



The Kumaon Trail

A trek in the Himalayan foothills for wildlife and adventure Pangot – Trek – Corbett National Park

Duration: 06 nights and 07 days

Best Time: November to April

ITINERARY

Day 01: Delhi to Pangot

Day 02: Pangot

Day 03: Trek

Day 04: Trek

Day 05: Corbett National Park

Day 06: Corbett National Park

Day 07: Corbett National Park to Delhi

Highlights

- Beautiful Himalayan views
- Varied flora and fauna
- Off the beaten track villages and sights
- Glimpse into architecture and lifestyle of rural Kumaon
- Tiger sightings at Corbett
- Quaint lodges, camping and exciting jungle stays

Description

This tour takes you through the scenic foothills and Himalayan Mountains with a fabulous experience of the wildlife, birds and the beautiful flora of the region. Trekking through beautiful unexplored forests with some unforgettable vistas,

the treks also provide a glimpse of the lifestyle and unique architecture of the Kumaoni hill folks.

On this trip, you have the option of either driving from Delhi to Pangot (8 hrs) or taking a 6-hour train journey. Arrival at Kathgodam station is followed by a 50 km drive through the scenic hills and the forested area of Cheena Peak Range via Snow View Point and Kilbury, the main habitats for wildlife in this region. You will stay at the quaint and idyllic Jungle Lore Birding Lodge

The first trek is an exciting half-day trek to Cheena Peak with a picnic lunch. We take you to a local house to see a magnificent view of Corbett National Park area and villages (where Jim Corbett killed 10ft long tiger called 'Bachelor of Pawalgarh'). Admiring unique local architecture on the way, we stop at 'Dhamdhamiya' for excellent views and Akhorwadi', home to a lot of walnut trees for spotting various woodpecker species and other birds.

Along the trek we also find a lot of diverse landscapes, flora and fauna. There are deep ravines and small spring water streams created in the monsoon seasons like the one at Ghorgatti. Salimdhar (named after Salim, a type of grass) is especially spectacular when the fog covers the whole area making you feel like you are walking in the clouds.

Reaching Naina Peak (2311 m) you can enjoy a stunning panoramic view of the Himalayas and get a chance to see close up of the peaks through a powerful telescope. On the downward journey, we get superb views of the lake city 'Nainital'. We then head back to Pangot via Kilbury forest. Full of oak and rhododendron trees, it's a great area to spot many birds like Koklas, Kalij Pheasants, Common Kestrel, Grey Winged Blackbird, Black Red Start, Bar-Tailed Tree Creeper etc. You may also spot some animals like Leopards, Himalayan Black Bear, Civet Cat, Porcupine, Deer and Wild Boar etc.

Trekking through the forests, you can see lovely sights of traditionally dressed villagers collecting fodder for their cattle and firewood for their homes.

A bon-fire is the perfect end to the evening, around which the experiences of the trek can be shared.

Next comes an easy 5-hour long trek towards Kunjkharak. This forest trek has an altitudinal variation of 2500 m to 450 m bringing the chance to spot an astounding 500 bird species and equally impressive assemblage of mammals, including the elusive Serow. Highly recommended for beginners, this is a trek along old pony trails, dense broadleaf forests and shallow streams. Dense conifer forests of oak and pine open into scenic valleys and gorges. With spectacular views of the icy Himalayas, you pass through colonial era forest bungalows and small villages and hamlets, where you can see simple hill folks live in harmony with their wild surroundings.

Since this area is actually a high pass, it can get very windy and winter temperatures may drop to 0 degrees, with occasional snowfall in the area. Huge rocks in forested ridges make it a good place to sight high altitude birds like Lammergeier, Himalayan and Eurasian Griffon. Other raptors you may see are

Tawny Eagle, Steppe eagle and Kestrel. Barely a kilometre after Kunjkharak you get a magnificent 380 km broad view of the Himalayan range. A unique feature of this moist temperate forest is the Khoola moss that carpets the floor below. This moss absorbs water and helps in retaining moisture in the forest. However, due to indiscriminate extraction and collection for its use in several cosmetic products, this moss has become highly endangered. Evenings are magical here, as the setting sun transforms the icy Himalayas across Kunjkharak into gold.

The third trek is an easy 6-hour long trek towards Akashkhanda. Being miles away from road, the forest bungalow at Akashkhanda is seldom visited by tourists or even forest officials. Though in a dilapidated state now, this beautiful bungalow is set amidst pine trees and offers complete solitude. On a clear day you get spectacular views of Nanda Ghunti (20,700 ft) and Trishul (23,360 ft). From here the trek takes us to dense temperate forests dominated by oak,

chestnut and rhododendron, which is a riot of red when in bloom. Birds commonly seen here include the colourful Jays, Magpie and Thrushes. This area also supports rich mammal life. On the hill slopes you can try to spot the Ghoral (goat antelope) and on the trail you stumble upon the occasional pugmarks of the leopard. We camp for the night at Akashkhanda (1600 m).

The next day brings us a moderate 8-hour long trek towards Corbett National Park. From here the vegetation gets scanty and the steep ascent can get quite exhausting by the time you reach the small village of Mon. After Mon the trail gets narrow and the climb gets steeper. The vegetation gradually transforms from Coniferous forest to Sal all the way till Kumeria. We go downhill through a narrow broken trail that leads to the village of Okhaldhunga (500m) and then to the village of Damas (600m). The trail is still used by villagers to carry supplies on packhorses and mules. The trek ends at Kumeria; a suspension bridge over the Kosi River at Kunkhet village leads you to the road head. From there, you are taken to a wildlife lodge at Corbett, called Tiger Camp for overnight stay.

The next two days are spent in Corbett National Park.

Established in 1936, Jim Corbett National Park is the first wildlife reserve of India and also the first reserve to come under Project Tiger in 1973.

It was named in the honor of Jim Corbett, legendary hunter-turned-conservationist, best known for hunting man-eating tigers and leopards in the Kumaon and lower Garhwal in the 1920s. Corbett Park provides fantastic opportunity for viewing wildlife, especially the tiger in its natural habitat. The main animals found in the Corbett National Park include the Tiger, Elephant, Chital, Sambar, Nilgai, Gharial, King Cobra, Muntjac, Wild Boar, Hedgehog, Common Musk Shrew, Flying Fox, Indian Pangolin and nearly 600 species of birds.

You can choose to explore the park on or jeep safaris or on an elephant back (subject to availability and on direct payment)

The second night stay is at the Dhikala tourism zone inside the park.

The accommodation in Dhikala is basic but comfortable, with en suite toilets and showers.

Dhikala opens on Nov 16 and remains open till June 15. If this itinerary operates in October till mid November we will visit a different part of the park and stay overnight at Tiger Camp.

On day 7 after another safari, we drive back to Delhi (6 hours) in a private car. The tour ends once we reach Delhi.

ITINERARY

Day 01: Delhi-Pangot

Meals: Lunch and Dinner

Drive from Delhi to Pangot in the morning at 0600 hr, arriving at 0200 pm approx or board the train starting from Delhi at 0600 hours, arriving Kathgodam at noon. The 50 km drive from the station is through the scenic hills and the forested area of Cheena Peak Range via Snow View Point and Kilbury, the main habitats for wildlife. Day free with your guide for a short trek to familiarise with the area. Overnight in Jungle Lore Birding Lodge or Kafal House. Note: Please check about the train timings with us.

Day 02: Pangot

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day trek to Cheena Peak range. One of the most beautiful day treks in the region. Overnight in Jungle Lore Birding Lodge or Kafal House.

Day 03: Vinayak to Kunjkharak Trek

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Today we leave for an easy 5-hour long trek towards Kunjkharak. Overnight at a camp at Kunjkharak.

Day 04: Kunjkharak to Akashkhanda Trek

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Today we leave for an easy 6-hour long trek towards Akashkhanda. We camp for the night at Akashkhanda (1600 m).

Day 05: Trek to Corbett Tiger Reserve

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Today we leave for a moderate 8-hour long trek towards Corbett National Park. The trek ends at Kumeria. A suspension bridge over the Kosi River at Kunkhet village leads you to the road ahead. From there, you are taken to a wildlife lodge with the Corbett park, called Dhikala Forest Rest House for an overnight stay. Arrive at the main tourist complex, Dhikala. Dinner and relax a bit in the serene,

lingering quietness of the park and capture the panoramic expanse on your camera. Note: Dhikala opens on Nov 16 and remains open till June 15. If this itinerary operates in October till mid November we will visit a different part of the park and stay overnight in comfortable cottages at Tiger Camp. Please note that the accommodation in Dhikala is basic but has en suite toilet and shower.

Day 06: Corbett Tiger Reserve

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

You can enjoy an elephant ride (subject to availability and on direct payment) or go for wildlife tracking safari in a 4WD. Return to the tourist complex. Overnight stay at Dhikala.

Day 07: Corbett National Park-Delhi

Meals: Breakfast in Dhikala and Lunch at the resort

Morning Jeep safari through the jungles of Corbett for wildlife viewing, birding and crocodile watching. Return to Tiger Camp by noon for an early lunch. Drive back to Delhi with your car and driver (6 hours) or you may drive to Kathgodam (2 hours) and opt for an air-conditioned afternoon train for a comfortable journey which leaves at 1600 hours, arrives Delhi at 2200 hours. Tour ends.

Note: In case if it snows anytime in December, January, February or March, we shall change the route and opt for a trek in the lower altitude without compromising on the experience.

Services included:

Accommodation on twin sharing basis in the hotels / fully serviced camps -Meals as per the itinerary -Treks and sightseeing with a guide and porters / camp staff -Camping gear, a guide and porters during the trek -Jungle visits in Corbett National Park, with 4WD, entrance fee & park guide -Transport in a private vehicle for all long and short journeys -Any permits / entry fee

Services not included:

-Optional tours/excursions, personal & incidental expenses. -Tips, laundry, phone calls, alcohol, camera fee etc. -International and domestic air fare, visa, insurance, Elephant rides, Train tickets.