

SOME FACTS ABOUT THE HIMALAYAS

- The Himalayas are less than 25 million year old, amongst the youngest mountains in the world!
- Himalayas stretch 1900 Miles (3000Kms) long and between 50-200 miles wide
 - The Himalayas are divided into three zones depending on their altitudes
 - Outer or lower Himalayas: Not more than 3000Feet above MSL these are known as the Siwaliks
 - Middle or greater Himalayas: Extend from Kashmir to Bhutan and China between 600 feet to 14000Feet high
 - Inner Himalayas: Consist of Zanskar, Ladakh, Hindu Kush and Karakoram
 - The Himalayas excluding the Karakoram are divided into five ranges depending on their location: Kashmir Himalayas, Punjab Himalayas, Kumaon & Garhwal Himalayas, Nepal Himalayas, Assam Himalayas
- The Indian Himalayas consists of Arunachal Pradesh (Also known as the Assam Himalayas), Sikkim, Kumaun, Garhwal, Kinnaur, Spiti, Kullu, Lahaul, Kishtwar, Kashmir, Zanskar, Ladakh and the Eastern Karakoram.
- The Eastern Himalayas are considerably wetter than the Western because the rain clouds coming from Bay of Bengal drain themselves in the southern section losing moisture quickly as they move northwest.
- In general the temperature drops about 1 degree C for every 300Mtrs rise in altitude.
- Even in winters, one may see grasshoppers and agamid lizards feeding or basking in the sun on one side of the slope, while a few meters away the ground is covered by deep snow and all animals are hibernating.

Formation of State	9-11-2000
Uttarakhand Capital	Dehradun
International Boundries with Uttarakhand	China and Nepal
Uttarakhand State boundries	UP & Himanchal Pradesh
Uttarakhand State Flower	Brahma Kamal
Uttarakhand State Tree	Rhododendron (Buransh)
Uttarakhand State Animal	Musk Deer (Kasturi Mrig)
Uttarakhand State Bird	Himalayan Monal (<i>Lophophorus impejanus</i>)
Geographical area	53,483 Sq Km
Uttarakhand Forest cover	35,394 Sq Km

The Himalayan ranges falling in Kumaon & Garhwal region falls under the state of Uttarkhand. The range of Uttarakhand's terrain is such that there are extreme variations in climate from hot summers in the Terai and lower foothills, to cold weather even during the summer months at pilgrim spots such as Badrinath and Gangotri. The maximum temperature in popular hill stations such as Ranikhet, Mussorie and Nainital generally does not exceed 32 degrees and that too only when the plains are scorched with temperatures of 42degrees and more. Two or three continuous days of these heat wave conditions (by hill standards), generally result in a thunder shower, restoring the temperature to an ambient 27degrees.

In winter, snowfall is common during the months December to February in most places above 1829Mtrs. During the monsoons(July-September), rainfall is reasonably heavy and this is when landslips are most likely to occur.

One can travel around Uttarakhand throughout the year. At the height of winter, Corbett Park, the Lake District(barring Nainital), as also the Rishikesh area, are very pleasant and make an ideal holiday destination. Auli is the place to go for those looking to ski and experience the snows. The rainy season has an altogether different charm with dramatic storms and brilliant sunsets. Being enveloped by the mysterious swirling mists that rise up from the valleys is a memorable experience. Needless to say, summer is when this hill state makes an ideal escape from the enervating heat of the plains. Uttaranchal's proximity to Delhi makes it very easily accessible and you could actually get up one morning and take off on an impromptu trip to whichever destination attracts you, at virtually anytime of the year.

GARHWAL & KUMAON

- In January 2007, the name of the state was officially changed from Uttaranchal, its interim name, to Uttarakhand.
 - It was referred to as Uttarakhand or Kedarkhand in the Puranas
 - Comprises of 8 districts (5 in Garhwal and 3 in Kumaon)
 - Bordered by Nepal in the East, Himachal Pradesh in the west, Uttar Pradesh in the south and Tibet on the Northern boundary.
 - It is known as *dev bhoomi* or the Land of the Gods.
 - The Katyuri dynasty of Kumaon ruled Uttaranchal between the eighth and fourteenth centuries. Art and architecture flourished under the Katyuris and the exquisite temples of Baijnath , Joshimath and Jageshwar are a testimony to their contribution. With the disintegration of this dynasty, Kumaon and Garhwal followed different course. The Chand dynasty with its capital at Almora ruled supreme in Kumaon as did the Panwars in Garhwal .
 - Before 10th century, Garhwal was broken into many small principalities as a result of various religious wars and anarchy reigned . During 10-12 Century, 52 fortresses came into being. These 52 Fortresses called Garhs impart their name to Garhwal. These principalities were then unified and Garhwal came into existence with Srinagar as its capital. Later the Gurkhas invaded and took over the region finally passing over to the British in 1816.
 - Garhwal region has the Char Dhams and the Panch Prayags
 - Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri and Yamnotri are the Char Dhams. They are considered the most revered pilgrimage sites for Hindus that have to be visited in one's lifetime.
 - Devprayag, Karnaprayag, Rudraprayag, Vishnuprayag and Nandaprayag are the 5 Prayags.
 - Prayag means confluence of the rivers, especially the rivers that finally join to become the Ganga. Namely Vishnu Prayag, Nand Prayag, Karn prayag, Rudra Prayag and Dev Prayag.
 - Kumaon gets its name from the Tortoise incarnation of Lord Vishnu.
 - Nanda Devi (7816Mtrs) is the second highest peak in India defining the northern boundary between Garhwal and Kumaon. This is the second highest peak in the world.
 - The Nanda Devi is flanked by Trishul(7120Mtrs), towards the west the visible peaks are Dunagiri, Neelkanth, Chaukhamba, Badrinath and Kedarnath all in the league of 7000Mtrs and above.
 - Kumaon region is also home to the popular Jim Corbett National Park
 - Trekking routes are available from Musiyari, Ranikhet, Gwaldam, Nandprayag, Joshimath, Dehradun, Gangotri and Uttarkashi.
 - Popular hill stations like Nainital, Mussorie, Ranikhet dot this region.
 - Primary crops are wheat, corn and rice.
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Uttaranchal is blessed with a variety of flora thanks to its climatic variations and the range of natural terrain. The region can be divided into climatic zones, starting with the subtropical zone that includes the jungles of the foothills up to an altitude of 3963ft. Sal forests interspersed with toon, neem, red silk cotton and mango trees dominate lower regions of this zone. The beautiful yellow laburnum blooms in May and is preceded by the stunning mauve jacaranda that blossoms a little earlier. The dhak(coral tree) bears vivid scarlet flowers in clumps at the end of its branches(March to May); and the 'flame of the forest'(amaltas), has distinctive orange flowers that colour the landscape between February and May. Poplars, bottle brush and bamboo are commonly seen in parts of this region as also the cannabis shrub that grows wild, in ragged dusty clumps by the roadside and also at higher altitudes.

Above this sub-tropical belt is the temperate zone, extending up to the tree line, and the exchange in flora between the two is quite dramatic. The pine begins to dominate and there are belts of dense mixed forests of oak(banj), birch (bhoj), magnolia, mimosa, horse chestnut and silver oak. There is also a variety of fruit bearing trees like peaches, plums, apples and pears. Above 5904ft, the stately deodar makes its presence and is commonly seen up to 7872ft. The rhodendrons(buransh), can be seen in this belt and their brilliant red, and sometimes pink, flowers bloom in March-April adding vivid splashes of colour to the forests. Between 7872ft and 11808ft, you see spruce, fir, cypress and some blue pine.

Floral species include geraniums, asters, lilies, roses, anemones, marigolds, orchids, arums, tree dahlias, primulas, iris, hydrangeas, cosmos, daisies, the white columbras(koonj), lady's slipper and many other beautiful blooms. An amazing range of medicinal plants and herbs also grow in parts of this state.

FAUNA

The huge geographic contrast favours a variety of species in Uttarakhand. Animal life abounds but with the pressure of population, the animals can be best spotted in the protected sanctuaries and parks. Corbett National Park offers a wide spectrum of wildlife of the region in a compact space.

We offer a brief description of some of the species:

Himalayan Tahr (*Hemitragus jemlahicus*)

A wild goat which lives in the steepest precipices. May go up to 5000m altitude. Males have a distinctive, dark, shaggy ruff and a long mantle of paler hairs: they weigh up to 100 kg; females about 60 kg. Live in groups as large as 20 to 30.

Himalayan Musk Deer (*Moschus chrysoogaster*)

Member of deer family though different appearance. Does not have any antlers. Males have backward-curving tusk-like incisors in the upper jaw. Unlike other deer, they have a gall bladder and a uniquely developed scent gland in the abdominal region which produces valuable musk.

Himalayan Black Bear (*Selenarctos thibetanus*)

Associated with mixed broad leaf and conifer forests. Adult males weigh up to 180 kgs before hibernation; head-body length of 1.6m. A creamy white V pattern marks the chest. Well adapted for tree climbing. Can become carnivorous

Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*)

A richly coloured fox with long silky fur and a superb brush. The black backs to the upper half of its ears and white

tip to its tail are distinguishing features. This fox can easily be seen in the high altitude areas of Dhel, Tirath and Rakti Sar.

Himalayan Weasel (*Mustela sibirica*)

Reddish-copper fur; body about 30 cm, tail 15 cm long. Found in dense forests from 1,500 to **5,000m** altitude; also lives close to villages. Bold, good hunters.

Common Langur (*Presbytes entellus*)

Long-limbed, long-tailed, black faced monkey; heavily whiskered and thickly coated. Lives close to villages as well as in the forest areas. 60 to 75 cms height (while seated). Live in troops of 15 to 30 individuals, mostly on trees to 3,500m altitude.

Giant Indian Flying Squirrel (*Petaurista petaurista*)

Lives between 2,000m up to the treeline. Nocturnal forest animal, with roosting in tree hollows. Feeds mainly on the central portion of leaves and walnuts.

Yellow-throated Marten (*Martes flavigula*)

Larger than a weasel; body length 45 to 60 cms. Fur deep brown with yellow throat. Adapts to varying conditions.

Himalayan Brown Bear (*Ursus arctos*)

Usually herbivorous feeding on grass and herbs. Some become carnivorous killing sheep, goats or ponies. Males may grow to 1.7m in length; females are smaller.

Bharal (*Pseudois nayaur*)

Sheep like in appearance; males are 3 ft at shoulder; slaty blue body colour, black flank stripes and dark chests; cylindrical horns curve outwards seen in large herds of 80 in high altitude parts of Ladakh. It is an important source of food for the snow leopard.

Snow Leopard (*Panthera uncial*)

One of the most beautiful of the large cats with handsomely marked coat. Regular sightings of snow leopard are reported.

AVIFAUNA

Uttarakhand is a bird watcher’s paradise with over 230 species in the state. You can spot babblers, thrushes, tits, magpies, bulbuls, flycatchers, warblers, finches, orioles, minivets, shrikes, nightjars, owls, pheasants, woodpeckers, pigeons and even the rarer Himalayan golden eagle, trangopan, monal, and Himalayan bearded vulture. This area has amazingly vibrant and varied birdlife. The best areas to go bird watching are Naukuchiyatal, the Binsar sanctuary and the Har-ki-doon valley.

A Sample Checklist of birds provided below:

Himalayan Swiftlet, <i>Collocalia brevirostris</i>	Crested Goshawk, <i>Accipiter trivirgatus</i>
Besra, <i>Accipiter virgatus</i>	Long-legged Buzzard, <i>Buteo rufinus</i>
Lammergeier, <i>Gypaetus barbatus</i>	Himalayan Griffon, <i>Gyps himalayensis</i>
Black Kite, <i>Milvus migrans</i>	Red-headed Vulture, <i>Sarcogyps calvus</i>
Mountain Hawk Eagle, <i>Spizaetus nipalensis</i>	Common Kestrel, <i>Falco tinnunculus</i>
Golden Eagle, <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	Speckled Wood Pigeon, <i>Columba hodgsonii</i>
Snow Pigeon, <i>Columba leuconota</i>	Spotted Dove, <i>Streptopelia chinensis</i>
Oriental Turtle Dove, <i>Streptopelia orientalis</i>	Hill Partridge, <i>Arborophila torqueola</i>
Snow Partridge, <i>Lerwa lerwa</i>	Himalayan Monal, <i>Lophophorus impejanus</i>
Kalij Pheasant, <i>Lophura leucomelanos</i>	Koklass Pheasant, <i>Pucrasia macrolopha</i>

Black-throated Tit, <i>Aegithalos concinnus</i>	Bar-tailed Treecreeper, <i>Certhia himalayana</i>
Rusty-flanked Treecreeper, <i>Certhia nipalensis</i>	Winter Wren, <i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>
Hill Prinia, <i>Prinia atrogularis</i>	Striated Prinia, <i>Prinia crinigera</i>
Common Raven, <i>Corvus corax</i>	Large-billed Crow, <i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>
Ashy Drongo, <i>Dicrurus leucophaeus</i>	Lesser Racket-tailed Drongo, <i>Dicrurus remifer</i>
Eurasian Jay, <i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	Black-headed Jay, <i>Garrulus lanceolatus</i>
Maroon Oriole, <i>Oriolus traillii</i>	Long-tailed Minivet, <i>Pericrocotus ethologus</i>
Scarlet Minivet, <i>Pericrocotus flammeus</i>	Yellow-bellied Fantail, <i>Rhipidura hypoxantha</i>
Yellow-billed Blue Magpie, <i>Urocissa flavirostris</i>	Yellow-breasted Greenfinch, <i>Carduelis spinoides</i>
Common Rosefinch, <i>Carpodacus erythrinus</i>	Dark-breasted Rosefinch, <i>Carpodacus nipalensis</i>
Rock Bunting, <i>Emberiza cia</i>	Black-and-yellow Grosbeak, <i>Mycerobas icterioides</i>

REPTILES

The area is relatively poor in **reptiles**; most often seen are:
the High altitude Lizard (*Agama tuberculata*),
Himalayan Ground skink (*Leiolopisma himalayana*),
Himalayan pit viper (*Gloydius himalayanus*)

INSECTS

Along with the flowers are wild bees and many species of butterflies which need to be more researched ,a few of the more evident species are lime butterfly (*Papilo protenor*) and common blue Apollo (*Parnassius hardwickei*)