

Benog Tibba via Lake Mist Estate

'Benog Tibba is a 7500 ft (2265 m) hill situated at the Western corner of Mussoorie, beyond Library Bazaar, beyond the Clouds End Estate. We will approach it from the forested valley to the North- East rather than the normal approach from the Library - Clouds End road.

From Library, we will drive down towards Kempty falls, turning off 2 km before Kempty bazaar at a village called 'Bungalow Ki Kandi' on an old limestone quarrying road to the South- West. This will bring us to the entrance to the Benog Mountain Quail Sanctuary at about 5000 ft. From here a wide footpath follows a clear, gently- flowing stream (that continues on to become Kempty Falls) under a dense canopy of large, mainly *Daphiphyllum*, *Toona*, *Rhododendron*, *Viburnum*, and other trees associated with Banj Oak (*Quercus*). The undergrowth is rich and diverse with many species of ferns. There is abundant bird and insect life, with butterflies puddling at shallow spots, and masses of tadpoles found seasonally. The path climbs gradually until about a km before the Benog Saddle. This is a low point on the connecting ridge between Benog and Clouds End. From here the path climbs steeply away from the stream and up the Eastern face of the hill, till it gains the saddle, passing above some abandoned terraces on the way.

From here, the path winds around the shoulder of the mountain gradually, until it reaches the top where there is a temple dedicated to the local goddess Jwala Devi, a small shrine under an overhanging rock, and an observation tower used by Sir George Everest during his great trigonometric survey to calculate the heights of the major Himalayan peaks. "On a clear day, Benog offers a beautiful panoramic view of the Doon valley, a breathtakingly wide expanse of the snows, and the Aglar and Yamuna rivers meeting each other."

On the way back, we will follow the route normally taken by hikers coming from Landour. After reaching the saddle, we will gradually climb along the North face of the connecting ridge to Clouds End, and gain the motor road just 1 km South- East of Clouds End. This stretch is a pleasant walk through sometimes dense and sometimes open Banj Oak forest. Of interest is the diversity of trees, shrubs and wild flowers. There are several species that are not seen on our end of Mussoorie (Landour) like Laurels (*Machilus*), *Lyonia*, *Symplocos*, and hill bamboos.