

Mcleodganj - Triund (Himachal Pradesh)

or

Sumi's first proper Trek

We had already spent three days in Mcleodganj before we started our trek. We used that time to visit the Dalai lama and his beautiful temple and walk around and acclimatise. Photography wasn't allowed in the temple but we did manage to make it the background to this photo taken on the path bypassing it.



We also, drank yummy cappaccino's at the coffee shop and ate tenshi (dry fruit biscuits). The cafe had a photo of Richard Gere with two of the waitresses who served us. So in a manner of speaking we felt we had met him as well!

Another morning was spent walking to the Bhagsu waterfall. Below is a picture of the path (on the right) leading to the waterfall. We had breakfast (with a view) in the small café seen on the middle right of the picture.



Below is a picture of us enjoying the water. It was freezing and we couldn't stand in it for long. As usual, there was a small tea shop at the waterfall (we encountered tea shops everywhere on this trip, even at the snowline!). They had kept crates of juice bottles in the water so that they could serve them chilled. One thing that struck us about all the places we saw, is how neat and clean they were. No garbage and definitely no plastics bags lying around. We later found out that plastic bags are banned in Himachal and what a difference it makes.



On Monday, the whole trek troupe ( 6 adults and Sumi, aged 3.5 years old) had assembled in Mcleodganj, arriving from Chennai at different times but now all ready to hit the trail.

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After a filling breakfast of sweet tea and alu parathas, we began our walk through the jungle to a small settlement called Gullu. Although only an hour away from Mcleodganj by road, we were going to take the scenic route through the forest. The walk would take about four hours.

We came around a corner and there were the mountains in all their glory....





After a short break to admire the view, we continued on our way with Sumi walking as well.

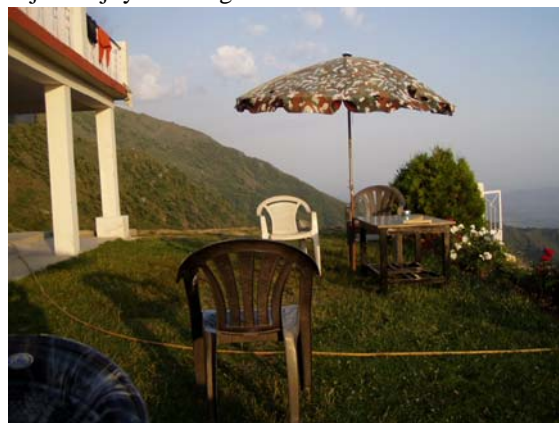


We took another break at a teashop (where else?!) at the river. However, we weren't the only ones enjoying the river. A large number of goats and sheep were grazing upstream from us. We didn't let this deter us



when we came back several days later and actually waded in the water which seemed awfully clean.

After another hour of walking we reached the cottage a Gullu and made ourselves comfortable. The cottage was simple but more than adequate. In addition to all its charms, one corner of the balcony had a bookshelf with an interesting assortment of books, presumably left by fellow travellers. There was one book with a passionate scene on the front cover but was in Dutch! Some of us helped ourselves to an English book each and sat in the sun enjoying the first day of our trek. Others just enjoyed lazing!



The second day

After breakfast, we set off for the meadow at Triund where we would spend the next two nights. We stopped again at a teashop on the way. Ashok, our guide slowed down and walked close to Subbu since Subbu was carrying Sumi. Below is a picture of Sumi with Ashok at the teashop.



Although the walk wasn't tough and took about five hours, we didn't really have the energy to take more photos so the camera got put away till Triund. Sumi walked the last stretch and was getting tired but before she could say anything, she was whisked away by Ashok and reached Triund in style. He did put her down so that she could walk the last few steps herself. Threatening rain clouds hovered over the distant mountains although the meadow itself was sunny. But the wind was cold and we had to keep our warm gear on.





In the tent,



from the tent...



and all around.



The high altitude and less oxygen didn't affect someones spirits...



The following picture should be labelled either 'Chew with a view' or 'loo with a view' depending on whether you were looking at it from the point of view of the sheep or Sumi!



Triund is a beautiful meadow. It is very clean and there were a large number of people camping, although most of them were non-Indians. In fact, there was a large number of Israelis and in the night, we could hear singing in Hebrew. We had a more or less uneventful night in the tent, except for the mules that were grazing nearby and occasionally stepped on someone in the tent!

Day three

The walk to the Glacier



We've reached!



On the glacier...



We couldn't stay at the Glacier for too long as the sky clouded over and a storm seemed imminent. It was extremely cold as well and so we hurried back down to the tea shop near the snow line. We reached and huddled in just in time to avoid some heavy wind and rain. We sat inside, drank tea and by then the storm had passed and we could go on our way. We spent the rest of the day walking around at Triund itself. It felt like the meadow went on endlessly. Lovely stretches of green with huge boulders. Simply magnificent. That night, our tents were put to the test as there was a major storm. The wind was so strong that the tent was almost touching our noses and we had to push back the wall ever so often. The wind rose and died several times during the night but we were all dry and safe.

The next morning, we packed our tents and set off back to Gullu, where we spent the next three days. Since we didn't have a camera with large enough zoom, we didn't take any pictures of birds but we saw lots of them during our stay in Himachal. The Verditer flycatcher was all over the place. All in all, we saw 50 different types of birds and a lot of them from quite close up. I truly enjoyed this kind of bird watching.

Himachal Pradesh is an amazingly beautiful state and we will surely visit again. We were also very impressed with the High point Trekking group that organised the trek for us. Not only were the people very nice, they were also extremely professional. All in all, it was a terrific holiday and it was with much regret that we bid farewell to HP and started our long journey back home.

