



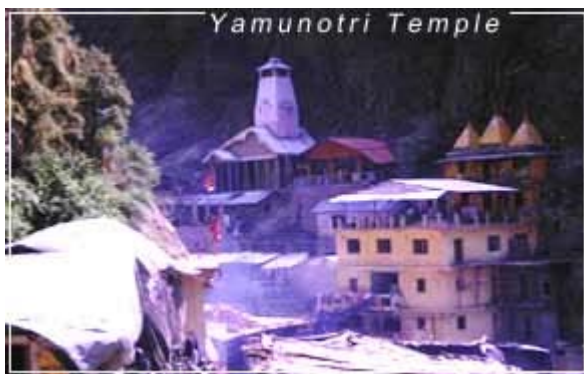
## trekking to Yamunotri

By Venkatesh Dutta

Perched at an altitude of 3293 meters above sea level, Yamunotri is located in the Uttarkashi district of the northern state of Uttaranchal. It is very close to the Indo-Chinese border and is surrounded by the Himalayan offshoots on all sides. Yamunotri, lies near the Bandarpunch Mountain, which is 6315 m high and lies to the north. The glacial lake of Saptarishi Kund, on the Kalind Parbat, at an altitude of 4421 m, is the real source of the Yamuna River. Yamunotri is at a distance of 278 km from Dehradun, 236 km from Rishikesh, 176 km from Chamba, and 21 km from Sanya Chatti. It remains cool even during summers. The winters are snow-bound and temperatures fall below 0°C. One is advised to carry light or heavy woolens depending on the time of visit. Best season to visit is May-June and September-October.



**Y**amunotri, the source of the river Yamuna, is the western most shrine in the Garhwal Himalayas, located on a flank of the Bandarpunch peak (the revered shrine of Yamunotri, source of the shadow of the 6,315 mts high Bandarpunch mountain). It constitutes one of the four most important pilgrimages, collectively called '*char dham*' of the Garhwal Himalayas.



Just like Gangotri (the place where the river Ganges originates) Yamunotri is the place where the river Yamuna originates. This pilgrim centre is in the Uttarkashi region at a height of 3233 mts above sea level on the western side of the Banderpoonch peak which is at a height of 6316 mts above sea level. The last bus stop is

Hanuman Chatti which is 14 kms away by foot.

The actual source of river Yamuna lies a further one km. ahead of Yamunotri, at an altitude of 4,421 m, and the trek to this place is extremely difficult, so pilgrims usually offer obeisance at the Yamunotri temple itself. Legend has it that a sage, Asit Muni, used to reside at this secluded spot in ancient times. The chief attraction at Yamunotri is the temple devoted to goddess Yamuna and the holy thermal springs at Jankichatti (7 km. away). This ancient temple was made by the King of Tehri, Pratap Shah in 1919. It is said that the temple of Yamunotri was built by Maharani Gularia of Jaipur in the last decade of the 19th century. In 1923 this was destroyed, with only the idols left, and was rebuilt. It was once again damaged in 1982. A hot water pool

at Yamunotri is used for the preparation of "PRASAD" normally rice and potatoes, cooked by dipping them in the hot water, tied in cloth bags.

During winters this place is buried under a heavy blanket of snow, so the approach is extremely difficult. The track along the river bank is quite magnificent, dominated by a wide panorama of mountains. The whole trek to the temple passes through many large and small rivers, lakes, canals, forests, waterfalls, villages and meadows.

### **TREKKING TO YAMUNOTRI**

For reaching Yamunotri, one has to undertake a 220 km journey from Rishikesh to Hanumanchatti, where the motorable road ends. The remaining 13 km journey has to be covered on foot or on ponies.

The temple remains closed during the winter months of Nov. to April.

Yamunotri is famous for its trekking routes. The trek route from Hanuman Chatti to Yamunotri is 14 km and takes about 5 hours. It is a picturesque route through the countryside following the river track.

The Dodi Tal track, which links Gangotri and Yamunotri, is a famous trek route. It starts from Kalyani, en route Gangotri from Uttar Kashi. It then goes on to Agoda, Dodi Tal (3024 m), Darwa Top (4130 m), Shima and finally Hanuman Chatti. The entire route is about 60 km long and takes about four days to complete.

There is another trek from Hanuman Chatti to Phul Chatti and from Janki Chatti to Kharsali.

Both routes, from Rishikesh or Dehra Dun converge at Barkot, a place of great scenic beauty, with apple orchards all around and the great Himalaya range forming the skyline. Actual trekking starts from Hanuman Chatti, the road to which is motorable. Buses ply from Rishikesh/Dehra Dun/Barkot.

<b>Place</b>	<b>Altitude (M)</b>	<b>Distance (km)</b>	<b>Accommodation</b>
Dehra Dun	701	-	TB*, PWD*, F*, H*
Barkot	1828	128 motor	TB*, F*, PWD*
Hanuman Chatti	2134	34 motor	TB*, F*, PWD *
Phool Chatti	2561	5 trek	V*, DS*
Janaki Chatti	2567	2 trek	DS*, PWD*, TB*
Yamunotri	3323	6 trek	TB*

\* TB = Tourist Bungalow, H = Hotel, F = Forest Lodge, V = Village, DS = Dharamshala, PWD = Public Works Department Rest House

### **GANGOTRI TO YAMUNOTRI VIA DODITAL**

This is a trek of great beauty between Kalyani & Hanuman Chatti, a distance of 49 km. You can do a round trip from either end.

From Uttarkashi take a local bus to Gangotri & get off at the confusingly named

Gangotri (3 km) or walk it. Here take the track to your left up to Kalyani (1,829 m), the recognized starting point of the trek. From here it gets steeper as the path climbs through forest to Agoda (2,280 m, 5 km), a suitable camping or halting place. The next day carry to Dodital (3,024 m), picturesquely set in a forest of pine, deodar & oak. This is the source of Asi Ganga & is stocked with trout. There is a Forest Rest House. Above the lake there are fine views of Bander Punch (6,378 m, Monkey's tail). To reach Hanuman Chatti (2,400 m) walk up to the Aineha Pass (3,667 m, 6 km) which also has splendid views. Then it is a 22 km walk down to Hanuman Chatti, the road head for Yamunotri.

### **Yamunotri, via Dodi Tal**

This is an interesting trek which starts from Uttarkashi, situated at the bank of Bhagirathi (Ganga) river, and reaches Yamunotri, the source of Yamuna river. The bus journey from Delhi to Uttarkashi is the same to Gangotri-Gaumukh trek. Due to acute lack of accommodation facilities at Yamunotri, pilgrims usually do not halt, but return the same day to Janakibai Chatti after the visit.

A usual short trek to Yamunotri starts from Hanumanchatti (one day).

It takes two days to reach Hanumanchatti roadhead from Delhi, via Hardwar or Mussoorie.

#### ***1: Uttarkashi - Agoda, 2286 (11 km)***

The first 11 km up to Kalyani can be covered by bus or jeep. Beyond, the trail is very steep right up to Agoda. The Forest rest house is situated half a km further on.

#### ***2: Agoda, 2286 - Dodi Tal, 3307 m (16 km)***

The trail passes through a dense pine forest, which is the home of long-tailed monkeys. Midway there is a shepherd's hut. After a steep climb of a few more km the trail reaches Dodi Tal, a pool of dazzling water surrounded by dense forest. Forest rest house.

#### ***3: Dodi Tal, 3307 m - Shepherd's hut, 3020 m (15 km)***

From Dodi Tal the trail goes up steeply and reaches Sonpara Top, 3953 m, after a trek of 9 km. From the top the entire Bandarpunch group of peaks can be seen in all its glory. Sonapara Top is a long ridge and after following the ridge for 2 km, goes downwards till it reaches the grassy ground where a shepherd's hut is situated.

#### ***4: Shepherd's hut, 3020 m - Hanumanchatti, 2400 m (10 km)***

A strenuous trek through thick vegetation. Can be easily lost on the trail. Forest rest house and dharamshalas.

#### ***5: Hanumanchatti, 2400 m - Yamunotri, 3185 m (14 km)***

After walking 7 km along the Yamuna river upstream, you arrive at Janak Chatti, 2575 m. Yamunotri in another 7 km beyond. A bath in the hot water springs at Yamunotri is most refreshing. Forest rest house, dharamshalas and pilgrims' hotel.

#### **6: Yamunotri - Hanumanchatti (14 km)**

Take a bus from there, via Barkot, to Mussoorie.

Mussoorie to Delhi is another 7 hours journey by bus.

### **TREK FROM RISHIKESH TO YAMUNOTRI**

**Best Season:** May, June, Sep

#### **ITINERARY**

**DAY 1:** Delhi - Flight:

Arrive Delhi. Overnight Hotel stay.

**DAY 2:** Delhi/Rishikesh - Coach: Morning drive to Rishikesh via Hardwar (225 km). Overnight stay at Tourist Bungalow.

**DAY 3:** Rishikesh/Uttarkashi/Kalyani - Coach: Morning drive to Uttarkashi (148 km). Arrive Uttarkashi and overnight stay at Shikhar Nature Resort.

**DAY 4:** Uttarkashi/Kalyani/Agoda - Trek: Morning after breakfast drive to Kalyani and start the first day's trek to Agoda (2050 m) through dense forest. Overnight stay at Tourist Bungalow.

**DAY 5:** Agoda/Dodital - Trek: Morning after breakfast start trekking to reach Dodital (3024 m). Dodital is a beautiful lake surrounded by forest of pine, deodar, oak etc. and is full of golden trout. Arrive and overnight stay at Tourist Bungalow.

**DAY 6:** Doidtal/Darba Top - Trek: Morning after breakfast start trekking to reach Darba Top (3500 m), with a panoramic view of Mt. Kala Nag, Banderpunch and its satellite peaks. Overnight stay in tents below Darba Top.

**DAY 7:** Darba Top/Hanumanchatti - Trek: Morning after breakfast start trekking to reach Hanumanchatti (2400 m). Arrive and overnight stay at Tourist Bungalow.

**DAY 8:** Hanumanchatti/Yamunotri - Trek: Morning after breakfast start trekking to reach Yamunotri (3000 m) source of the Yamuna river and one of the holiest place in Uttar Pradesh. Visit Yamunotri shrine. Overnight stay at Tourist Bungalow.

**DAY 9:** Yamunotri/Hanumanchatti - Trek: Morning after breakfast start trekking to reach Hanumanchatti. Overnight stay at Tourist Bungalow.

**DAY 10:** Hanumanchatti/Dehra Dun- Coach: Morning after breakfast drive to reach Dehra Dun. Arrive and overnight stay at hotel.

**DAY 11:** Dehradun/Delhi - Coach: Morning drive to reach Delhi. Upon arrival transfer to airport to board flight for onward destination.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### Places of Interest:

**Yamuna Devi temple:** This temple was built in the 19th century by a descendent of the Jaipur royal family. It is said that this temple was destroyed twice by landslides and was reconstructed again in the 20th century. Due to heavy snowfall this temple is closed from November to May.

**Surya Kund:** Close to the Yamuna Devi temple, there are many hot water springs of which Surya Kund is the most important. In this spring the water is so hot that people boil rice and potatoes here by tying them in a cloth and immersing them in the water for a while.

**Saptarishi Kund Lake:** 10 kms from Yamunotri, this is an extremely difficult journey covered with ice. This is the actual place where Yamuna rises. The water of the glaciers gathers in this lake. The colour of the water here is a deep blue. On the banks of the lake are naturally carved slate stones. The rare Brahma Lotus grows here.

**Janaki Chatti:** 7 kms from Yamnotri, this is another place where there are hot water springs. Many hotels and lodges are available. This is the best place for food in the valley. One road from here leads to the last village of Kharsali.

**Kharsali:** 1 km from Janaki Chatti the old temples here are worth visiting. The carved stones on the walls of houses and the woodwork are amazing. The temple here is four storeyed.

**Hanuman Chatti:** This is the last bus stop for Yamnotri. There is a Hanuman temple here. Government guest houses and hotels are available here. Horses and ponies are also hired for further journeys.

**Badkot:** 36 kms before Hanuman Chatti, Badkot is a pretty village. All facilities are available here. An ancient temple is located here. This place is 49 kms from Yamnotri.

**Clothings:** Light woollens in summer and heavy woollens in winter. Light woollens in summer and heavy woollens in winter.

### Temperature:

Climate	Max	Min
Summer	20°C	below 0°C
Winter	Below 0°C	Below 0°C

**Travel Plans:** There is no direct route to Yamnotri. 14 kms before Yamnotri is Hanuman Chatti till where bus services are available. From there, one has to walk.

Hanuman Chatti is connected to Rishikesh, Dehra Dun, VikasNagar, Mussoorie, Uttarkashi, Gangotri and Badkot by regular bus services.

Taxis and jeeps can be hired from here. The closest railway station is Rishikesh but very few trains run on this line. There are no air services available.

#### **Distances from Cities and Towns:**

<b>Cities</b>	<b>Kms</b>
Dehra Dun	278
Rishikesh	236
Chamba	176
Tehri	157
Dharasu	107
Uttarkashi	134
Brahmakhal	85
Badkot	50
Janaki Chatti	21
Hanuman Chatti	14

#### **YAMUNOTRI - WHERE TO STAY**

There are ashrams, dharamshalas, and a few guesthouses in Yamunotri. The Garhwal Mandal Vikas Nigam (GMVN) Tourist houses at Janki Chatti and Yamunotri can be checked out. These are mostly in the form of dormitories. The Ramananda Dharamshala is a good place to stay. One can find simple vegetarian food in these places. Alcohol is strictly prohibited and discouraged.

**Hotels:** Only guest houses are available here which are not very comfortable. But in Janaki Chatti which is 7 kms away there is a travellers lodge. Other tourist bungalows and lodges are run by the Garhwal Mandal Corporation which is quite comfortable. Badkot also has a few places for accommodation.

**Tourist Season:** From May to November, the gates of the temples are opened. During monsoons it gets very difficult to travel.

#### **FACILITIES:**

#### **HOW TO GET THERE**

- **AIR :** Airport Jolly Grant, 17 km from Rishikesh & 24 km from Dehradun.
- **RAIL :** The nearest convenient Railway stations are Dehradun and Hardwar.

- ROAD** : Yamunotri is easily approached from Rishikesh, Saharanpur and Dehradun. En route accommodations and other facilities are available at the following places:
  - RISHIKESH-YAMUNOTRI ROUTE** : Narendra Nagar, Chamba, Tehri, Dharasu, Barkot, Sayana Chatti, Hanuman Chatti, Jankibai Chatti,
  - DEHRADUN-YAMUNOTRI ROUTE**: Mussoorie, Kempty Falls, Yamuna bridge, Damta, Kunwa, Naugaon.
  - SAHARANPUR-YAMUNOTRI ROUTE** : Herbertpur, Dak Pathar.

