

Description of hike to Kimoi Village

'Kimoi village is reached by walking down Tehri road about 3 kms to a gap in the ridge, from where a wide path starts down the North side of the ridge, with a signboard at the top. On a clear day, this is the first view of the snows after Bataghat. There is a roadside shrine dedicated to the local Snake Deity (Nag Devta) just before the gap.

From this gap, the path winds down gradually, for about 5 kms, through fairly dense mixed Oak- Rhododendron forest, terraced farmland, and grassy hill slopes, crossing several clear, gushing streams on the way, ending at the village square, from where you can make out a cluster of traditional A- frame type stone and wood dwellings with slate roofs, and interesting wood carvings on door and window panels. The forest along the path is much more bio-diverse than the forest on our hillside.

For those interested, it is quite a bio-diverse walk- the only area near Mussoorie where you can see a few trees of Himalayan Ash *Fraxinus Micrantha* in the wild (right near the beginning of the path down, next to Horse Chestnut trees). Another rare associate of our local 'Banj' Oak *Quercus leucotrichophora* is also found here- *Neolitsea pallens*, also known as *Litsea umbrosa*, and locally as 'Sharoor'. The village claims to have given up on growing traditional millets and other grains because of extensive crop damage by wild animals. They concentrate on cash crops like 'Marsa' or Amaranth- a grain that is used to make ceremonial laddoos for the Maha Shiv Ratri religious festival, and otherwise only eaten when fasting- that is abstaining from eating wheat, rice, etc.'