



Kedarnath is a Hindu holy town located in the Indian state of Uttarakhand. It is a nagar panchayat in Rudrapur district. The most remote of the four Char Dham sites, Kedarnath is located in the Himalayas, about 3584m above sea level near the head of river Mandakini, and is flanked by breathtaking snow-capped peaks. Kedarnath hosts one of the holiest Hindu temples, the Kedarnath Temple, and is a popular destination for Hindu pilgrims from all over the world, being one of the four major sites in India's Chota Char Dham pilgrimage.

Kedarnath is named in honor of King Kedar who ruled in the Satya Yuga. He had a daughter named Vrinda who was a partial incarnation of Goddess Lakshmi. She performed austerities for 60000 years. In honour of her, the land is named Vrindavan. However, Kedarnath and its temple exist from the Mahabharata Era when the Pandavas are supposed to have pleased Lord Shiva by doing penance there.

Kedarnath Temple

Kedarnath Mandir is one of the holiest Hindu temples dedicated to Lord Shiva and is located atop the Garhwal Himalayan range near the Mandakini river in Kedarnath, Uttarakhand in India. Due to extreme weather conditions, the temple is open only between the end of April to start of November. Here god Shiva is worshipped as Kedarnath, the 'Lord of Kedar Khand', the historical name of the region.

The temple is not directly accessible by road and has to be reached by a 14 km uphill trek from Gaurikund. The temple is believed to have been built by Adi Sankaracharya and is one of the twelve Jyotirlingas, the holiest Hindu shrines of Shiva. The older temple existed from the times of Mahabharata, when the Pandavas are supposed to have pleased Shiva by doing penance in Kedarnath. The temple is also one of the four major sites in India's Chota Char Dham pilgrimage of Northern Himalayas.

There are 2 ways to reach Kedarnath: 1) By foot for a steep 14 km trek through a paved path (horses or palanquins are available for rent) from Gaurikund, which is connected by road from Rishikesh, Haridwar, Dehradun and other known hill stations of Garhwal and Kumaon regions in Uttarakhand 2) Through air travel. Recently government has started Pawan Hans Helicopter Service from Agastyamuni and Phata to Kedarnath. The fare is reasonable.

The temple opens on Akshaya Tritiya (April end or first week of May) and closes on Bhai Duj (October end or 1st week of November) due to heavy snowfall and extreme cold weather during winter. Gaurikhund is 75 km from Rudraprayag. In between Rudraprayag and Kedarnath there are several places of pilgrimage such as Agastyamuni, Ukhimath, Phauli- Pasalat Devi Maa, Bamsu (Lamgoundi) Vanasur, Maa Kali at Kalimath, Trijugi Narayan (7 km from Son Prayag) (Where Lord Shankar got married to Goddess Parwati from when the fire of hawan kund is still alive) and Kashi Vishwanath at Guptakashi.

There are several guest houses in Kedarnath like Birla House, Sanjay Shukla Lodge, Maharashtra Mandal, Kali Kamali Dharmasala etc. All of them have nominal charges and provide lodging as well as food. pooja /prasad (shukla pooja prasad center near birla mangal niketan) In Kedarnath Udak Kund is located. It is written in Kedar Khand of Shiv Mahapuran that the water of Udak Kund is mixture of all the 5 Oceans and always remain fresh even when kept for many years. The holy water of Udak Kund is used for purification rituals. Hans Kund, Bharo Nath, Navdurga Mandir, Shankaracharya Samadhi, Ishaneswar Mahadev Temple, Ret Kund, Panch Ganga Sangam, Chaurwari Taal now known as Gandhi Sarowar, Bashuki Taal are also places to visit here.

Demographics

As of 2001 India census, Kedarnath had a population of 479. Males constitute 98% of the population and females 2%. Kedarnath has an average literacy rate of 63%, higher than the national average of 59.5%: male literacy is 63%, and female literacy is 36%. In Kedarnath, 0% of the population is under 6 years of age.

During winter due to heavy snowfall, the Temple is closed and no one stays in Kedarnath. For six months (November to April) the Palki of Lord Kedarnath is transferred to a place near

Guptakashi called Ukhimath. People shift their settlement too from Kedarnath to nearby villages. Around 360 families of Tirtha Purohit of 55 villages and other nearby villages are depend on Kedarnath.