

Earthbound Expeditions

Char Dham Tour

15 days, from US$1,967 per person

Duration	Group size	Country
15 days	**No limit**	**India**

Char Dham Tour Overview

A Char Dham tour of India covering Yamunotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath and Badrinath, including Rishikesh and Haridwar. The Char Dham Yatra is one of the most important pilgrimages in India.

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The Char Dham Yatra is one of the most important spiritual journeys in India. It is the best-known and holiest pilgrimage in the country and visits four shrines: Yamunotri and Gangotri, at the sources of the Yamuna and Ganga rivers; the Shiva shrine of Kedarnath; and the Vishnu shrine of Badrinath Dham. Together, these four shrines form the Chota Char Dham Yatra. All of them are located in the Himalayan foothills of Uttarakhand, in different districts of northern India.

The shrines stand in the valleys of the Great Himalaya in the districts of Uttarkashi, Chamoli and Rudraprayag in the Garhwal hills, and are linked to legends and a history going back thousands of years. The Char Dham pilgrimage began thousands of years ago and was revived in the 8th century by the reformer and philosopher Adi Shankaracharya. Since then it has drawn large numbers of pilgrims from around the world.

The Char Dham Yatra can also be combined with a Jammu and Kashmir tour, Vaishno Devi, the Amarnath Yatra, the Golden Triangle tour of India or the Tapovan Gaumukh trek. The best time for the Char Dham tour is May to October. Please contact us for dates and specific itineraries. Earthbound Expeditions organises the Char Dham Yatra each year for NRIs and pilgrims from around the world.

Itinerary

Day 1

Arrive in Delhi

You arrive at Delhi Airport. India is a country known for its hospitality, with a culture rooted in tradition and a history kept alive in music and dance. You will be met at the airport and, if time permits, taken to Akshardham. Overnight in Delhi.

Altitude: 215 m On foot: None, arrival day Night: Hotel, Delhi Meals: Dinner

Day 2

Drive from Delhi to Mussoorie (290 km, 7 to 8 hours)

After breakfast, you drive to Mussoorie. On arrival, you check in to the hotel. Overnight in the hotel.

Altitude: 2,000 m On foot: None, 7–8 hr drive Night: Hotel, Mussoorie Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 3

Drive to Barkot

Barkot is located in the Rawain Valley of Uttarkashi District on the banks of the Yamuna. The people of Rawain were long cut off from the rest of Garhwal by the area's remote location, and their culture is similar to, yet distinct from, the rest of Garhwal. This makes the area particularly interesting. Barkot also has views of the Banderpunch range and considerable natural beauty. Its location on the route to Yamunotri Dham adds to its importance.

Altitude: 1,220 m On foot: None, 4–5 hr drive Night: Hotel, Barkot Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 4

Trek to Yamunotri and return to Barkot

After an early breakfast, you drive by jeep to Janki Chatti, the starting point of the trek. You trek 7 km to Yamunotri, one of the four sacred shrines of Uttarakhand and the source of the Yamuna River. You visit the Yamunotri Temple, dedicated to the goddess Yamuna and built by Queen Gularia of Jaipur; Suryakund, a hot spring with a temperature of 190°F, where pilgrims tie rice and potatoes in muslin cloth and cook them in the water; and Divyashila, a rock pillar worshipped before entering the Yamunotri Temple. You then trek back to Janki Chatti and drive back to Barkot for the night. Between Hanuman Chatti and Janki Chatti (10 km each way), we may use local jeeps because of poor road conditions. This is decided on the spot when you reach Hanuman Chatti.

Altitude: 1,220 m On foot: 14 km, 6–7 hrs Night: Hotel, Barkot Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 5

Drive to Uttarkashi and Gangotri

After breakfast, you drive to Uttarkashi, have a quick lunch and continue to Gangotri. On arrival, you check in to the hotel. We visit the temple for the Aarti. Overnight in Gangotri. Gangotri Dham: the temple is a modest granite structure first built in the 18th century and later rebuilt. Hindus believe that the goddess Ganga was brought down to earth by the mythological king Bhagirath, and the Ganga is believed to contain “Amrit”, a holy nectar.

Altitude: 3,100 m On foot: None, 8–9 hr drive Night: Hotel, Gangotri Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 6

Trek from Gangotri to Bhojbasa and Gaumukh

After breakfast, you trek to Bhojbasa (approximately 14 km) and continue to Gaumukh and back to Bhojbasa (approximately 8 km in total). Overnight at a guest house with dormitory beds only and shared toilets. Dormitory beds cannot be booked in advance. Lunch and dinner are paid for directly at the canteen in Bhojbasa.

Altitude: 3,790 m On foot: 22 km, 8–9 hrs Night: Guesthouse, Bhojbasa Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Day 7

Trek from Bhojbasa to Gangotri

Early in the morning, you trek downhill to Gangotri (approximately 14 km). Depending on time and walking pace, we may reach Gangotri early in the morning.

Altitude: 3,100 m On foot: 14 km, 4–5 hrs Night: Hotel, Gangotri Meals: Dinner

Day 8

Drive from Gangotri to Uttarkashi

After breakfast, you drive to Uttarkashi. Later, you visit the Kashi Vishwanath Temple in the town, one of the Jyotirlingas. Overnight in Uttarkashi.

Altitude: 1,160 m On foot: None, 3–4 hr drive Night: Hotel, Uttarkashi Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 9

Drive from Uttarkashi to Guptkashi (210 km)

After breakfast, you check out of the hotel and drive to Guptkashi. On arrival, you check in to the hotel for the night.

Altitude: 1,320 m On foot: None, 8–9 hr drive Night: Hotel, Guptkashi Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 10

Drive from Guptkashi to Gaurikund (30 km) and trek to Kedarnath (17 km)

In the morning you drive to Gaurikund and start the trek to Kedarnath, arriving in the afternoon. You visit Kedarnath Temple and stay overnight in a tented camp. Gaurikund lies 5 km from Sonprayag at an altitude of 1,982 metres. You can bathe in the hot spring here and visit the Gauri Temple. This is where the goddess Parvati is said to have meditated to win Lord Shiva. It is the starting point for the trek to Kedarnath. Kedarnath: the Kedarnath shrine, one of the 12 Jyotirlingas of Lord Shiva, stands against the backdrop of the Kedarnath range. Kedar is another name for Lord Shiva, the protector and the destroyer. According to legend, the Pandavas, after defeating the Kauravas in the Kurukshetra war, felt guilty for having killed their own relatives and sought the blessings of Lord Shiva for redemption. He avoided them repeatedly and, while fleeing, took refuge at Kedarnath in the form of a bull. When they followed him, he dived into the ground, leaving his hump on the surface. The remaining parts of Lord Shiva appeared at four other places, where they are worshipped as his manifestations: the arms at Tungnath, the face at Rudranath, the belly at Madhmaheshwar and his hair and head at Kalpeshwar. Kedarnath and these four shrines together are known as the Panch Kedar.

Altitude: 3,580 m On foot: 17 km, 6–7 hrs Night: Tented camp, Kedarnath Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 11

Trek from Kedarnath to Gaurikund (17 km) and drive to Chamoli (160 km)

In the morning you trek down to Gaurikund and drive to Chamoli. On arrival, you check in to the hotel for the night.

Altitude: 1,050 m On foot: 17 km, 5–6 hrs Night: Hotel, Chamoli Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 12

Chamoli to Joshimath and Badrinath, returning to Joshimath (140 km round trip)

In the morning you drive to Joshimath, leave your bags there and continue to Badrinath. On arrival at Badrinath, you visit the holy temple. Later in the day, you drive back to Joshimath for the night in a hotel. Badrinath, one of the Four Dhams, is one of the most celebrated pilgrimage sites in India. It lies at an elevation of 3,133 metres between two mountain ranges known as Nar and Narayan, with Neelkanth Peak rising behind it. The area was once covered in wild berries, which gave the place the name “Badri Van”, meaning “forest of berries”.

Altitude: 1,890 m On foot: None, 5–6 hr drive Night: Hotel, Joshimath Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 13

Drive from Joshimath to Rishikesh (260 km)

After breakfast, you drive back to Rishikesh. On the way, you make a short photo stop at Devprayag to see the confluence of the Bhagirathi and Alaknanda rivers, then continue to Rishikesh and check in to the hotel. Devprayag is a small town at the confluence of the Alaknanda and Bhagirathi rivers. From this point onwards the combined river is called the Ganga; above it, the Bhagirathi is considered the Ganga. The place is of great religious importance, as it is here that the Ganga takes its full form. The town is named after the sage Dev Sharma, who lived and meditated here and is said to have been blessed with a vision of God. Devprayag is a popular destination for Hindu pilgrims. Ritual bathing takes place at two basins cut into the rock at the junction of the holy rivers: the Brahm Kund on the Bhagirathi and the Vashisht Kund on the Alaknanda. In the evening, if time permits, you attend the Ganga Aarti at Parmarth Niketan, Ram Jhula. Overnight in the hotel.

Altitude: 340 m On foot: None, 9–10 hr drive Night: Hotel, Rishikesh Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 14

Rishikesh sightseeing

A full day exploring Rishikesh, followed by the Ganga Aarti in the evening.

Altitude: 340 m On foot: Easy walking, 2–3 hrs Night: Hotel, Rishikesh Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 15

Drive from Rishikesh to Haridwar and Delhi

After a relaxed breakfast, you drive to Haridwar and then on to Delhi.

Altitude: 215 m On foot: None, 6–7 hr drive Night: No overnight Meals: Breakfast

What's included

- Accommodation on a twin or double sharing basis in good hotels, with dinner and breakfast included
- All transport by air-conditioned car, Innova, Tempo Traveller or minibus from Delhi to Delhi, as per the programme
- All current government taxes, which are subject to change without notice.
- Vehicle air conditioning operates only in Delhi, Haridwar and Rishikesh.
- Meals as per the programme above (breakfast and dinner)
- Assistance on arrival and departure in Delhi
- Pilgrimage journey to Char Dham

Not included

- International and domestic airfares, visa fees, airport taxes and insurance of any kind
- Lunch during the tour
- Transport of luggage of any kind during hiking
- Personal expenses such as drinks, room service, laundry, telephone calls at hotels and tips.
- Train tickets and entry tickets
- Any additional expenses caused by, or liability for, disruption to the programme due to circumstances such as weather conditions, sickness, natural disasters or riots.
- Liability for, or insurance against, injury, loss of life, accidents or loss of goods.
- Camera fees.
- Personal equipment such as sleeping bags, walking sticks, shoes and crampons.
- Any other expenses incurred due to bad weather, road closures, landslides and so on, and anything not listed as included.

Photos, videos and reviews of this trip: earthbound.rajansimkhada.com/char-dham-tour