

## Special Trekking Course at Nehru Institute of Mountaineering

After the enervating month of May concluded with first Home Test, we, the Officer Trainees (OTs), got their first opportunity to go on an attachment, that too on a trek to Uttarkashi. On the fateful Saturday of May 28<sup>th</sup>, we left National Academy of Direct Taxes (NADT) to undertake the special trekking course at Nehru Institute of Mountaineering.

We went to Uttarkashi via Delhi and Dehradun, including a night's stay at Dehradun, and reached Nehru Institute of Mountaineering on Sunday, May 29<sup>th</sup>.



On the left: Statue of Tenzing Norgay, the sherpa of Edmund Hillary who helped him scale the Everest, at NIM.  
On the right: OTs at the gate of NIM.

On Monday, May 30<sup>th</sup>, we were welcomed by the military discipline of waking of to the gong of a bell. After morning tea at 5 AM – unfathomable at the NADT – we were acclimatized to the mountains through a morning PT. We were divided into 5 groups – called ropes in the mountaineering language – for all our activities and Rakesh was selected as the group senior, overall responsibility landing on his shoulders. Through the day we were trained on different aspects of mountaineering – from introduction to different tools like jumar, rappel, etc. to technique of tent-pitching. This continued the next day which also included a short conditioning trek to a nearby steep hill.

On June 1<sup>st</sup>, we proceeded for our trek from NIM. We first reached the village Barsu by bus from where we proceeded to Barnala, our base camp site, on foot. Himalayan trek was a new experience for most and carrying the rucksack on a stony pavement with continuous climb did test the stamina of most of us.

The location of the base camp was in a valley which was quite picturesque. Despite being tired, most of us went further uphill to visit Barnala Tal and Temple near it with rolling grasses all around us. With the night approaching, we were welcomed by a warm bonfire which eventually became a daily ritual.



On the left: The villagers at the Barsu village engaging in agricultural activities.  
On the right: The base camp at Barnala.

The very next day was the most exciting of all for we had to visit Dayara Bugyal, one of the most beautiful meadows of the region. Located at a height of 12,167 feet, the bugyal is surrounded by many ice-capped peaks. The trek to bugyal was not easy either as there was no availability of water in between and most of the way was quite steep. Having almost no cover of trees in between, there was enough exposure to enervating Sun too. However, the company of friends and the beautiful view around was more energizing.

We reached the Dayara top in the afternoon and had food there. It was the same food that was served in the breakfast, albeit cold now. But it tasted better for not only we were tired and hungry, but at that point everything seemed better.



The coming down from Dayara to Barnala camp was quite mundane inasmuch it was not taxing at all. However, we did enjoy each-other's company, clicked loads of pictures and, following the ritual of the mountains, had Maggie and tea at "Maggie Point". Back at the camp we were again greeted by a bonfire, larger than the last night, and hot meal, which becomes luxury in the mountains.



On the left: The tasty lunch at the Dayara top.

On the right: The happy us excited on scaling the peak.

As some of the fellow OTs fell sick, with the blood oxygen level dropping for some in the high altitudes, a call was taken to return to NIM the very next day and the plan for one more day of trek was dropped. However, NIM had more in its kitty than we expected.

On the day next to our return, NIM engaged us in fun and adventure activities. The best part was that one seldom gets access to these activities in life and, thus, everyone made full use of them. River crossing was fun, jumaring was challenging, wall-climbing almost impossible, and rappelling a cakewalk.





On the top: First river crossing being performed on rope. The return journey was through the turbulent water.  
On the left: Jumaring being performed by one of OTs from Bhutan.  
On the right: Wall climbing, the toughest activity of all, being taken by its horn.

The special course finally came to its conclusion after these activities with a group photograph with the Principal of NIM and subsequent visit to Kashi Vishwanath temple in the town.



Above: OTs in NIM attire ready for valediction.

With the conclusion of valediction, we moved on to Ghaziabad for our next attachment with Bureau of Police Research & Development.