

*The
Happy*

HIMALAYAN

Village

NESTLED IN THE GARHWAL HIMALAYAS,
IN TEHRI, IS THE GOAT VILLAGE, WHICH
COMBINES ECO., AGRO AND RURAL TOURISM
TO BRING ABOUT DEVELOPMENT ALONGSIDE
ECOLOGICALLY RESPONSIBLE MEANS.

BY NEEHARIKA SATYAVADA

“

Come eat some fresh corn on the cob,” said the smiling old lady with a mischievous twinkle in her eye. It was one monsoon afternoon in the Lower Himalayas, just before winter set in, that we were returning from our trek to Nag Tibba. As we found our way back to our temporary home in the clouds, The Goat Village, we landed ourselves this invitation. It was only later that we realised that this farmer who had so warmly befriended us was our neighbour for the weekend. Have you ever longed to escape to a place that would take you far from the madding crowd and the hustle and bustle of your city life? Then, The Goat Village in Tehri, Uttarakhand ought to be on your travel bucket list. Here is a Himalayan farm retreat along a popular trek route, that is encouraging reverse migration of farmers and promoting agro tourism all at once. So, stay a while, live alongside the local farmers and goat herders living in their *chaanis* (mountain homes for them and their cattle), eat organically grown vegetables, go mushroom hunting in the forest, camp under the starry sky and go on to complete the trek first thing the next morning. Only to come back and do nothing. For, it is the perfect place to do nothing – to simply watch the sunrise and the moonrise from your doorstep... The Nag Tibba Trek is today one of the most in demand treks in the Garhwal region of the Himalayas and is fast catching on as the ideal weekend trek from Delhi. Given that it is only fifty-seven kilometres from Mussoorie and also, of course, for the thrill of scaling the highest peak of the Lesser Himalayas, Nag Tibba or the Serpent’s Peak. This mountain is believed to be the seat of Nag Devta, the Hindu Snake God and has a shrine dedicated to him right at the summit. With one of the nearby villages as a base, the scenic trek through the Himalayan forest to this temple can be done in a day or two, depending on the route one takes. It isn’t just the quaint little temple that brings the crowds, for once you reach the peak, you are treated to the sight of the entire Bandarpooch Range of the Greater Himalayas from a height of 9,915 feet.





The Goat Village is a farm retreat along a popular trekking route in Uttarakhand

THE GREEN PEOPLE

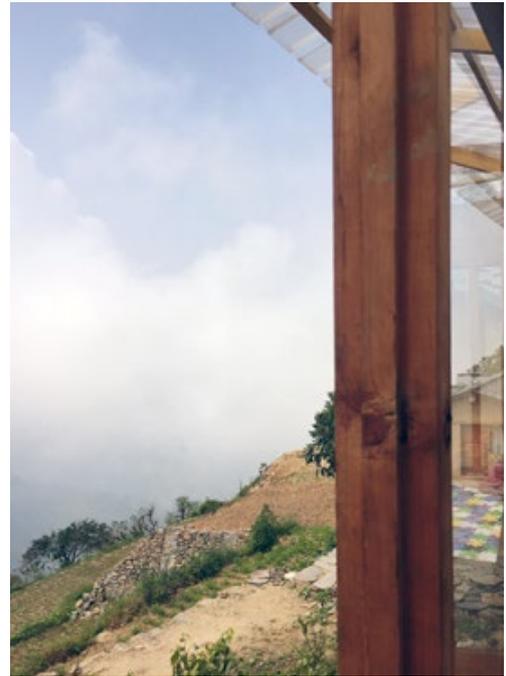
The Green People a community in the Lower Himalayas, are combining eco., agro- and rural tourism to bring about development alongside ecologically responsible means. Through their farm retreats, they are reviving abandoned villages, encouraging reverse migration of farmers and making locals a part of the process all along. You can volunteer at The Goat Village for an extended period of time in any capacity. From becoming the guest manager to getting involved in their marketing to simply turning into an organic farmer and getting closer to nature.

There are two trek routes to get to Nag Tibba. Of which, the more commonly taken route starts from Devalsari as a base, where one can stay at the Forest Guest House and complete the trek in two days with a camping break in between. As opposed to this relatively challenging trek of thirteen kilometres, there is a shorter one from Pantwari. Of moderate difficulty, the trek from the village of Pantwari follows a clearly marked trail of 8 km and can be completed in a day.

This is the trek route we decided to follow, for halfway along this second trek route is where The Goat Village is. A two-hour trek from Pantwari brings you here. One can even choose not to go

further. For this lush bucolic village that boasts of traditionally curated Garhwal homes—built only from wood, mud and the slate that chips and falls off the mountains—is a destination in itself.

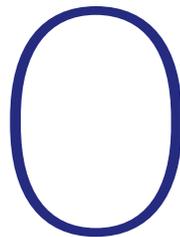
So here we were hiking up to The Goat Village in the dark after sunset, not knowing what to expect, for night had fallen by the time we reached the village. We went to sleep not knowing what we were going to wake up to, with only a hurricane lamp to guide us to our rooms. But what a sight it was that we woke up to! This farm retreat is all about wooden cottages nestled in the mountains. Where to touch the clouds all you have to do is extend your hand and with no electricity or Wi-fi to distract you with updates every few minutes, that is just what you end up doing.



The Goat Village is run by The Green People, and encourages reverse migration of farmers and revives abandoned mountain villages



The Goat Village, in Nag Tibba, is about 200 km from Chandigarh. Go Air operates direct flights to Chandigarh from Mumbai, with convenient connections from Goa, Bengaluru, Chennai and Kochi, and it operates direct flights to Delhi from Mumbai, Bengaluru, Pune, and Patna, among others, with convenient connections from other cities. For more information, log on to www.GoAir.in



One of the many initiatives by The Green People, a community working towards reviving abandoned villages and encouraging reverse migration of farmers, The Goat Village combines eco., agro- and rural tourism to bring about development in the Himalayan villages of Uttarakhand alongside ecologically responsible means. Which makes this stop along the trek, an interesting option for travellers to escape the mundane, giving them a chance to experience a 'Happier

Himalayan Village', as they call it, in the most earthy way possible.

So, if offbeat places draw you and you are someone who wants a bit of adventure on your holiday, the trek to Nag Tibba with a stopover at The Goat Village would be just about perfect. For not only can you plan your itinerary in such a way that if one day you are getting lost in the forest only to come across some naughty children of the mountain, then the next day you are only soaking up the sun in their poly house-cum-cafeteria, drinking the local brew of strong tea flavoured with the wild mint that grows along these mountain slopes.