

HARIDWAR

Haridwar is on the west bank of the Ganges, at the foot of the Himalaya Mountains. Haridwar means "the gateway to Hari." It is also called Gangadwara, because the holy Ganges enters the plains here. This is one of the seven main holy cities in India. Haridwar is about 225km northeast of Delhi.

Significance

It is also called Mayapuri Kshetra in the puranas . It is also called Kapilasthan, because it is said Kapiladeva performed penance here.

This is where Vidura was instructed by Maitreya.

The great sacrifice of Daksha Prajapati took place near here, where Sati burned herself alive.

Nearby at Sapta Sarovara, the Ganges splits into seven streams to please the seven Rishis doing austerities there.

The river is fed icy melting glaciers and snow peaks. A barrage just north of Haridwar splits the Ganges. The water that flows next to the city of Haridwar is actually a fast-moving, big canal. The main natural rivulet of the Ganges, called Neel Dhara, flows about a half-km east of the city.

Kumbha Mela

Haridwar is one of the four places where the kumbha mela is held, during which sadhus from all over India come. This takes every 12 years. The other places where Kumbha--mela takes place are Allahabad (Prayag), Nasik, and Ujjain. It is said that some of the nectar from the kumbha carried by Jayanta (the son of Indra) fell at this place. The main bathing place is Har Ki Pauri

Important places

Hari ki Pauri Ghat (Brahma Kund)

This is located at the exact spot where the Ganges lives the mountains and reaches the plains and is considered a very holy place.

The name Hari-ki-Pauri means "the feet of Hari (Lord Vishnu)." The footprints of Vishnu are imprinted on the wall underneath the water at this ghat. You need to ask the priest to be able to touch it.



This Ghat is also called Brahma Kund because it is said that Raja Shveta performed austerities here and received blessings from Brahma. Kumbha-mela is held here where the nectar fell. There are temples here dedicated to the goddess Ganga and Haricharan.

Every night at about 6 pm there is an arati to the sacred Ganges.

Before starting their "Char Dham yatra in himalayas," pilgrims are supposed to come and bathe at this ghat. One hundred thousand people can bathe here at one time. There are chains and rails that enable people to bathe safely, as the Ganges flows very swiftly at this spot.

Auspicious Bathing Dates

Hundreds of thousands of people come to bathe at this ghat on the first day of Vaisakha in April/May, when the Hindu solar year begins. On Ganga-dasera, at the beginning of the rainy season, the Ganges is said to have come down from the heavens. Other important bathing days are on Purnimas (full moon days, especially Kartika Purnima), Ekadasis, Amavasyas (new moon days), Sankrantis (when the sun enters the next zodiac sign), and solar and lunar eclipses.

The ashes of the dead are supposed to be cast into the Ganges at the southern part of the ghat.

Other Ghats

South of Hari-ki-Pauri, there is an interesting area to walk which is lined with bathing ghats.

Kushavarta Ghat, about half a km south of Hari-ki-Pauri is said to be the place where Dattatreya did penance by standing on one foot for a thousand years.

Lord Vishnu is said to have bathed at **Vishnu Ghat**.

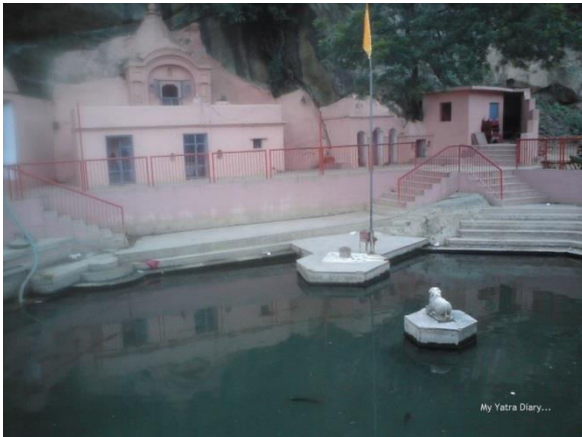
Mansa Devi Temple



This temple is situated on Vilwa Parvat, the hill above the city. Mansa Devi is a form of Shakti Durga. It is said to be the place where the heart and navel of goddess Sati had fallen.

There is a cable car that goes to the top of the hill, which you board close to Ratan Cinema, just off the main road. From the top of the hill you get a bird's eye view of Haridwar, the Ganga valley, and the Himalayan peaks, Open 8 am to noon and 2 to 5 pm. It takes about a half-hour to walk up the hill.

Other Places



about 6km north of Haridwar, on the banks of the Ganges. At this place, the Ganges is said to have divided to avoid displeasing the seven rishis (yogis) meditating there.

The **Pareshwar Mahadev Temple** is four km south of Haridwar. The Siva-linga in the temple is said to be made of mercury.

Nearby Places

Kankhal

Kankhal is said to have been the capital of Prajapati Daksha. It is about 4 km south of the Haridwar railway station.

To explain the story in brief, Sati's father Daksha, son of Brahma, did not like Sati's husband, Shiva. So when Daksha had his huge Yajna ritual, he did not want Shiva to be there. When Daksha had entered the arena, all sages stood in respect except Brahma and Shiva, which offended Daksha. So Daksha cursed Shiva to not partake in the rituals. Thereafter, Daksha and Shiva both left the arena.



Bhimgoda Kund is said to have been created by Bhima, one of the Pandava brothers from the Mahabharata, by a blow of his knee. It is about half a km upstream from Hari-ki-Pauri Ghat, just off the road on the way to Sapta Rishi Ashram.

About half a km further north is **Sapta Rishi Ashram**. It is



Afterwards, Daksha did not invite Shiva to the next Yajna ritual, but Sati still wanted to go, even against the advice of Shiva. After arriving, she underwent insults by her father, Daksha, toward her because of being married to Shiva. So she self-immolated herself in fire. After Shiva heard about this, he became extremely angry and created a huge black demon, Virabhadra, and sent along with him his followers to fight and destroy Daksha's ritual. This Virabhadra finally cut off Daksha's head and threw it into

the fire. When Shiva came and gathered Sati's body, he was grief stricken and carried her body wherever he went. To relieve Shiva's grief, Lord Vishnu cut Sati's body into pieces with His chakra and wherever they

dropped became Shakti-piths, or places of power where people go to worship Shakti, or Durga. The Daksha Mahadeva Mandir is said to mark the place where the fire of Daksha's Vedic ritual was located.

The **Daksheswara Mahadeva Siva Temple** (also called Daksha Prajapati Temple) is said to have been built in commemoration of Lord Siva coming to this place to help Sati.

The little pit in the Daksha Mahadeva Mandir is said to be where Daksha had his original sacrificial fire.

Next to this temple on the bank of the Ganges is Daksha Ghat.

Sati Kund on Kankhal Jwalapur Road is said to mark the spot where Sati actually burnt herself.

