Nigam, Nainital

Trekking Tour Operators

⊙ Vaibhav Kala, Aquaterra, New Delhi
⊙ Ajeet Bajaj, Snow Leopard Adventures P Ltd, New Delhi
⊙ Akshay Kumar, Mercury Himalayan Exploration, New Delhi
⊙ Maj. SK Yadav, Wanderlust Camps, New Delhi
⊙ Mandep Singh Soin, Ibex Expeditions Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi
⊙ Devendra N. Puri, Abercrombie & Kent, New Delhi
⊙ Vinod Mahajan, Ambassador Travels, New Delhi
⊙ Avinash Kohli, Amber Tours (P) Ltd, New Delhi
⊙ L.P. Singh, Cox & Kings, New Delhi
⊙ Sanjiv Saran, Hipoint, New Delhi
⊙ OP Ahuja, Holiday Maker, New Delhi
⊙ Sujit Banerjee, International Travel House, New Delhi
⊙ Gautam Khanna, Mercury Travels, New Delhi
⊙ AS Madhavan, Pettits India, New Delhi
⊙ Swadesh Kumar, Shikhar Travels, New Delhi
⊙ Arjun Sharma, Sita Travels, New Delhi
⊙ Subhsh Goyal, STIC Travels, New Delhi
⊙ Homa Mistry, TCI, New Delhi
⊙ Aloch Chandola, Trans-Himalayan expeditions, New Delhi
⊙ Harsh Vardhan, World Expeditions, New Delhi
⊙ RJ Agarwal, Tradewings, New Delhi
⊙ Chewang Motup Goba, Rimo Expeditions, New Delhi
⊙ N.P. Sehgal, National Secretary, Youth Hostels Association of India, New Delhi
⊙ Mahesh C. Tewari, Step Himalayan Adventures, Rishikesh
⊙ Rajeev Tiwari, Garhwal Himalayan Explorations Pvt. Ltd., Rishikesh

Other Individuals

⊙ Anirudh Chaoji, Director, Pugmarks, Non Government Organization, Pune
⊙ Dr Vinod B. Mathur, Professor, Department of Protected Area Network, Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun
⊙ Dr G.S Rawat, Professor, Habitat Ecology, WII
⊙ Jennifer Nandi, Naturalist, New Delhi
⊙ Dr. Kimberley Chawla, East West Rescue, New Delhi
⊙ Syed Liyakhat, Equations, Bangalore
⊙ Julie Webb, Nepal Tourism Board, Kathmandu
⊙ Dr Beena Syal, PRO, Kumaon Mandal Vikas Nigam, Nainital
Master plan for development of trekking routes in Uttaranchal

Appendix 3 – List of Individuals surveyed

- Ang Rita Sherpa, Himalayan Programme, The Mountain Institute, Kathmandu
- Jose Dominic, Casino Group of Hotels, Cochin
- Raj Kumar Bharadwaj, Secretary, Adventure Cell, Northern Railway Trekking and Mountaineering Association
- Karma P. Takapa, Project Director, Sikkim Development Foundation, Gangtok
- Rahula Pereira, Council Member, The Ecotourism Society of Sri Lanka, Colombo
- Rinchen Wangchuk, Snow Leopard Conservancy, Leh
- P.D Rai, Chairman, Ecotourism and Conservation Society of Sikkim, Gangtok
- Manu Bhatnagar, Regional and Environmental Planner, Intach, New Delhi
- Subhash Nirola, Director, Nepal Tourism Board, Kathmandu
- Rajgopal Singh, Wetlands International, New Delhi
- Niranjan Khattri, General Manager, Welcomenvironment Initiative, ITC Hotels Limited, New Delhi
- Krishna Prasad Oli, Programme Co-ordinator, IUCN Nepal (World Conservation Union), Kathmandu
- Fergus Tyler Mclares, Director, The International Ecotourism Society, Virginia, USA
- Seema Bhatt, Biodiversity Specialist, New Delhi
- Ghana Shyam Gurung, Director, Sustainable Development, WWF Nepal Program, Kathmandu
- Rik Thwaites, Lecturer, Ecotourism, Charles Sturt University, Australia
Appendix 4 – Guidelines for trekking route development

Introduction

Traditionally, trekking routes have followed either erstwhile migratory and trade routes or pilgrim trails. Access to the routes is almost always by road and rarely by air. The development and maintenance of the routes is important in order to maintain the sustainability of trekking in the region.

Master planning
(Environmental Assessment Plans and Habitat and Species Management Plans)

Master planning is a tool that is essential to the conservation and sustainability of the natural resources of the region as well as to maintain the character of trekking routes. Two techniques that should be adopted in order to maximize the potential of the existing trekking routes as well as to conserve them are the Environmental Assessment (EAP) Technique as well as the development of Habitat and Species Management (HSM) Plans.

In order to fulfil the potential of these techniques, scientists and planners should be commissioned to develop an environmental blueprint for the region using GIS technology and overlays to assess the stability of individual trek routes, identifying environmentally sensitive zones and regions that need immediate intervention. HSM plans should also be developed for individual trek routes. Information/Data maintenance as well as the overall maintenance should then be assigned to a team of local villagers with a scientific officer for each trek route. This is a tool that will help ensure the conservation of the local resources and will be pivotal in maintaining the sustainability of the region. A compilation of individual HSM Plans as well the EAP should be easily available to the public.

Accessibility and Access Road design

In order to maintain the pristine-ness and adventurous character of trekking routes in the region, it is essential that the access roads to the routes not be overdeveloped. Much of the rugged character of trekking comes from the difficulty of the access route. However, it is essential that the access road is capable of handling the traffic in the region. For this reason a different approach needs to be adopted in the development of access roads. Furthermore, limits should be imposed on the use of automobiles and other motor vehicles with established low speed limits in the vicinity of the road heads as well as local villages.

Road heads

Appropriate physical planning of the road heads is a necessity for the development of trekking in any region. Most road heads are small villages with little or no access to basic physical facilities such as water, electricity or sanitation or any form of planning. While it is essential to have adequate communication and accommodation facilities at the road heads for trekkers, the demand will also have to be based on local need. While traditional town planning methods may prove difficult to develop or enforce in these villages, basic planning can be established based on a participatory rural appraisal (PRA) conducted at each village. This technique will result in a more community oriented
development plan for each road head/village and can be completed with limited funding and indigenous resources.

**Trekking routes**

Most trekking routes require little or no intervention in order to improve conditions, except to appropriately locate future campsites, insert signage and upgrade existing facilities such as accommodation. The more untouched the route, the more appreciated the trek. Therefore, it is essential that the actual trail not be touched or altered with stone steps, excavation and smoothening or other unnatural means or easing the passage of the trekker.

**Signage**

While signage is not essential to trek routes, it is at best convenient for the average trekker. It however has to be minimal and blend with the natural surrounds in order to maintain the character of the trek. Unobtrusive stone milestones can be placed at strategic locations along the route in order to navigate the trek, marking campsites and rest areas. Other sensitive signage such as comments on the region, flora, fauna etc can be scattered along the trail, at appropriate locations, in order to educate the trekker on the history and the background of the trek, without intruding on the sense of the trek.

Another means of educating the trekker is to develop a trail network map with the camping sites, historic markers and scenic views marked on the publications.

**Garbage recycling**

While burying solid waste is a preferable option to dumping, regulations have come into effect in some parts of Nepal (Sagarmatha National Park) to enforce strict removal of all solid waste that trekkers bring in. The optimal guideline for garbage disposal in the mountains should be to carry all waste generated out of the hills. This should be applied to both visitors as well as locals.

**Fuels**

It is suggested that kerosene is the best and only practical alternative to fuel wood use by tourists and their porters in the Himalayas. The strict enforcement of such rules will be necessary if significant reductions are to be made in the use of fuel wood and forest regeneration is to be attained.

**Tea shops**

While it is impossible to control the random development of teashops and small dhabas on the trekking routes, controls can be enforced to maintain higher standards of hygiene, design and quality (garbage disposal, fuel wood usage vs. use of more efficient stoves) in order to preserve the pristine-ness of the region.
Local communities

It is essential to include the local community in the development and maintenance of trek routes. This will be pivotal in creating an interface between the traditionally isolated hill people of Uttaranchal and the hordes of tourists in the region. It will also provide a means of income generation for the local villagers.

Guidelines for the inclusion of local communities will include awareness creation about ecotourism and conservation among villagers, facilitation of employment opportunities as guides, monitoring officers; maintaining ongoing programmes to educate locals through non-governmental organisations, development of micro credit schemes to facilitate participations in product development.

Cultural resources

Any development along the trekking routes should be of a low impact and in accordance with the local culture of the area. Consequently it is essential to utilise traditional building and construction methods in the development or re-development of any accommodation/food outlets in the region. Furthermore, it is essential that permission be sought before entering villages in order to conserve the tradition of the village.
Master plan for development of trekking routes in Uttaranchal

Appendix 5 – Guidelines for Campsite development

Introduction

Camping in addition to the government guesthouses in the Himalayas of Uttaranchal is the most popular means of tourist accommodation in the State. While some of the treks listed have identified camping sites enroute, the vast majority don’t have adequate accommodation.

Sites for camps need to be carefully identified, based on travel time, ease of access, drainage, limited slope, orientation to the sun and wherever possible, interspacing with trees and hedges. As per international standards, the more permanent camps have been classified as transit camps, where facilities are minimum and stay is generally no more than 48 hours to the more permanent tourism and forest camps, where the typical USA campsite is a minimum density facility, with up to 25 units at least 35m between the two units and with a full range of facilities (drainage, electricity, water etc).

However, in the case of the individual campsites that are used in Uttaranchal, the following guidelines need to be followed:

Identification and location

Wherever possible, develop in previously disturbed sites. Many sites are already in use by trekkers in the region. The redevelopment or conversion of existing facilities is one of the lowest impact design techniques.

Site camp in locations at a reasonable distance from source of water (streams/ rivers) so as not to pollute the water resources in the region.

Camp should ideally be sited facing the east and protected from the north-easterly winds of the Himalayas by either shrubbery and trees or rock faces (though not directly in the path of loose debris from the mountains). While camping in alpine plateaus is picturesque and attractive, it is least desirable due to the potential impact on the immediate environment as well as the lack of protection from natural elements.

Rotation

When appropriate, camping sites at high altitude need to be rotated in order to allow for plant and soil regeneration, where space is limited and / or impacts begin to reach critically high levels, resting periods for either the entire region or selected areas need to be enforced.

Adapted from Byers et al, 1992, expert comments from interviews conducted by PKF in April 2002
Camp design

While individual camps, such as those in the Himalayas need no physical infrastructure; tent pads (with stone bases) can be created in the form of clusters of four and six, space withstanding. Occasionally, sanitation infrastructure can also be created in the form of septic tanks. However, this is rare and is not recommended.

Sanitation

Construction, maintenance and required use of latrines are the most practical alternative for camping sites. Tented latrines may be appropriate for lower altitude base camp approaches. In most camps, the latrines need to be placed as far away from the source of water as possible and if possible provided with rough septic tanks.

Camp maintenance

Camp etiquette (hygiene, cleanliness and usage) is essential in trekkers in order to maintain the quality of campsites. Instructions and training should be imparted to all trekkers prior to use of campsites in order to leave behind a usable campsite for the next trekking party.
Appendix 6 – Guidelines for Visitor Management for Trekking Routes

- Determine visitor impact on each trekking route. The size and capacity of the trekking route should be determined on the basis of limiting factors, i.e. ecological vulnerability of the area, water and energy sources, space, access. Techniques that can be used include the LAC (Limits of Acceptable Change) and the carrying capacity methods.

- Define management plan for each trekking route with corresponding visitor numbers, traffic parameters, opening times and restricted activities.

- Create programme plan that defines potential market and approximates number of visitors that may visit the trekking routes. This can me be used as a managerial tool to adequately handle the demands and effect of tourism on the trekking routes.

- Study the EAP, which will contain the inventory of resources that are present e.g. Flora fauna, water resources, and geology.

- Determine number of trekkers needed to meet economic goals of local community on each route. This assessment will need to be conducted in confluence with environmental and habitat management plans. It will also require the involvement of the local community in order to establish the economic demand in the region.

- Identify special attractions (scenic views, habitats, etc) on the route.

- Restrict number of subsidiary trails from main trekking route in order to conserve natural resources.

- Publicise maximum number of people allowed on the routes to prevent environment damages.

- Define type of materials to be used on trekking routes. Make inventory of local materials that can be scavenged for development.

- Establish permanent monitoring system, i.e. check points, local scientific officer for trekking route.

- Work with protected area staff/forest officers to enforce restriction on trekking routes.

- Promote creations of wildlife corridors.

- Involve active participations from local organisations in conservation, development and protection.

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27 Adapted from Visitor Management for Parks, International Ecolodge Guidelines edited by Hitesh Mehta
Appendix 7 – Regional planning guidelines

Introduction

The guiding principle for trekking in Uttaranchal is that of sustainability, i.e. balancing the aspirations for development on the part of the government and the local community with the economic, social, cultural and ecological sensitivity of the region.

This principle assumes particular significance since the region consists of one of the most ecologically sensitive areas of the world, as well as perhaps one of the most economically backward with few development and employment alternatives other than tourism. It also has strong cultural values and sense of community.

The challenge in formulating development guidelines for the region is, therefore, the need to have a flexible and innovative framework that assists local residents to harness tourism to their advantage, while preserving their unique natural and cultural heritage.

The following are the key elements of the regional planning guidelines:

Resource identification, mapping and master planning

Traditionally, the dominant mode of tourism development is focused on the distinct and separate geographic zones of cities and rural areas. However, planning and development of ecotourism is predominantly rural and regional in nature and needs to be more integrated with urban and regional development plans. Furthermore, master planning for each route is essential with the preparation of environmental assessment plans (EAP), Habitat and species management plans (HSMP) as well as management and destination plans ranging from the regional to the individual trekking route level for the entire State. Additionally, it is essential to identify key personnel at the local (village) and institutional levels to assist in the implementation of the plans.

Roads and trails development

The main roads should have moderate improvements within the existing right of way. Whenever possible, existing roads should be utilised. Refurbishing of existing roads requires minimal disturbance of natural systems since the disturbed site may already be impacting the site. Attempts should be made to keep the width and length of the roads at a minimum and roads designed in a manner that slow speeds are forced. Roads should not be sited on the ridgelines since this scars the landscape. They should be sited a minimum of 5-8m vertical distance below the ridgeline.

Adapted from guidelines from Tourism Planning, Clare A Gunn and Regional Planning for the Vagamon Development Plan, 2001
Settlements

Settlements, the road heads and villages are expected to develop and grow once the trekking routes become more popular. From past experience, it can be expected that these new developments will undergo random and uncontrolled growth resulting in roadblocks along the highways, unattractive market developments in the heart of the village or the subdivision of larger agricultural plots. Most of this type of development occurs partly due to the lack of adequate planning and regulation in the rural sector, in terms of land use and land distribution. Flexible and enforceable development controls are necessary discipline to the random growth of these settlements.

Zoning laws will have to be based on the existing land ownership in the region. However, while respecting the rights of the owners, the guidelines will restrict the widespread conversion of agricultural land use to that of a more commercial nature. Only certain land uses that are compatible with the master plan will be allowed in the region.

- No land use or establishment shall be permitted to produce a strong light or reflection of that light beyond its plot lines onto neighbouring properties, or onto any town way so as to impair the vision of the driver of any vehicle upon that town way.

- Floor Area Ratios will be restricted between 0.75 - 1.00 so as to maintain the natural landscape of the region.

- Tracts with forest/plantation will have to be maintained and forestation will be extended in lieu of commercial development in the form of a credit structure.

- Where existing buildings express a traditionally modest (pre-zoning) front setback, creating a characteristically close relationship with the street (as in village and town centres and along their approach roads), it is highly desirable to continue this pattern in order to retain the area’s character. Therefore the maximum setback of the new construction should harmonise with the average setbacks of the existing adjacent buildings.

- Lighting must be controlled in both height and intensity to maintain rural character. Under no circumstances may the light level at the plot line exceed 0.2 foot-candles, measured at ground level. To achieve this, luminaires shall be shielded to prevent light shining beyond the plot lines into neighbouring properties or public ways.

- Buildings should be sited so that obstruction of views from the public ways will be minimised. This can be achieved by taking advantage of topographic changes or existing vegetation.

- Emission of dust, dirt, flash, fumes, vapours or gases which could be injurious to human health, animals, or vegetation; detrimental to the enjoyment of adjoining or nearby properties; or which could soil or stain persons or property, at any point beyond the plot line of the commercial establishment creating that emission shall be prohibited. In addition no land use or establishment shall be permitted to produce harmful, offensive, or bothersome odours, scents or aromas perceptible beyond their plot lines, either at ground or habitable elevation.
Excessive noise at unreasonable hours shall be required to be muffled so as not to be objectionable due to intermittence, beat frequency, shrillness, or volume.

All neighbours shall provide for the disposal of all solid and liquid wastes on a timely basis and in an environmentally sensitive safe manner.

**Farmland/ Agricultural land**

Less restrictive than agricultural protection zoning is the concept of low-density standards for new development. Another approach to agricultural zoning is to require that new homes be located on much smaller parcels to avoid fragmentation of the resource base.

The natural state of watercourses, swales, flood ways, or rights-of-way shall be maintained as nearly as possible. The design period is the 50-year storm.

Erosion of soil and sedimentation of watercourses and water bodies shall be minimised by employing the following “best management” practices:

- Stripping of vegetation and soil removal to be accomplished in such a way as to minimise erosion
- The duration of exposure of the disturbed area shall be kept to a practical minimum
- Temporary vegetation and/or mulching shall be used to protect exposed critical areas during development
- Permanent vegetation and mechanical erosion control measures shall be installed as soon as practicable after construction ends.
- Until a disturbed area is stabilised, sediment in run-off water shall be trapped by the use of debris basins, sediment basins, silt traps, or other acceptable methods as determined by the planning board.
- The top of a cut and fill section shall not be closer than ten feet to an adjoining property, unless otherwise specified by the planning board
- Application of chemical fertilisers is to be minimised and bio-fertilisers are to be promoted. Integrated management of agriculture is recommended to avoid excess use of pesticides and chemical fertilisers.
- Sub-surface disposal systems for septic wastes shall be located no less than 150ft from the normal high water mark.

**Landscaping**

Development on the edges of the smaller towns should pay close attention to the design of the edges, especially where they form the outer perimeter of the town/ village. This should be done by either enhancing the approach roads through avenue planting or by seeking opportunities for habitat creation in the form of copses, hedges and ponds.
New landscaping should reflect the local landscape, through the choice of the appropriate native species, the patterns of the woodlands, the use of the landform and the avoidance of hard lines and use of local materials for walls and buildings.

New landscaping should enhance the existing forest cover and animal habitats in the region.

**Architecture**

In attempting to draw on the local cultural context, the design of all buildings should examine and adopt from various aspects of the vernacular architecture. Traditional buildings have a distinct style that is characterised by the woodcarvings on the doors and windows of the buildings. Most traditional buildings are based on a construction technique of wood and stone infill. An architecture should be created that will be consistent with the environmental philosophy and within the goals of sustainable tourism, avoiding design contradictions, providing variations in scale, a sense of privacy, ease of access and screened parking. New structures should reflect the traditional architectural character of the area.

**Open spaces**

- Open spaces in the region should be designed so that they are in character with the natural grassland landscape of the region and add to the visual quality of the area.

- All building in the centre of the meadow is to be avoided

- Visual prominence should be avoided by building into the woodland edges

- Large setbacks from the plot should be avoided if the plot is small or near a village centre

- Avoid building on ridgelines

**Construction**

There is an increase in soil erosion during the construction stage of any development, which will cause fertility loss. In order to minimise the damage, construction should be on flat land. Furthermore, replenishing the topsoil is an important consideration during the construction phase and it should not get deposited in streams during the construction phase.

**Grading and drainage**

Grading will be kept to a minimum and excavation will be carefully designed. In siting buildings, working with the existing topography will save both construction and maintenance costs and will retain topsoil. Minimising pavement areas will also afford some preservation of mature native soils. Aligning buildings with landscape contours will minimise earthwork and clearing. Terraces will take up the excess slope. Vegetated swales will be designed to convey concentrated run-off.
Solid waste

Suitable waste disposal sites sufficiently away from the active tourist locations should be identified and procured. Since ground water can be tapped from upstream locations, care has to be taken that the leachates from the dumped waste do not contaminate water aquifers. Since no mechanism is operative for collection and transportation of waste, infrastructure facilities need to be created. Adequate number of compost pits should be installed at main waste generating locations. Public awareness has to be built up for disposal of from the hills and the burying of waste in compost pits only if absolutely necessary. A complete ban on plastic carry bags should be enforced. Segregation of wastes has to be made either at the source or at the disposal site at the road heads according to convenience. The recyclable materials such as good quality plastics and metal scraps can be sold out and the inert material used for landfill. Clear-cut guidelines should be issued regarding disposal of solid waste in resorts and hotels.

Water

Because of the scarcity of water, it should be used sparingly since this area, despite its abundant rainfall, is nonetheless a fragile ecosystem, which needs to be protected. To overcome the drinking water shortage, watershed management at a macro scale and rainwater harvesting should be carried out at the local level.
Appendix 8 – Case Study: Nepal

Introduction

The following section is an attempt to assess distinct regions that are potential role models or benchmarks for the development of the trekking industry in Uttaranchal. Due to the lack of examples in India, the case study of the mountain state of Nepal.

The background

Geography

Nepal is a small landlocked country, 800 km long and 200 km wide. Longitudinally, the terrain changes from glaciers on the Tibetan border to flat jungles of the Terai. It consists of four main physiographic regions or natural zones: the Terai, the Middle Hills, the Himalaya and the Trans Himalayas. Beyond the Himalayas is the 5,000 m high plateau of Tibet. The basic riverine system primarily consists of rivers flowing southward from the glaciers of the Nepal Himalayas to join the Ganges in India.

History

The Himalayan state of Nepal was once a collection of feudal principalities sandwiched between Mughal India and Tibet. In 1768, Prithvi Narayan Shah, the ruler of the House of Gorkhas, unified these diverse kingdoms and established the present state of Nepal. In 1814, the British East India Company declared war on Nepal and after a long battle with Imperial India, Nepal had to concede a considerable section of its territory to the current northern Indian states of the Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttaranchal and Bihar. In 1846, the prime minister of Nepal established the House of the Ranas, a dynasty that ruled the country for a little more that a century. The Shahs were reinstated in 1950, with the help of the Indian state and the current ruler belongs to the Shah lineage. Democracy was established in Nepal with the elections of 1991. However, with the 2001 massacre of the Royal family and the consequent political discontent and Maoist uprising in the country, the state of Nepal is currently in a state of turmoil and unrest.

History of trekking in Nepal

Traditionally Nepal has been closed to the outside world, and the only foreign travellers to Nepal in the past consisted of traders from India. Even the British Resident was not permitted to leave the Kathmandu valley. Much of this stems from the lack of interaction between the capital Kathmandu and the remote hill villages. Travel to Kathmandu itself was difficult with no road or air access. The first airplane landed in Kathmandu only in 1947 and it was only in 1955 that the Tribhuvan Rajpath, the road linking Kathmandu with India was completed. The airport at Kathmandu was extended and regular air services from India were started in 1954. Thomas Cook organized the first conducted tour to Nepal in 1955.

Travel itself within the state was limited to generations of porters and traders that have carried Indian goods to remote hill villages in Nepal and Tibet, travelling along established trade routes in the hills. It is these trade routes that have now been transposed into trekking trails. The original trails were also
used by the local inhabitants migrating from the colder Himalayan regions to the warmer climates of the Terai to the south, in the winters.

The earliest travellers to Nepal had to secret themselves into the state, like the mapmakers of the Survey of India. One of the earliest accounts of a traveller to Nepal is that of the Japanese explorer Ekai Kawaguchi in 1899, who wrote “Three Years in Tibet” and describes his travels in Nepal.

While clandestine travel into the state continued regardless of the restriction on travel, the first officially permitted traveller was allowed in 1949, with the maharaja allowing a seasoned trekker William Tillman to visit the region around Kali Gandaki, Helambu and Everest. The Frenchman, Maurice Herzog, led an expedition to Annapurna in 1950, thus beginning the advent of adventure travel/tourism into Nepal. With the 1953 ascent of Everest by Norgay and Hilary, the Himalayas were more popular than ever before and Nepal and the Kathmandu valley would serve as a base for all future expeditions into the mountains.

What began with primarily a mountaineering industry has now turned into a profitable trekking destination. While most people travel to the state with the express wish to either see the mountains up close or to actually experience the Greater Himalayas, only a small percentage actually embarks on full scale mountaineering expeditions. The greater majority is satisfied with the less arduous and dangerous experience of trekking along the mountain trails to base camps such as that at the base of Mount Everest, and viewing the mountains in the process.

**Policy framework**

**History**

Tourism, as an industry was never considered important in the first few development plans in Nepal. However, the First National Development Plan (1955-60) started the process of identifying possibilities and building some of the infrastructure required for tourism development. As a first national tourism organization, the Tourism Development Board was set up in 1957. The Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation (the RNAC) was created as the national airlines company in 1958. It was only in the early 60’s that the RNAC together with the domestic networks started external services to three points in India and later to Dhaka. With a view to promote the tourism industry, the first national tourism organization, the Tourism Development Board was converted to Department of Tourism in 1959.

The Second National Development Plan (1962-65), came into being as tourism was beginning to grow in Nepal. The Plan consequently, acknowledged the need to regularize tourism activity. Tourism legislation was brought into force in 1962 and the planned development of Department of Tourism standard accommodation and tourism facilities was initiated. It was during this period that a number of hotels were built by the government in regions that were considered of tourism potential. Due to the significant growth in overseas arrivals, the DOT started recording inbound data in 1962. The number of arrivals in 1962 was around 6,179.

Due to the direct impact of tourism on the economy of the state, new tourism policies were formulated in the Third National Development Plan (1966-70). The Tourism Development Committee was established in 1969, with the express aim of developing a Tourism master plan. The Hotel sector was encouraged through the extension of substantial credit to the private sector for construction of new

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29 Source: Nepal Tourism Board
hotels, through the Nepal Industrial Development Corporation (NIDC). The Master plan for Tourism, created in association with the Government of West Germany, set out the framework for future development in the state. This 1972 master plan outlined a set of proposals to be implemented in a 10-year period. These include the upgradation of the physical infrastructure needed for tourism such as the airports and airlines as well as the road networks. The protection and conservation of the National parks as well as wildlife sanctuaries in the state was also recommended as a proposal, indicating an early realization of the potential of the natural resources of the state.

The Fourth (1970-75) and the Fifth (1975-80) National Development Plans incorporated most of the projects and programmes recommended in the master plan. During the course of these plans, the number of airports and airstrips were increased, jet services (the introduction of the Boeing 727) were introduced and the services were extended to various destinations around the country in 1976. A number of roadways were completed. The Hotel management and Tourism Training Centre (HMTTC) was established in 1972, with UNDP/ILO assistance, and offered training courses for individuals in various sectors of the tourism industry. Tourist information centres were also set up across the country. Furthermore, a separate Ministry of Tourism was formed in February 1977. In April 1978, the government formed a high level Tourism Coordination Committee to coordinate promotion and development activities and to review the Master plan for Tourism and other programs related to the development of Tourism. By 1978, tourist arrivals stood at 156,000.

During the Sixth Plan (1980-85), the frontier between Nepal and Tibet was reopened (1985) and services to Hong Kong, Dhaka, Rangoon, Singapore, Karachi and Dubai were introduced by the RNAC. Air transport networking was further extended to 13 destinations including London and Frankfurt during the 1985-90 Seventh National Development Plan period. A 1989 Asian Development Bank study indicated the need to develop tourism to the western, central and eastern regions of the country.

Till the Eighth Plan (1992-97), tourism was considered a significant contributor to the economy and most development was instigated to encourage the development of tourism. However, with the eighth plan, the understanding that tourism had more than just an economic impact on the economy and environment, resulted in a set of objectives that today directs most development in the state.

Apart from being an important industry for foreign exchange, it was understood that tourism could be used to benefit the rural and mountain communities’ of Nepal without adversely affecting the existing physical and cultural heritage of the state. Consequently, the tourism industry was given the highest priority in the plan. A tourism council was also established under the chairmanship of the prime minister. The Everest Pollution Control Board was constituted under the Eighth Plan, to conserve the environment in the Khumbu area.

The key tourism objectives of the Eighth Plan were:

- To earn a larger amount of foreign exchange by the development of the tourism industry
- To expand tourism activities to other areas in the country in order to ease tourist pressure in a few limited regions
- To improve the living standards of the people and to reduce the level of poverty by increasing the employment opportunities through the expansion of the tourism industry.
- To improve the quality of services and facilities related to tourism with the promotion of environmental, historical and cultural properties
- To develop the necessary infrastructure required for the operation of efficient, safe and well facilitated and standardized air services

Appendix 8 – Case Study: Nepal
To forge a close coordinating link between the tourism sector and the other sectors of the economy
To augment the use of local materials and services in the tourism industry

During this period, the National Civil Aviation Policy 2050 was implemented, with 14 new airlines licensed and Necon, Everest Air, Nepal Airways servicing the domestic sector. The Pokhara airport was upgraded in this period and the Upper Mustang, Manaslu, Kailash Mansarovar sectors were opened up.

**Current policy**

The Tourism Policy 2052, developed in 1995, defined the role of the Private sector in tourism. In July 1994, the Partnership for Quality Tourism Projects was launched by the UNDP to experiment with public private partnership. Initiatives from the private sector saw the introduction of new tourism services such as Hot Air ballooning in Kathmandu and power glider in Pokhara. The broad objectives of the 2052 policy are:

- To develop tourism as an important sector by setting up linkages between tourism and other sectors
- To augment tourism in the rural areas to improve employment opportunities; net proceeds of the foreign currency, growth of national income and the regional imbalances
- To maintain the country’s ‘high’ image in the international market by providing standard services and necessary security to tourists
- To develop and promote Nepal as an attractive tourist centre

Policies set up to achieve the stated objectives include:

- Private Sector participation sought to a maximum extent for tourism product development
- Minimize role of the government to that of development of tourism infrastructure as well as that of coordinator and motivator / catalyst
- Implementation of environmental protection programmes for the sustainable development of the tourism industry
- Prioritising rural tourist attractions by strengthening tourism infrastructure and facilities
- Promoting religious tourism by marketing pilgrim points
- Developing Adventure Tourism gradually
- Standardizing the quality of products offered by private entrepreneurs and making security a priority
- Maintain regional balances while developing tourism
- Promote and integrate agro based and cottage industries with the tourism industry
- Promotion of indigenous investment and attract foreign investment to transfer skills and technology
- Implement National Civil Aviation Policy as an integral part of the Tourism Policy

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30 Source: Nepal Tourism Board, Sustainable Tourism Network
Some of the more pertinent working policies related to Nature based tourism and Pilgrimage tourism include:

- Encourage of the private sector to provide sightseeing in religious and cultural areas
- Encouragement of private sector in the operation of adventure sports without prejudice to the original culture and traditions of the country
- Providing incentives to temple trusts, monasteries to develop international spiritual centres and to increase domestic/internal tourism
- Promotion of wildlife tourism
- Expansion of mountain tourism in a sectoral manner by opening new trekking routes and more peaks
- Promoting inter-country tourism activity
- Encourage Rural tourism by allowing rural communities to operate own programmes
- Framing of Tourism Environmental Guidelines, to prevent the adverse effects on the environment
- Classification of Trekking areas as General (areas open for tourism trekking where outlines of routes and trails exist with minimum tourism facilities), Guided (where neither trails nor tourism facilities exist) and Restricted area (areas with limited access to modernity, with extremely sensitive environments and culture; where trekking will be permitted only with liaison officers on behalf of His Majesty’s Government) trekking.
- Development of special programmes to maintain the quality of Mount Everest
- Promote tourism industry in Asian nations

The Ninth Plan (1997-2002) stresses the increased participation of the private sector in the management of the tourism industry and envisages a catalytic role for the government with a limited role in infrastructure development. It recognizes tourism as a sector that can address regional imbalances and sets out a long term perspective with a 20 year forecast for tourism development, including:

- Establishing Nepal as a destination on the world tourism market
- Stretching out the benefits of tourism to the rural areas

The stated objectives of the Ninth Plan are:

- To develop tourism as a significant sector of the national economy through forward and backward linkages
- Establish Nepal as a unique tourism destination in the world market through strong publicity and promotion
- Increase employment, foreign currency earnings and national income to improve regional imbalances, by expanding the tourism industry to the rural areas

The Nepal Tourism Board, a regulatory body for all tourism and travel services and practices in Nepal, was set up in this period.

Nepal has consistently been associated with the sustainable development movement and recently with the trend towards ecotourism. With a number of reputed international and local NGOS operating in the country, that are associated with poverty reduction and conservation efforts through ecotourism, Nepal is considered to have a few well known operating models of ecotourism in the world. One of these models is the Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP), established under the patronage of the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation, anon profit organization with Royal Patronage, which integrates conservation and development using ecotourism as a development tool. The Sustainable Tourism Network (STN) is a coordinating body for ecotourism planning and...
implementation and was set up in 1997 in order to coordinate the operations of bodies operating in ecotourism by the Nepal Tourism Board (NTB)

The NTB also developed the National Ecotourism Strategy and Ecotourism Marketing Programme in December 2001.

**Review of the tourism product**

**Visitor Statistics**

Nepal attracted 463,646 foreign travellers in the year 2000, a decline of 5.7% over the figures for 1999 (491,504 persons). Over the previous four years, the arrival figures had risen by an average of 8.8% per annum. While figures are unavailable for the last year, it is certain that the annual arrivals have declined steeply due to the current political and security conditions prevailing in the country. However, it is significant that third country arrivals (international travellers other than Indian nationals) showed a 4.8% growth over 1999 despite the overall decline in arrivals. Indian nationals normally account for one third of Nepal's entire foreign visitation, though they only accounted for 21% in 2000. Nepal relies heavily on the North American and western European markets, which have consistently accounted for nearly half of all arrivals (45% in 2000). Japan is also a strong market and the Nepal Tourism Board is now targeting other nations in Asia like China.

The gross foreign exchange earnings remained relatively stable; down only 0.7% from US$ 168 mn in 1999 to US$167 mn in 2000. (see for 2001/ compare with int market) The combination of the royal massacre and the September 11 episode has put 2001 arrivals to Nepal in the negative.

Domestic tourism is primarily associated with the religious circuits and with visiting friends and family.

**Products**

Nepal is one of the few destinations in the world that can truly promote itself as the centre of adventure and nature tourism. Mountaineering, trekking, and white water-rafting form the basis of this positioning. Nepal’s mountains continue to attract increasing numbers of visitors. About 43% of all international leisure arrivals go trekking in Nepal. Tourist visits to protected areas are increasing at around 15% per annum.

Most of Nepal’s primary tourism attractions are world class. They include the seven World heritage sites of the Kathmandu valley and Lumbini, the birthplace of Buddha, the Royal Chitwan National Park and the Sagarmatha National Park.

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31 Source: Annual Statistical Reports, 1999, 2000, Nepal Tourism Statistics
32 Source: Nepal Tourism Board, Lonely Planet and other associated literature
The basic products include:

**Adventure tourism – Trekking**

- Probably the most popular activity in Nepal tourism, it essentially involves either people walking alone or accompanied by trekking agents and their support staff and staying in either local teahouses or in tents. Currently, half of all Nepal trekkers trek independently and trek operators outfit half.
- Ranges from expeditions to high altitude treks to easily paced walks/hikes.
- Trekking is most popular with westerners.
- 1999-2000 protected area figures indicate that 97% of trekkers in Nepal concentrate their activities in the more popular trekking regions of the Annapurna Conservation Area, the Sagarmatha National Park and the Langtang National Park.
- Trekking to the further regions of Nepal to the west and east is difficult for foreign nationals due to the HMG trek permit regulations. As per the 1999 policies, visitors wishing to trek in the regions such as Dolpa, Kanchenjunga, Manaslu, Mustang etc have to procure permits that range from simple trek permits costing US$ 10 to “controlled region” and “remote area” permits that require travel with a registered travel operator and accompanied by a liaison officer. Remote area fees go up to US$ 700 for 10 days and $ 70 per day thereafter.

**Adventure tourism – Mountaineering**

- With eight of the highest peaks in the world, Nepal accounts for some of the more important mountaineering expeditions in the world.
- Mountaineering expeditions are directly related to the development of remote areas. This is due to the Nepal policy of retrenching a percentage of all fees collected for the development of the region. In 2000, Nepal accounted for 132 mountaineering expeditions with a total expenditure of US$9.74 mn. Park Fees and mountaineering fees account for a sizable section of the treasury receipts. Expedition fees vary from region to region. The Sagarmatha (Mt Everest) charges are US$75,000 per expedition.

**Adventure tourism – White water rafting**

**Wildlife tourism – World Heritage Sites (Natural)**

- Royal Chitwan National Park (World Heritage Site)
- Everest National Park (World Heritage Site)

**Wildlife tourism – Other national parks**

- Bardiya National Park
- Langtang national park
- Shey- Phoksundo National Park
- Rara National Park
- Khaptad National Park
- Makalu Barun National Park and Conservation Areas

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33 Source: Nepal Tourism Board
Wildlife tourism – wildlife reserves

- Sukla Phanta Reserve
- Parsa Reserve
- Koshi- Tappu Reserve
- Shivapuri Watershed and Wildlife Reserve

Wildlife tourism – Conservation areas

- Annapurna Conservation Area
- Manaslu Conservation Area
- Kunchenjunga Conservation Area

Wildlife tourism – Hunting reserve

- Dhorpatan Hunting Reserve

Village tourism

A form of ecotourism, village tourism emphasises the need to involve the local and rural economy in the development of tourism in the country. The network of home stays, tea houses and small lodges that have emerged in the villages along the more popular trekking routes in Nepal are a successful example of village tourism in Asia. There is evidence that there is demand for such lower impact facilities in the international market visiting Nepal and the private sector is responding by developing products such as accommodation that is acceptable to both the village community as well as the traveller (both the experienced trekker as well as the more comfort seeking, non trekker), in terms of design, hygiene as well as quality. Some of the villages that are currently being used for village tourism are:

- Sirubari
- Gorkha

Cultural tourism – World Heritage Sites

- Swayambh
- Boudha
- Bhaktapur Darbar Square
- Changunarayan
- Kathmandu Darbar Square
- Patan Darbar Square
- Lumbini
Market assessment

The Nepal Tourism Board commissioned Org Marg Nepal to conduct a visitor survey in Nepal in 2001. Some of the key results were as follows:

Demographic profile

- Majority of tourists (43%) fall in the 25-34 age group, with the average age of traveller to Nepal at 36
- 77% of all travellers are employed
- About 68% of the tourists were male

Duration of stay

- Average duration of stay ranges from 24 days for independent travellers to 15 days for the package tour travellers. Indian tourists have a shorter visit period lasting a maximum of 11 days

Purpose of visit

- The main purpose of visitation is to holiday (38%) followed by trekking (32%). Over one-third of the visitors from India are on business and 10% on pilgrimage.
- The main factor for choosing Nepal over other destinations appears to be “natural attraction” (50%) followed by trekking (38%). However, trekking was the most important reason for travellers from Europe and America. Independent travellers rate trekking as the prime reason for choosing Nepal while package tourists rated the natural attraction as their prime motivation. Trekking is more important in May
- Other motivations include: Culture (21%), shopping (19%), family (12%) and wildlife observation (12%)

Information and awareness

- Main source of information about Nepal is “word of mouth”; 43% for the independent traveller and 34% for the package segment. The Internet was a source of information for 8% of travellers.

Travel profile

- 93% arrive by air; only one fourth had a maximum of two flight changeovers.
- Over 57% of independent travellers travelled alone while only 15% of package tourists were alone.
- The average size of group travellers for independent travellers is 3 while that of the package segment is 9.
- Independent travellers tend to stay in cheaper accommodation (41%), while 54% of the package tourists stayed in 3 to 5 star hotels.
- Incidence of availing of package tours to Nepal is 25%. 65% of package tourists are paying upwards of $1000. The majority of package tourists come from South East Asia.
- Average tourist spending in Nepal is around $30 per day
Destinations

- The most popular destinations in Nepal are Kathmandu Valley, Pokhara (44%), Nagarkot (30%), Annapurna region (24%), and Chitwan (22%).
- The Annapurna region is the most popular trekking route. However, the Everest region is more frequented by package tourists (it is easily accessible by air).
- Thailand is often visited on the trip to Nepal; the majority (88%) visit Nepal alone.

Satisfaction levels

- Dissatisfaction with the airport, transport facilities and pollution levels
- At least 97% of the travellers will recommend Nepal to others while over 90% expressed a desire to visit Nepal again.

Strengths, Opportunities, Constraints analysis

Strengths

- Eight of the highest mountains in the world
- Established trekking industry (last 40 years)
- Strong cultural tourism aspect
- Established tourism infrastructure with close development links with rural sector
- Air connectivity
- Strong sustainability/ environmental basis for development

Opportunities

- Undeveloped western and eastern regions of the country
- Reposition for existing markets-
- Pilgrimage and holiday for India
- Pilgrimage, Holiday and sightseeing for S.E Asia
- Holiday and trekking for Western Hemisphere
- New Markets- China

Constraints

- Political instability
- Interstate access
- Physical infrastructure- airport and roads
- Trek permits to remote areas
- Kathmandu city
Key lessons for Uttaranchal

Similar to Nepal in topography, the new Indian State of Uttaranchal only lacks in the absence of the 8000m mountains. The only high mountain in the state is the Nanda Devi Mountain, which is currently closed to climbing. Land locked like Nepal, Uttaranchal faces much of the same problems that Nepal faces today.

Access

Access, like that to Nepal is difficult. However, a crucial lesson learnt in Nepal is the development of the domestic air service that connects every corner of the state. The opening up of the airlines to the private sector has occurred gradually in Nepal but is critical to the growth of the trekking and tourism market in the country. Due to the mountainous topography of the both Nepal and Uttaranchal road network is limited to the flatter Terai region and is limited in the higher areas of the state. Maintenance is also difficult in the higher regions.

Infrastructure

Both social and physical, in the State of Uttaranchal is today inadequate to even furnish the meagre needs of the local communities. The remote hill regions of the State, similar to that in Nepal, are cut off from any form of State infrastructure or aid. Consequently, the tourism infrastructure is very limited too. The Nepal model of developing tourism infrastructure through the private sector and the rural and local communities (i.e. the development of teahouses and rural tourism in the country), with the government acting purely as a catalyst, is a possible model for development in Uttaranchal. The role of the government should be limited to the development of basic infrastructure such as roads, telephone connectivity, the development of airstrips and the water supply. The government should develop development guidelines such as design guidelines, site planning/ selection and marketing guidelines.

Marketing

Marketing is crucial to the development of a destination. However, as in the case of Nepal, most marketing is through word of mouth, a form of marketing that complements nature and niche quality tourism. While most the marketing efforts in Nepal have been random and haphazard, Uttaranchal will need to learn from the Nepal format in order to maintain a low level but high sustainability related aspects of life in the State. Marketing efforts will need to be complimented with adequate development, quality and highly intensive degree of marketing that focuses on the environmental, social

Capacity building

One of the more important aspects of development that has been undertaken by the government. Today, the market in Nepal has responded to the tourism needs of the state, with the development of training institutions in almost every village in the country. The government has invested in the development of education and vocational training in fields as diverse as high altitude cooking to etiquette while dealing with western expeditions to safety and first aid training. The state has also invested in developing a more efficient rescue system for mountaineers and trekkers. The role of NGOs is invaluable in this area and will need to be encouraged.