



# DARE to climb

THE HIMALAYAS IS HOME TO EIGHT OF THE WORLD'S LOFTIEST PEAKS,  
AND HAS HELD THE FASCINATION OF CLIMBERS FOR CENTURIES

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Legend amongst mountaineering buffs, the Himalayan Hotel in Kalimpong was the family home of David Macdonald, the man who accompanied the Younghusband Mission to Lhasa in 1904. Macdonald served as interpreter on the trip and went on to hold a post as a British Trade Agent, serving in Yatung and Gyantse until he retired in 1924. On his return to India, he decided to convert it into a hotel which is still run by his grandchildren.

Kalimpong, set amidst its Himalyan splendour, used to be the take-off point for trade routes between India and Tibet. The lure of summit challenges was a subject of deep debate over hot toddies by its crackling fire when it became the temporary home to Everest expeditions from the days of Mallory and Irving in the 1920s. Hillary and Tenzing were frequent visitors as were Tibetologists such as Heinrich Harrer, the author of *Seven Years in Tibet*.

The Himalayas is the world's highest and youngest mountain system, and is still evolving. It is here that you will find eight of the world's loftiest mountains that include the legendary Mt Everest (8,848 m), Mt Kanchenjunga (8,585 m), Lhotse (8,516 m) and Dhaulagiri (8,167 m). This shining crown set upon the brow of India – stretching from the northwest regions of the Eastern Karakoram, Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal, Uttarakhand to Sikkim and Arunachal in the North-east, with a range of approachable high rise peaks – continues to be a magnet for the global mountain climbing community. They are the earthly homes of gods, and the repository of spiritual and cultural traditions for over 5,000 years.

Summit bashing opportunities can be found in the remote expanses of the western Himalayas around Leh-Ladakh in Jammu & Kashmir, Garhwal and Kumaon in Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh's Kullu region and Lahaul and Spiti, and in Sikkim and fragments of the North-east in the eastern Himalayas. A large number of peaks between 6,000-7,000 metres are challenging and still virgin, offering mountaineers an alluring canvas for discovery and conquest.

In the cold desert expanses of Ladakh's Great Himalayan Range, the Nun Kun massif (7,077 m) is a huge draw for climbers who head here between June to September as it lies in the rain shadow. It is Ladakh's loftiest peak. The journey along the Kargil-Padum route

<< **TEST OF ENDURANCE:** A group of mountaineers on their way to conquer the Stok Kangri massif

## FACT FILE

### TIPS

- \* You need to be physically very fit.
- \* Acclimatisation is a prerequisite for climbs, particularly in Ladakh
- \* Special permit from Indian Mountaineering Foundation (IMF), is required for peaks above 6,000 ft (1,828 m, approximately).
- \* The minimum period required for processing applications is six months.
- \* Each authorised expedition is provided with adequate rescue coverage in case of accidents and illness.
- \* Royalty rates to government for climbing peaks are hugely variable

### CONTACTS

**For Permits:** IMF, 6, Benito Juarez Road, New Delhi. Tel: 011 24111211, 24117935, 24111572;  
[www.indmount.org](http://www.indmount.org)

**For Kun expedition:** Ibex Expeditions, G-66 East of Kailash, New Delhi. Tel: 011 26912641/7829;  
[www.ibexexpeditions.com](http://www.ibexexpeditions.com).  
Cost: Foreigners: Rs 1,36,000 (approx) per head for two persons, airfares extra; Indians: Rs 1,13,000 (approx) for two persons, airfares extra.

**For Stok-Kangri expedition:** Aquaterra Adventures (I) Pvt. Ltd., S-507, ground floor, Greater Kailash II, New Delhi. Tel: 011 29212641, 29212760, 41636101,  
[www.indianhimalayas.net](http://www.indianhimalayas.net).  
Cost: Rs 49,815 (per head) plus Del-Leh-Del airfare

**Getting there:** Leh airport gets flights from Delhi and Srinagar.

**SEASON:** July-August



<< **RUSH TO THE TOP:** (Left and bottom) A camp set up in the pristine Zaskar valley in Ladakh; a climber tries to find a steady footing with the Shivling peak in the background

through the spectacular Suru Valley is simply awesome. You need to book well in advance as it's a popular climb. Other peaks of interest in Suru and the otherworldly Zaskar region are Pinnacle (6,930 m), White Needle (6,500 m), Z1 (6,400 m) and D41 (5,600 m).

South of Leh is another popular climbing magnet – the Stok-Kangri massif (6,153 m) set amidst the Zaskar range. Expect to enjoy some interesting cultural interactions with the community at Stok village, a two-day hike over three passes from the summit base.

In Uttarakhand's Garhwal and Kumaon region, climbers are treading the pathways of some of India's most sacred spaces. The Gangotri Glacier – the birthplace of the holy Ganga, and known here as the Bhagirathi – is the hub for climbing activities. It is the gateway for many fabled glaciers and astonishing summits.

One of the most sacred and beautiful mountains in Uttarakhand is the twin-peaked Nanda Devi (7,816 m) the second highest in India. In 1936, Britisher Bill Tilman made a successful attempt on Nanda Devi. Along with Eric Shipton, he had been the first man on record to reach the pristine sanctuary area of the peak. Climbing the Nanda Devi, (encircled by ranks of lesser peaks seventy miles in circumference), is now strictly prohibited for mountaineering, to preserve the fragile environment. However, you can now trek to the designated area along the outskirts of the Nanda Devi Sanctuary (established in 1980), and accessible from Joshimath and Lata village.

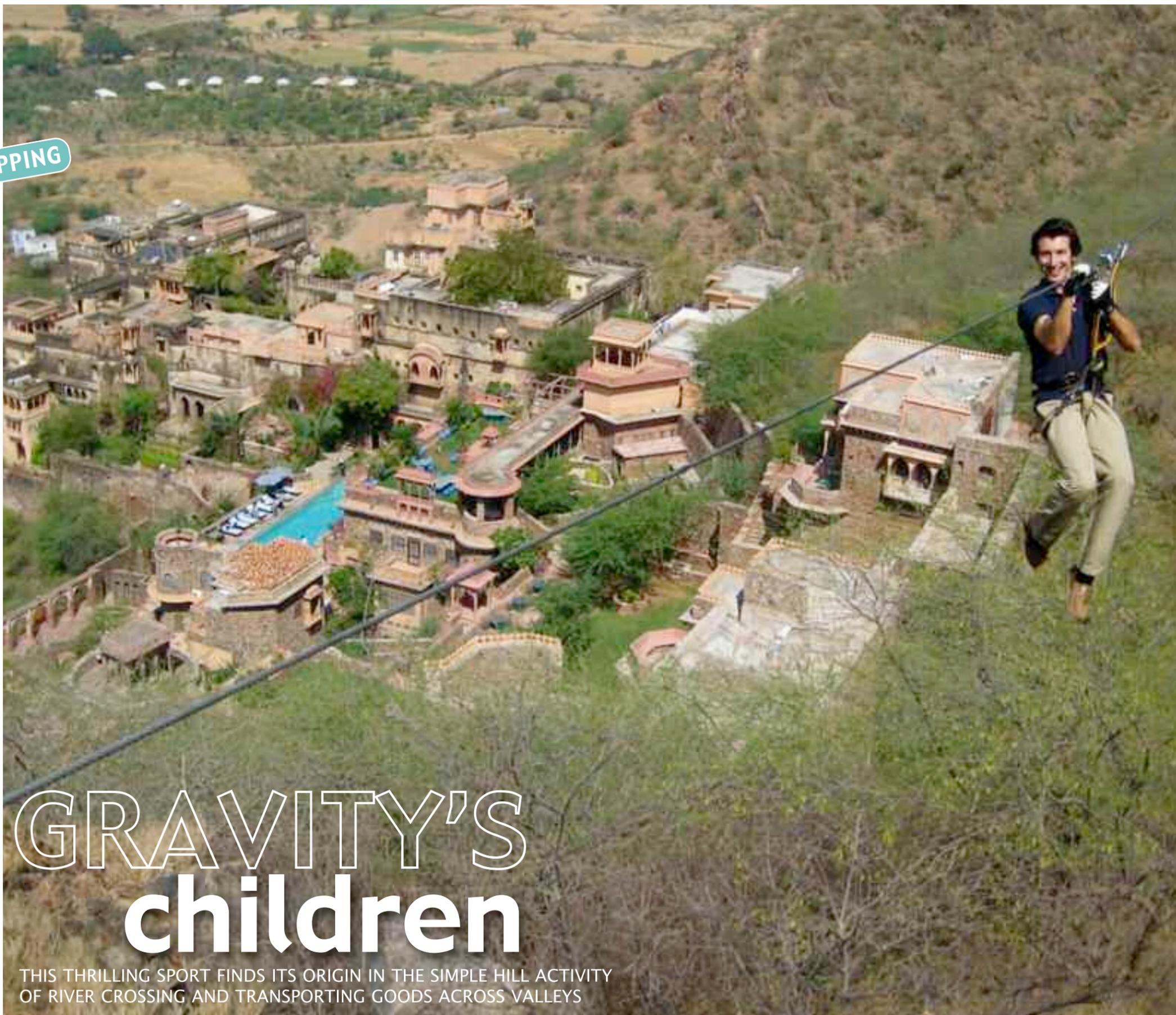
Prominent peaks in the Kumaon and Garhwal Himalayas include Banderpoonch (6,316 m), Kamet (7,756 m), Trisul (7,120 m), Shivling (6,543 m) and Mt Meru (6,450 m). From the Milam glacier, are the enticements of Hardeol (7,151 m) and Tirsuli (7,074 m). The Pindari valley is flanked by Panwali Dwar (6,663 m) and Nanda Khat – both very popular with climbers.

In Himachal's Kullu region, the south Parvati area has several peaks such as Indrasan (6,221 m) which are open to climbs. Lahaul too has been a draw for climbers, now with peaks such as Kullu Pumori (6,553 m) and Shigri Parbat (6,626 m) served up in the area around the Bara Shigri glacier.

In the Sikkim region, there are many peaks around Mt Kanchenjunga, such as Simvu and Siniolchu which are open for climbs. Pyramid Peak, Jongsang and Chorten Nyima, and Pauhunri with its Donkhya Ri pinnacle, also allure climbers.

**SEASON:** May to mid-October. 🏔️





# GRAVITY'S children

THIS THRILLING SPORT FINDS ITS ORIGIN IN THE SIMPLE HILL ACTIVITY OF RIVER CROSSING AND TRANSPORTING GOODS ACROSS VALLEYS



ravellers passing through interior Uttarakhand and Himachal (especially in the Kullu region) may have chanced upon a metal cable suspended between two high mountains with a metal basket swinging from it. For the villagers, this is sometimes the quickest option for getting themselves and their goods from one mountain to the next. It is not unknown that if a passenger partially falls out, the only thing between him and certain death is to cling on for life to that metal basket while he's desperately and quickly winched safely back to one side. It doesn't seem funny at all, if you imagine yourself in the hotseat.

The world's hottest adventure sport follows similar principals, except that you are put into a safety harness (no metal basket, making it even scarier) attached by ropes to a pulley. And then, you go zipping along with the help of an ultra-strong steel cable (located at an incline) to the other side. The dizzying descent is simply propelled by gravity. A special glove worn on the right hand helps control speed.

At less-frightening heights, and on small ziplines (less speedy also) you may be holding on to the pulley suspended above you from the cable without that harness. In the UK, the zipline system is known as the 'aerial runway,' and in Australia and New Zealand, as the 'flying fox.' It is also known as the more macabre 'death slide.'

In India, Flying Fox has been wowing adventure buffs at Neemrana Fort Palace near Gurgaon, and also at Jodhpur's magnificent Mehrangarh Fort, with its professionally-run ziplines. More recently, Della Adventure near Lonavala in Maharashtra is said to have set up India's longest permanent 500-foot zipline, and is doing brisk business ever since its inception.

**SEASON:** All-year-round except during extreme weather. ❏

<< **THE BEST JOYRIDE:** Zipping is considered to be the safest and most enjoyable adventure activity

## FACT FILE

### OPERATORS

**Flying Fox:** M-9, Green Park Main, New Delhi.  
Mob: 9810999390,  
[www.flyingfox.asia](http://www.flyingfox.asia).

Cost: Rs 1,660 per person and Rs 1,330 per child (Jodhpur

and Neemrana). Book and pay in advance for a 40 per cent discount; 20 per cent discount on online bookings.

**Della Adventure:** Kunegaon, Lonavala, Maharashtra  
Tel: 02114 260000. Della Adventure is touted as India's largest recreation park.