

## Pepper Pot and Pepper Pot Cave By Paul Seefeldt and Jon Jantzen (*Ophryisia*)

**Rating:** Easy

**Best Time to Go:** Year round

**Length:** 4 hours

**Distance:** 8 km

### Description:

Pepperpot, a mountain so named because the squareness of its top resembles a pepperpot or shaker, is a leisurely one-day walk to the east.

There are many approaches to this mountain, but the easiest is to follow Tehri Road out 9 km to just before the village of Masrana. At this point cut off up to the left, right next to a small yellow sign indicating block divisions. The path travels up the northeast side of the mountain through the light oak forest to a ridge, a distance of 1km or so from Tehri Road. From the end of the ridge the path is very indistinct and one must use their own judgement -- the main objective is to go up. From the ridge the real summit is hidden by a false peak. One should go around the south side of the false peak, and from there the trail is quite easily discerned. The path climbs almost straight up the mountain, a bit on the south side of the ridge, and terminates in the vicinity of a large waterhole, less than thirty metres from the top. The oak forest is quite thick in this area, so the tracks of *kakar* (barking deer) will likely be seen at the water hole. Occasionally the tracks of leopard are also seen. If an extended stay is desired, a nice spot is near the water hole. Be sure to take all your water with you, because good water is not close at hand. From the summit one can see the Chor Valley and the Nag Tibba range beyond Thatyur village to the north; Top Tibba, Dhanolti and Surkhandadevi in the east; and Mussoorie in the west. On a clear day, fine pictures of the snows may be taken from here.

Another nice mountain peak to visit in this area is Deo ki Tibba ("Mountain of the God"). It is the highest peak on the barefaced ridge above Tehri Road, about 8 km from Woodstock School.

The path starts upwards from Tehri Road about a furlong after the white Forest Rest House on the jutting ridge after Second Jabarkhet. This path climbs the barren slopes gradually until it reaches the ridge above, and then climbs steeply up to the peak of Deo ki Tibba. On the top there is a pile of rocks and a wooden pole to mark the sacred site. This point is about the same height as Pepperpot, seen across the valley to the north. The hiker can get a clear view of the neighbouring mountain peaks and valleys; Top Tibba to the east, and Surkhandadevi behind it with its white temple visible; Pepperpot, with Nag Tibba behind it to the north; and the Landour hillside to the west. The view of the Doon, seemingly directly beneath your feet, is as magnificent from this point as from Top Tibba.

The more interesting way to get to Deo ki Tibba is to start up from Tehri Road about 1 km past Second Jabarkhet, where the ridge comes down to the road level, passing over Panther Hill (the first hill you climb) and other minor peaks on the ridge. Most of this ridge is nicely forested, with heavy forest on the north side and dry, grassy slopes on the southern side. These slopes are gradually being replanted with pine trees by the Forest Department. Birds are plentiful on this ridge, and an early morning observer will sometimes spot *kakar* and on the rare occasion *ghoral* in the heavy forest and cliffs on the slopes beneath her. The ridge abounds in beautiful flowers.

Just below the third peak before Deo ki Tibba, on the forested side, is a natural cave, known as Pepperpot Cave and a perfect setting for the Dead Poet's Society. From below this cave a path goes along the back of the ridge through the forest to the saddle in the ridge between Deo ki Tibba and Pepperpot.

The summit of Panther Hill provides a wonderful place to camp, and other level spots are available on the ridge. Water must be carried in. This sit is not recommended for monsoon camping because the flat top is rather unprotected and the more sheltered dips in the ridge tend to fill up with water.