



KLN's Travelogues

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# Himalayan Trekking Adventures!

2018, Edition.



by [Nitheesh K L](#) on August 06, 2018

Travelogue of a 7 day trek in the greater Himalayas region of Uttarakhand by Phalgun and me with India Hikes.

With heavy snow, avalanches, river crossing and unexpected cancellations, this year's edition had plenty of drama in it. I've tried to capture some of these moments briefly here.

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## THE ITINERARY

was more like a random turn of events actually!



The original plan was to do the Kedartal trek (~16000 ft). Unfortunately, there was an avalanche just a few days before our batch, and it killed a porter and also stranded the first batch at a dangerous section. They all had to be rescued by the forest dept and that trail got closed for us.

We were then given an option to do the Gaumukh Tapovan trek (~14000 ft) since it starts from the same point and took the same number of days, or to forfeit and get refund. Since we had our travel booking done, we chose to do the Gaumukh Tapovan trek. Unfortunately, due to heavy snow, the previous batch (first for this season) couldn't even make it past the first campsite. We however, made it till the Gaumukh glacier, but found the glacier broken and impassable to continue to Tapovan. We tried to cross the river, but the force was too much one of them got carried away in the currents and had to be rescued. The forest dept closed the tapovan route also after this.

With three more days left and nothing else to do, our good trek leader managed to collate the leftover resources and got approvals to do the Dayara Bugyal trek (~12000 ft). Kedartal difficulty level was hard, Gaumukh's was medium, but Dayara Bugyal felt like a walk in the park.

Nevertheless, we completed the commute & trek to Dayara Bugyal in the last three days and enjoyed a relaxed ending, with a great party!



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## Day -1: Arrive in Dehradun

With only one flight a day from Bangalore to Dehradun, we had to arrive a day early. We did some exploring in the evening.



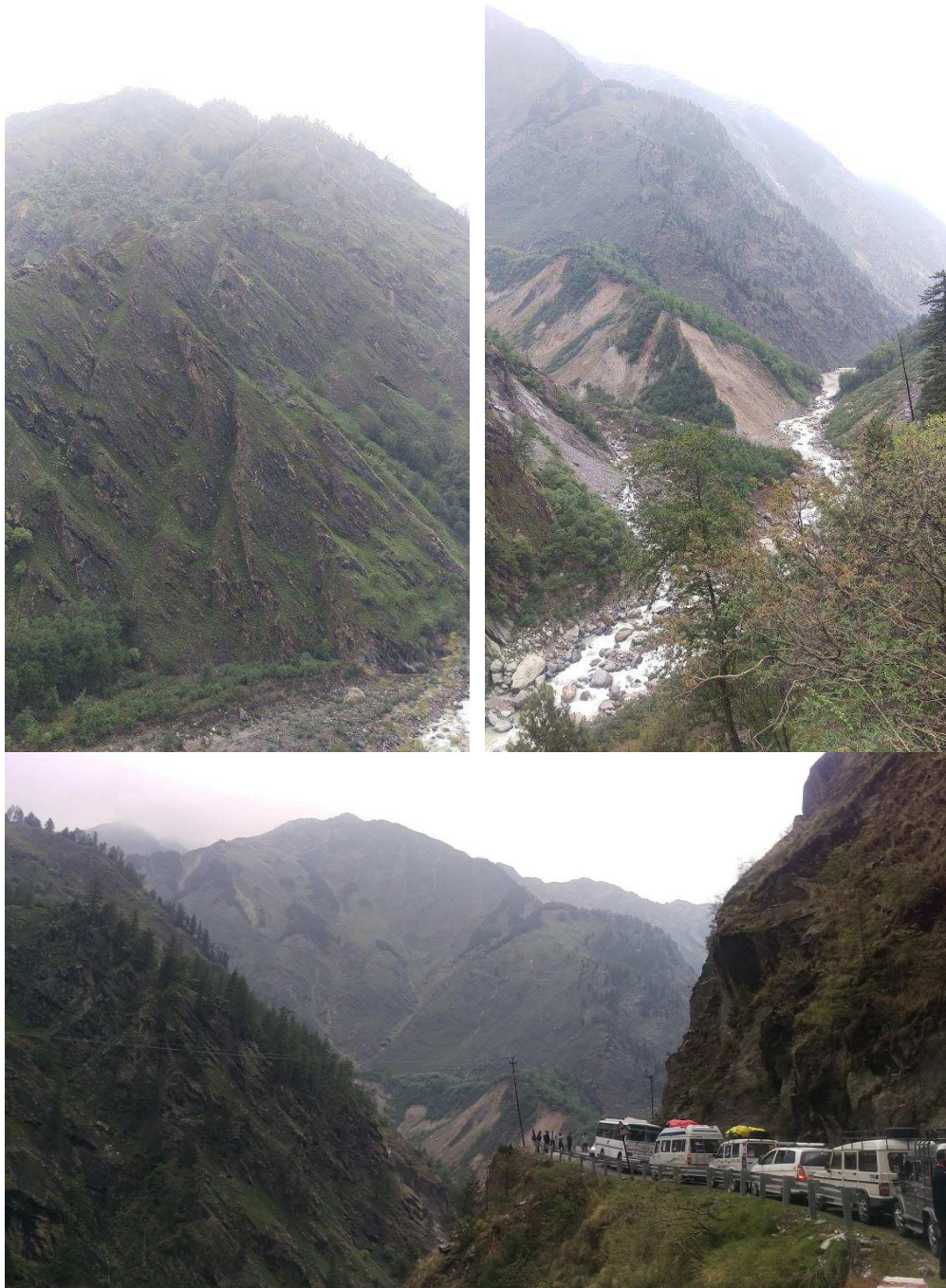
Our room for the night | The local punjabi delicacy | Doon Love | The local markets



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## Day 0: Cab ride from Dehradun to Dharali

The team joined together at the railways station at 6:00 am and we all shared 3 cabs among us to reach Dharali, which was our base camp. Took us nearly 12 hours for the entire ride.



Route is scenic, but encountered huge traffic pile up near Dharali.



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## Day 1: Cab to Gangotri, then trek to Chirbasa campsite

Trekking trail starts from Gangotri and goes through the Gangotri national park. Camping permits are required to enter.



Entering the national park. The trail is pretty flat here, along the Bhagirathi river. The skies were blue and we could see clearly through the entire valley.





First views of the snow peaks





Bhagirathi river, flowing fresh of the glacier. Water crossings on the way.





Chirbasa campsite. Being the first day, we were exhausted by the time we reach the site.





Views from Chirbasa campsite.



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By now, the entire group were well acquainted with each other. Let me introduce the characters.

## The leaders



On the left is **Anil bhai** - our fearless trekking guide who was leading us from the front. He's lived in this region for his entire life and has climbed pretty much all the major peaks you'll see in the pictures here.

In the middle is **Saurabh bhai** - our assistant guide and was the sweeper in the back. He's also a mountaineer from this region. He was always in the back giving good company to the ones with slow pace and made sure they didn't get left behind.

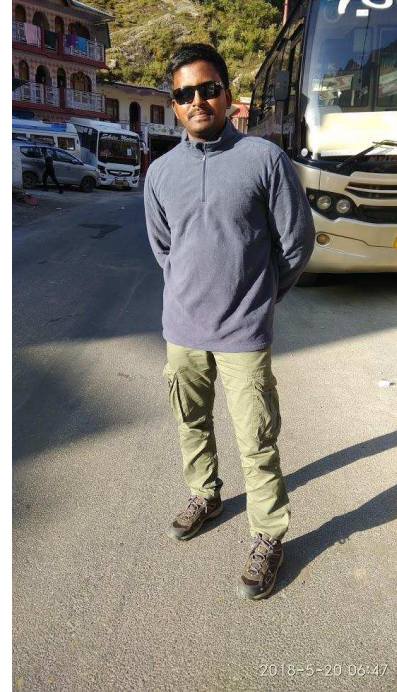
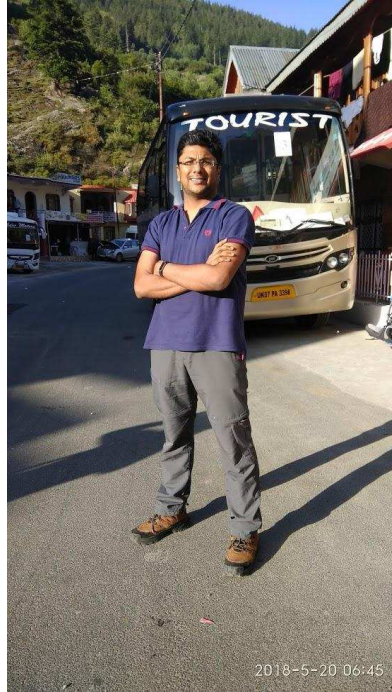
On the right is **Dushyant** - our trek leader from India hikes. Had all the right traits of being a great leader. He interacted with every single one of us while trekking and ensured everyone got the right attention and care.

These three by far were the best trek leader & guides I've had in all my Himalayan treks. They made the entire trek adventurous and also safe and comfortable at the same time. So a big shout-out to them!



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## The Chennai Boys



From left - **Hari Kishan**, **Ram** and **Karthik**. These guys had some majorly psyched out stories from their past treks, like, one fellow from their Kashmir Great Lakes trek got lost few years ago and has still not been found!

## The French Gang



Top left - **Pablo**

Top right - **Maxime**

Bottom left - **Antoine**

Bottom right - **Aurélien**

They were pretty cool. They all worked at the French embassy in Delhi and had been in India for the last two years.



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## A Confused Soul



Meet **Harsha** from Bangalore. He joined us along with the french guys. They had trekked Goechala together last year and so join this trek together. He's a Yoga professional and a teacher. Throughout the trek, I couldn't find him confirm on any decision and always asked people around for suggestions. Hence the title.

## The Couple



**Sanket & Anushree** from Mumbai. This was their first trek and were pretty nervous. By the end, they were transformed from amateurs to pros. Anushree was the only person in the group to be happy when Kedartal & Tapovan got cancelled! Sanket had a pretty good taste in music.

## The Cousins



**Vikram** (a.k.a **Momaya**) from Mumbai and **Nirali** from Madhya Pradesh. They were cousins. Nirali had just finished her engineering and was the youngest of the lot. It was her first trek as well. Vikram, I think, was the most hilarious of the group.



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## The Friendly Belgian



**Bart** - An extremely friendly globetrotter from Belgium. This guy was just like the characters one would read in the book. Every year he takes a month off for vacation and travels to a different country, without any phone or laptop! And he's been doing it since he was 19. This trek was the last part of his travel in India. He traveled with us in the cab and so got to know a lot about him and all his travels around the world. A true inspiration for travelers, I'd say.

Also, he's a professional football coach in Belgium. Just look at his massive legs!

He captured some amazing pictures of us, but hasn't shared them with us yet.

## The Encyclopedia



**Shobhit** was from Delhi. Not sure what his profession was or his background, but this guy knew the answers to pretty much any question you could ask about the surrounding regions or the Himalayas. After a point, we all just bowed down in respect of his general knowledge.

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## The Latecomer



**Aman** from Nagpur. He arrived an hour late on Day 0, and waiting for him cost us an additional 3 hours in traffic. He was late for breakfast, dinner, pulse-oxy readings...etc. He was the second youngest after Nirali. However, we all thought he was from Delhi until the end.

But beside all of that, we all were thankful to him for getting the frisbee to the trek, which we played a lot and had fun.

## The Bong



**Rituparna** from West Bengal - **Ritu** was the most hyper of us all and as the title suggests, she came with a lot of weird bengali names for common things. Word like 'kat-badam', 'fanifall'...etc. I give up! I can't remember those names.

She's also clicked some amazing pictures which you'll see in the upcoming sections.

## The Ladha



**Ankit Ladha** from Mumbai - **Ankit** was into marine business and ran a company that dealt with ship engines. He was an experienced trekker and traveled with us in the cab along with Bart. Got along very well with him and he was our tent mate for the entire trek.

This fellow absolutely doesn't look and behave like he has a 2 year old son. Had to make him show his son's birth certificate to prove it!



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And lastly, us



That's me, **Nitheesh**, on the left and **Phalgun** on the right. We are two techies from Bangalore. Phalgun is my best buddy from college and we've been traveling & trekking together ever since. We travel to the Himalayas every year for a trek and been doing so for several years now.

Oh, and also the porters & cooks



None of this would be possible without the help and support of these people. They carry all the ration & supplies needed to cook for us and provide us with delicious food throughout the expedition. They even managed to bake a cake for the birthday folks during the trek. They truly are the unsung heroes of every mountain expeditions!



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## An evening in Chirbasa campsite

Since we arrived at the campsite by 3:00 pm, we had the entire evening to relax. We sat by the river till sunset and shared plenty of stories & experiences among each other.





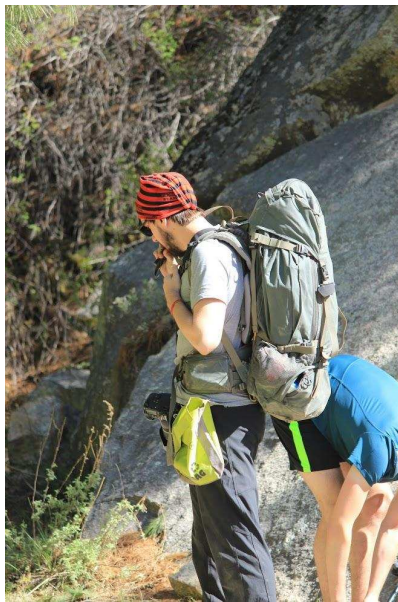
And the sunset was just brilliant





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## Day 2: Chirbasa campsite to Bhojbasa campsite



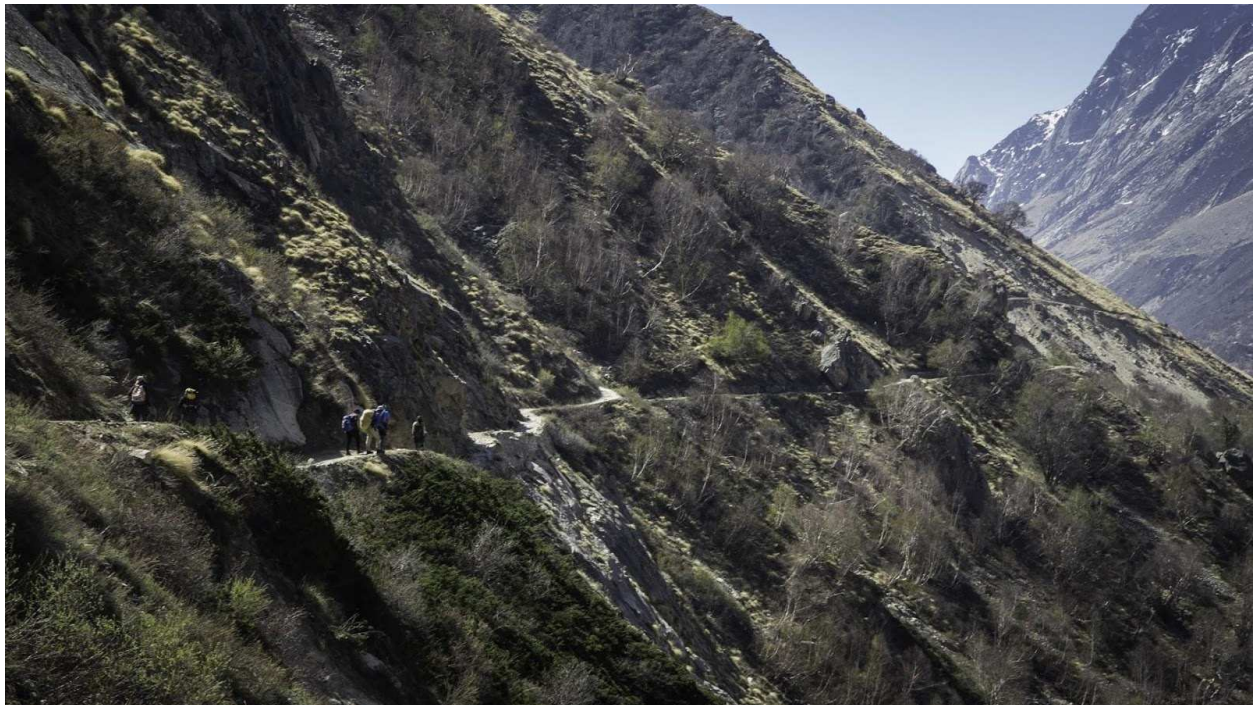
Scenes of packing up and getting ready to leave in the morning





Views of Mt. Sudarshan from the trail to Bhojbasa campsite





The narrow trail to Bhojbasa along steep slopes and loose rocks. This region is prone to landslides





A distant view of Bhojbasa campsite and the Bhagirathi 2,3 &1 peaks in the backdrop.



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Since we reached Bhojbasa by noon, we still had half the day left and hence decided to drop off our bags and go for an acclimatization walk to the Gaumukh glacier.



On the way to the Gaumukh glacier





That's as close as we could get to the Gaumukh glacier. Yes, that muddy layers beneath the mountains is the glacier, originating from the Bhagirathi peaks 2,3 & 1 in the background. As you can see, it was broken and covered from debris of landslides. The original route was to follow a narrow trail on the left and cross the glacier to the right and go past the Bhagirathi peaks towards Tapovan. We tried to find a safe route as much as possible, but the entire region was unstable and venturing in here would be highly risky. Unfortunately, we had to turn back.





Mt. Shivling, on the top, and other peaks surrounding us at the Gaumukh glacier.





With no other choice, we returned to Bhojbasa and relaxed for the rest of the evening.



The views from Bhojbasa campsite



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With vast open landscapes, the wind chill gets freezing here in the night as the sun goes down. We all gathered around inside the dining tents for all the activities. We played here, shared conversations, sang songs, had debates, arguments and quizzes, did all the team meetings and also had our food.



One such session inside the dining tents. It was pretty cozy and warm. Bart slept in the sleeping tent for the entire trek

Since we were all pretty upset of not being able to Kedartal and now, not even Tapovan, Dushyant didn't want to give up and discussed with other groups trek leaders, the guides, the forest dept people and also the cooks and porters and came up with a plan by dinner time. The plan was that Dushyant & Anil bhai will chart a route through the river at Bhojbasa and try crossing it at the morning, since the water flow would be lowest in the morning, and if they feel safe enough, then we all could cross the river and continue the trek. That meant getting wet early in the morning in cold glacial waters, but it seemed like a fair plan.





Sunrise at Bhojbasa.



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Beautiful morning colors









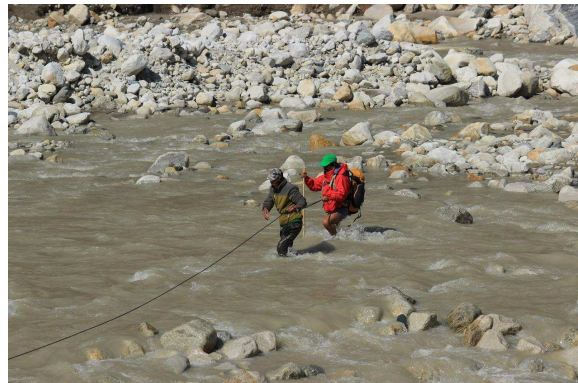
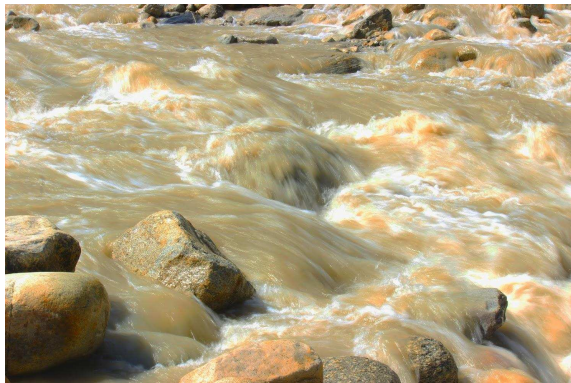


The next morning, I woke up early and joined Anil bhai and Dushyant to find a way across. There was only one section where the water level was below our waistline, but that was also the widest section of the river. Everywhere else, the water was deep and the rapids were powerful. Me and Anil bhai trekked almost until the glacier to find a safe spot for crossing, but we couldn't. The river would look narrow and calm from a distance, but as we get close, we could see it raging through the huge boulders. At one point, I even slipped climbing a boulder and almost fell into the river!



We realized we were dealing a risky hand and returned. Meanwhile at Bhojbasa, a group of 3 experienced bongos tried to cross the river across the path we had charted. One made through, but next one got swept away at midway point to almost a 100 meters. Luckily, he was harnessed with roped and was rescued. Everyone watched it happen. That was a clear indication we couldn't cross, especially with all the baggage & rations. And so, our dreams of reaching Tapovan got crushed!





The Bhagirathi river at Bhojbasa and the bongas attempting to cross it.



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With Tapovan not happening, we still have 3 more days left and we didn't want to waste it just going around on small, day treks, in the same place. So Dushyant tried to see if could at least do Dayara Bugyal trek. But there was no phone connectivity to obtain permissions from India Hikes office. So he asked us wait at Bhojbasa till noon while he went to Chirbasa campground where a faint bsnl/airtel connectivity was available and he could enquire for permissions from India Hikes HQ.



While waiting, we had some guest appearances. The Himalayan Blue sheep grazing on the neighboring mountain slopes.





I was perched up high. Spot me ?







Meanwhile, the French gang ventured onto some local exploration.



The best pic of the valley goes to Antoine!





Dushyant came back with a good news that we'll be able to do Dayara Bugyal. That felt a bit satisfying. The plan was to reach Dharali for the night and travel to Dayara Bugyal trail next morning. We took a group picture here to celebrate reaching at least till the Gaumukh glacier.



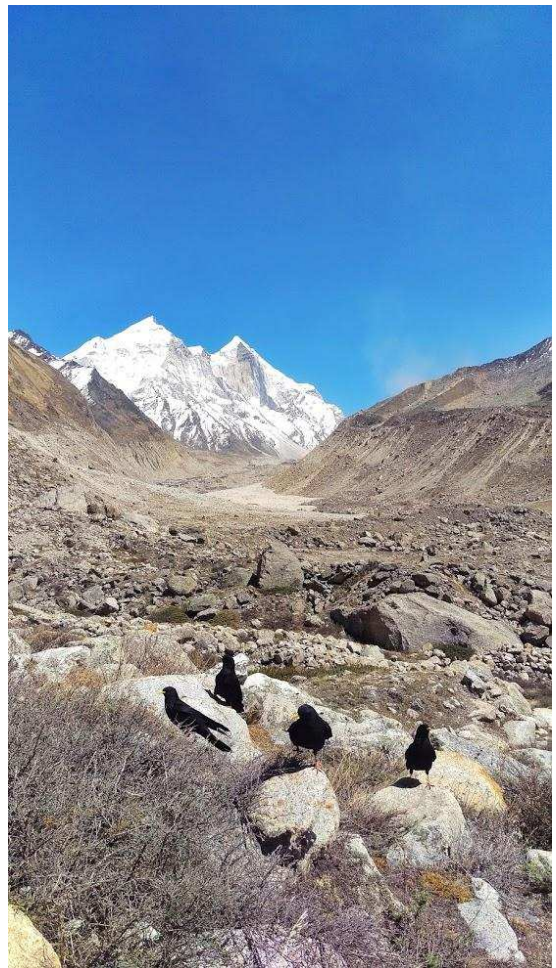


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Heading back to Dharali via Chirbasa & Gangotri. The same route we had come through











Visual treat!.



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We stopped at Gangotri on the way back to have a quick visit to the temple.

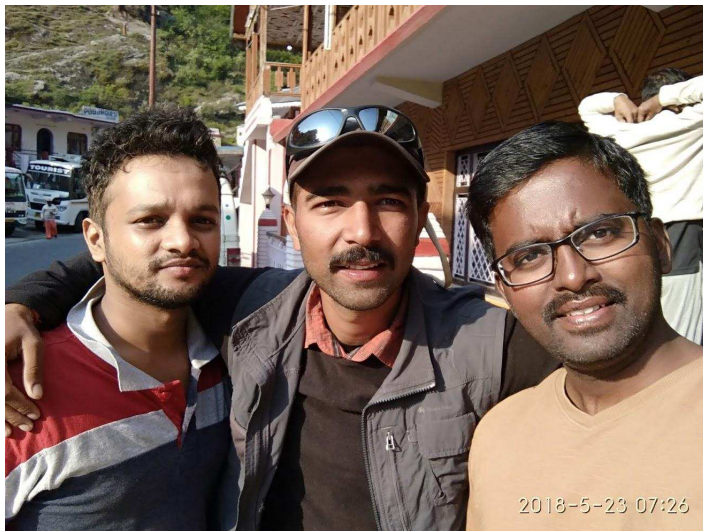


There were plenty of devotees and the pooja was going on in full swing.





Our accomodation at Dharali



Hari & Karthik had to head back home due to personal reasons and couldn't continue along with us to Dayara Bugyal. These two missed one helluva party at Dayara Bugyal!

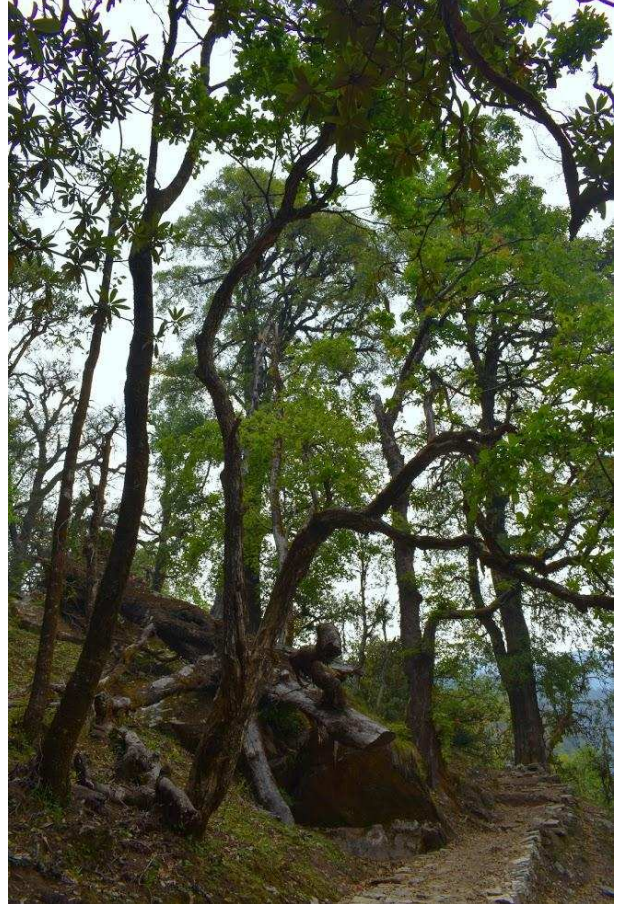
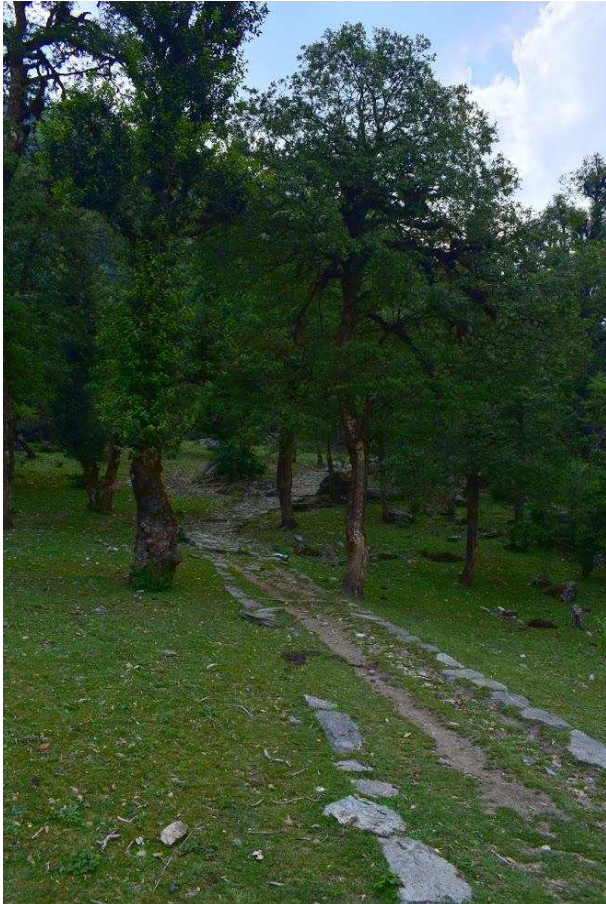




Climbing up to the first camp on Dayara Bugyal trail. As I said, it was literally like a walk in the park.











We found plenty of meadows and started to play the frisbee wherever we could.





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Campsite 1 on Dayara Bugyal trail



We indulged in some yoga session led by our Yoga teacher, Harsha





While the French guys showed off their skills





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The place was ideal for playing frisbee, so we soon got started with it.



Unfortunately, I slipped and fell badly on the slope. I landed on my left shoulder joint with my full body weight on it. The pain was so sharp that there was no voice coming out of my mouth even to scream! I didn't want to create a scene, so I kept it to myself and continued along. It's been two months since then and I still can't stretch my left shoulder completely straight. Damn! So for the rest of the while, I just rested in my shahenshah pose.





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Dushyant then introduced us to this hilarious game called '21 things/sentences'...or something like that. Basically the idea was we all sit around in a circle and each person get a turn to map a number between 1-21 to anything they'd like and the rest of us have to remember and recite the entire sequence in order, else that person would lose the round.



The French guys added in words like 'Fufun', which the rest of us had no clue what it meant, but had to say it nevertheless.

Momaya and Antoine were the finalists and went fiercely at each other. The game ended in a draw between them.





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We also had a fantastic view of the high himalayas from here. We were beyond those peaks, a few days back.





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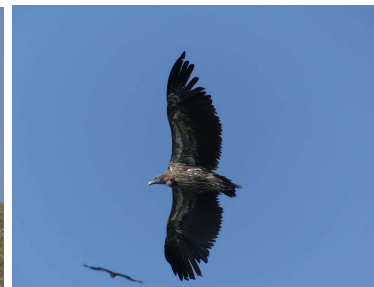
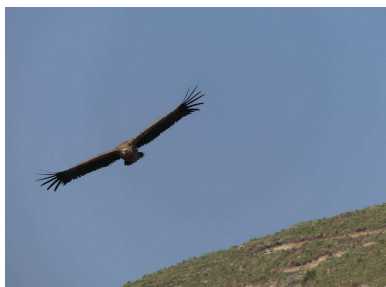
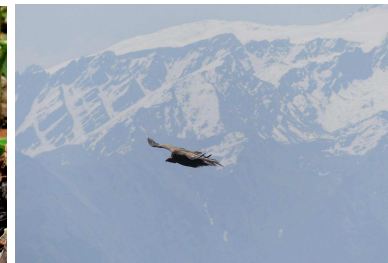
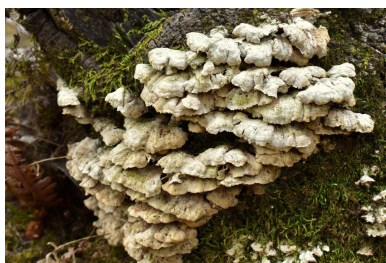
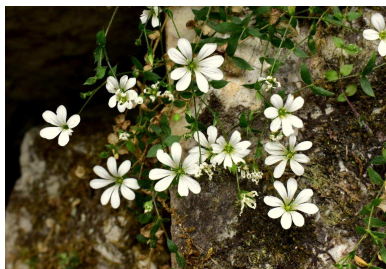
It was Phalgun's birthday on the 23rd, so we celebrated that night. Harparlji, our cook, even prepared us a cake in the night to celebrate.



Everyone joined in and sang and wished. As per my original plans, we should've been at Kedartal top for his birthday night and I was hoping to make him cut the cake underneath the stars. Unfortunately, that didn't happen, but it turned out to be total fun in the end.



Flora & Fauna we observed



These Himalayan Condors were huge! They could easily pick up a calf or a sheep and fly away.



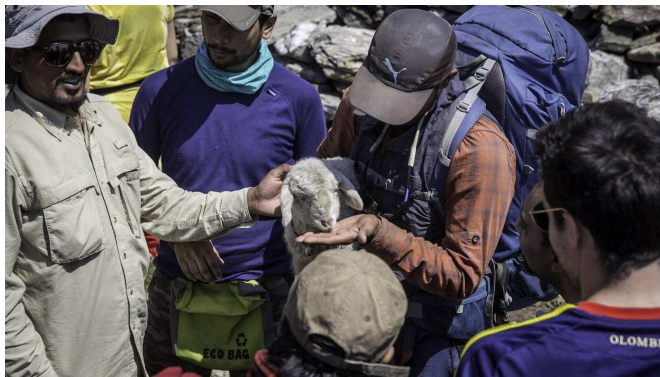
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Sunrise at campsite 1





On the way to campsite 2



This little lamb received a lot of love. It was even offered a beads necklace!



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A shepherd's family lived on the top at campsite 2





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Pitching our tents at campsite 2





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This shepherd ran a small Maggie business from his hut at campsite 2



We all had some Maggie, relaxed for a while and then took off to visit the Dayara Bugyal top.



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Bugyal means a meadow in hindi, I got to know. This place had lush green meadows.





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Not to mention, plenty of photoshoots



A jumping pic on the mountain is mandatory I suppose!



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And we all climbed to the top.



There wasn't a huge sense of achievement or any such feeling this time as it was pretty easy. This time it was all about having fun as group.







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There was our flag on the top as well. Salute!



Our mandatory pic. And the ministers of Guistan!



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As we grouped together at the top, Dushyant rightly told us that, it is not we who climb the mountain, but the mountain that lets us climb it. It is not the mountain we conquer, but ourselves. We closed our eyes in silence for a few mins and paid our respect to the mountains and the nature.



Every summit, be it easy or hard, deserves a group pic of accomplishment. We then descended and returned to camp







The grass was so soft that we walked barefoot for quite a while on it. The cattle grazing freely, the sound of their bells, the sheep, the green meadows, all this seemed exactly like in the Heidi cartoon I used to watch as a kid. But I guess these scenes were pretty normal for the French guys after growing up with the Alps.



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Sunset at campsite 2





That night was a feast at the camp. The jamoon got over in an instant. Bart just couldn't understand how it was okay for us to share food from the same box. Being the last night at camp, we conversed til late night, we sang, we played pictionary, even Anil bhai and Saurabh bhai joined us. We even established the kingdom of Guistan and allocated roles & responsibilities.



Sunrise at campsite 2







We were heading down to the Dayara Bugyal base camp for the night. The next morning, we'd all disperse from there.



Packing up in the morning to leave.



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We clicked one last group photo, this time with every single one included.



**India Hikes, Batch-3, May 19-25, 2018. At Dayara Bugyal campsite, after having completed Gaumukh.**



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We played more frisbee as we descended. It's incredible to throw it downhill as it travels large distances!





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At the Guest house in Dayara Bugyal base camp. We had bath after long, washed our clothes and refreshed.



There was a village nearby with small shops. We brought in plenty of chips and coke for ourselves.



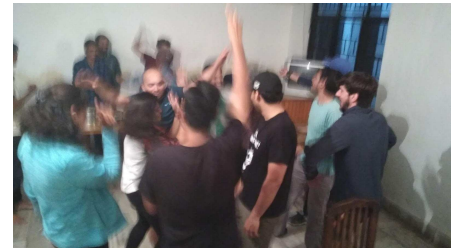
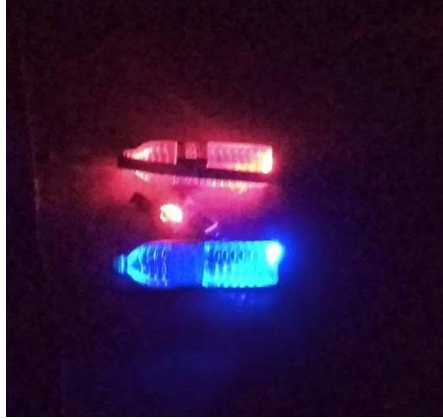
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It was Anushree's birthday that day, and it being a last night and all, we planned to put up a big party for the night. We convinced Dushyant to party at the guest house and coordinated with Anil & Saurabh bhai to get some drinks from the nearby town. Meanwhile, Harpalji prepared another cake to celebrate.



After cutting the care, that dorm room turned into one helluva party floor. Everyone in the building, including the cooks, the gardners, the maintenance staff, every single one joined in. Our headlamps became disco lights, Dushyant with his bluetooth speaker was the DJ, and we just let ourselves loose. I have never partied this hard or crazy ever in my life! It went on for several hours. We made Bart dance to some bollywood music, the French gang showed their skills, me and Momaya went on the floor to do some crazy moves...etc etc. By the end of it, we had even had a pillow fight, broke a bulb/light cover, heck, we even broke a bed! When we woke up the next morning, we found things scattered all across the corridor, footwears had gone flying everywhere...etc etc. The maintenance guys at the building that me that in their 5 years of stay in that building, no one had ever done anything like that. Every single one of us enjoyed to the core. Now that's what I call as ending the travel with a bang! (A big thanks to Sanket for owning all those expenses as part of Anushree's bday treat)





The next morning, we shared our contact details, bid goodbyes to everyone and returned to Dehradun in the cabs, similar to the way we had arrived.



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Some of us stayed back in Dehradun for the night to catch our flights/buses/trains the following day. So we met up at Dehradun as well for some local chow.





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The French guys, couldn't meet us as they decided to take an early bus to Delhi. I think Bart also joined in the same bus. Ankit & Aman took the late night train. Sanket & Anushree had their flight to Mumbai the next day. Harsha was confused as ever and was trying find a way to get to Amritsar. Ritu was staying in Dehradun for another day or two to explore. She thought it would be a hill station, but it wasn't. Phalgun & I had a bus to Manali the next day. So Phalgun, Ritu and I went to the Deadpool 2 movie there in a local theater the next day since we had time. From Manali, Phalgun & I did a bike ride in the Spiti valley. Antoine was kind enough to host us at his place in Delhi until our evening flight to home, when we returned from our Spiti ride.

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And that, is how our 2018 Himalayas travel ended.



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