

YAMUNOTRI

This is where the holy Yamuna River begins. Yamunotri is about 234km north of Haridwar. The Yamuna River flows west to east at Yamunotri. Yamunotri is the source of the Hanuman Ganga and the Tons River, which are tributaries of the Yamuna.

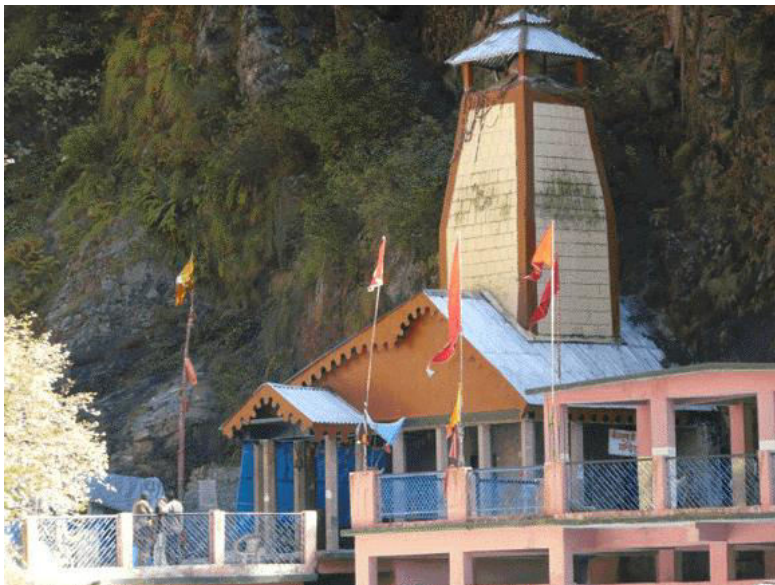
Yamunotri stands on the western flank of the always snow-covered Bandarpunch Mountain 6,315m.

The hard climb from Hanuman Chatti, where *the bus* road ends, takes five to six hours of climb. On the way up is the confluence of the Yamuna and Nil Ganga, called **Shani Prayag**. There is a temple here dedicated to Shani. Worship at this temple is supposed to rid one of the bad astrological influences.

Technically the source of the Yamuna is *Saptarishi Kund, a glacial lake*. To get there you have to climb right up the mountain, a very hard 12km trek to the base of Kalinda Parvat. You need a guide and at least one day's acclimatization at Yamunotri to reach Saptarishi Kund.

Yamunotri Temple

This temple built in 1839 is dedicated to the goddess Yamuna. The deity of Yamuna is carved from black stone, and there is also a deity of Gangadevi, who is white. Yamuna is the daughter of Surya (the sun god) and Sangya. Yamuna is the twin sister of Yamaraja, the "Lord of Death." If you bathe in her waters, you are spared a painful death. But before worshipping in the Yamuna temple, one is expected to visit the



Divya Shila, which is next to it.

The story is Yamuna took birth from Surya and Sangya. Due to bright effulgence of Sun, Sangya would close her eyes whenever he would approach her. Becoming angry on her, Sungod cursed her that a son would take birth from her who would cause fear in everyones life and would snatch life of living beings. This son will be called as Yamaraj. Later after seeing the repentence of her wife, he blessed her that she would beget another child, a

daughter, whose name would be Yamuna (Kalindi) who would free all from not only fear of her brother Yamaraj but also free one from cycle of birth and death.

The Yamunotri Temple is built at the foot of Kalinda Parvata (14,505 feet). The temple usually opens the last week of April or the first week of May. It closes around the second week of November.

Saptarishi Kund

The actual source of the Yamuna is located at the very difficult-to-reach Saptarishi Kund. You must have guide to go there. It is believed that seven great rishis- Kasyapa, Atri, Bharadvaja, Visvamisra, Gautama, Jamadagni, and Vasistha- performed austerities for millions of years here in Satya-yuga.

It takes 16 hours to go up and back down. You have to deal with the high altitude, climbing up hills and over rock, ice, snow, and water. The *kund* is about a half km in diameter, and its water is dark blue with slushy snow. Very few people come here, as it is a difficult place to reach.



Other Places



Close to the temple are hot water **springs** where the water gushes out at boiling point. At **Surya Kund**, which is said to be the most sacred, pilgrims wrap rice and potatoes in a cloth and place it in the hot water. Within a few minutes the rice and potatoes are cooked.

You can slowly get in and bathe in **Yamuna mai Kund**, which is about 15m (50ft) from the temple.

Right next to the temple is **Divya Shila**, which is

worshipped before *puja* is offered to Yamunaji.



Hanuman Chatti to Yamunotri

You have to walk the good part of a day, 14km uphill, to reach Yamunotri. It takes five or six hours to walk from Hanuman Chatti. At a distance of 6½ km from Hanuman Chatti there are sulfur springs.

Just past the halfway point is the town of Janaki Chatti, where you can stay for the night. From there you can go to the village of Kharsali (across the river, 1km away), which is a traditional Garhwali village. There is a temple here dedicated to **Someshwar**, the lord of the heavenly intoxicating Soma beverage. There are good views of the mountains from this temple.

Yamunotri is a steep and continuous climb to the top, just wide enough for two horses *or a dandi* to pass. The views are fantastic. The last half kilometer is almost vertical. The walk up is very difficult, but it is easy to walk down. It is advised not to carry too much up the hill.

If you cannot walk up the hill there are other transportations. A *dandi* is like a palanquin carried by four persons. It is the most comfortable form of transportation, as you can stretch your legs out. Pony rides are uncomfortable for most people. Going by *khandi* being carried in a backpack by one person, is uncomfortable.

Yamunāñöakam of Çré Rüpa Gosvämé:



1

bhrätur antakasya pattane ´bhipatti-häriëé
prekñayäti-päpino ´pi päpa-sindhu-täriëé

néra-mādhurēbhir apy aḥeṇa-citta-bandhiné

mā punātu sarvadāravinda-bandhu-nandiné

"May Yamunā-devé, the daughter of Sūrya the sun-god, always purify me. She saves those who touch her from going to the realm of her brother Yamarāja, and merely seeing her exonerates even greatly sinful people from the reactions to their sins. The attractiveness of her waters captivates everyone's heart."

2

hāri-vāri-dhārayābhimaēḍitoru-khāēḍavā

puēḍarēka-maēḍalodyad-aēḍajāli-tāēḍavā

snāna-kāma-pāmarogra-pāpa-sampad-andhiné

mā punātu sarvadāravinda-bandhu-nandiné

"Yamunā-devé adorns Indra's massive Khāēḍava forest with her enchanting current, and upon her blooming white lotuses, birds such as wagtails always dance. Simply desiring to bathe in her crystalline waters pardons one from even the greatest of sins. May that Yamunā-devé, the daughter of Sūrya the sun-god, always purify me."

3

ḥekarābhimāñña-jantu-durvipāka-mardiné

nanda-nandanāntaraiga-bhakti-pūra-varhdhiné

tēra-saigamābhilāñi-maigalānubandhiné

mā punātu sarvadāravinda-bandhu-nandiné

"Sprinkling a single drop of her water upon oneself frees one from the reaction to even the most heinous crime. She increases the flow of devotion for Nanda-nandana Ḥré Kāñña within one's heart and benedicts anyone who simply desires to reside on her banks. May Yamunā-devé, the daughter of Sūrya the sun-god, always purify me."

4

dvēpa-cakravāla-juñña-sapta-sindhu-bhediné

ḥré-mukunda-nirmitoru-divya-keli-vediné

kānti-kandalēbhir indranēla-vānda-nindiné

mää punātu sarvadāravinda-bandhu-nandiné

"Yamunā-devé is so inconceivably powerful that although she flows through the seven oceans which surround the earth's seven giant islands, she never merges into them as ordinary rivers do. Being an intimate witness to Çré Kāñëa's wonderful pastimes, she makes those pastimes arise in the hearts of those who take shelter of her. Her dark, shimmering beauty defeats even that of a precious blue sapphire. May Yamunā-devé, the daughter of Sürya the sun-god, always purify me."

5

māthureëa maëòalena cāruëābhimaëòitä

prema-naddha-vaiñëavādhva-varadhanāya paëòitä

ürmi-dor-vilāsa-padmanābha-pāda-vandiné

mää punātu sarvadāravinda-bandhu-nandiné

"Ornamented by the supremely enchanting land of Mathurā-maëòala, Yamunā-devé inspires spontaneous devotion in the hearts of the loving Vaiñëavas who bathe in her waters. With her waves, which are like playful arms, she worships Çré Kāñëa's lotus feet. May Yamunā-devé, the daughter of Sürya the sun-god, always purify me."

6

ramya-téra-rambhamäëa-go-kadamba-bhüñitä

divya-gandha-bhāk-kadamba-puñpa-rāji-rüñitä

nanda-sünu-bhakta-saigha-saigamābhinandiné

mää punātu sarvadāravinda-bandhu-nandiné

"Yamunā-devé's supremely attractive banks are further beautified by the celestial fragrance emanating from the flowers of the kadamba trees which line them and by the presence of mooing cows. She is especially delighted when Nanda-lāla's devotees assemble on those banks. May Yamunā-devé, the daughter of Sürya the sun-god, always purify me."

7

phulla-pakña-mallikākña-haāsa-lakña-küjitä

bhakti-viddha-deva-siddha-kinnarāli-püjitä

téra-gandhaväha-gandha-janma-bandha-randhiné

mää punätu sarvadäravinda-bandhu-nandiné

"Hundreds of thousands of swans glide along the waters of Yamunä-devé, who is worshipable to the demigods, siddhas, Kinnaras, and humans whose hearts are dedicated to the service of Çré Hari. Anyone who is touched by her gentle breezes is released from the cycle of birth and death. May Yamunä-devé, the daughter of Sürya the sun-god, always purify me."

8

cid-viläsa-väri-püra-bhür-bhuvaù-svar-äpiné

kértitäpi durmadaru-päpa-marma-täpiné

ballavendra-nandanäigaräga-bhaiga-gandhiné

mää punätu sarvadäravinda-bandhu-nandiné

"Yamunä-devé distributes transcendental knowledge throughout the three worlds known as Bhüù, Bhuvaù, and Svaù as she flows through them, and singing her glories burns to ashes the reactions of even the greatest of sins. She has become supremely fragrant due to the sandal paste from Çré Kåñëa's body melting in her waters as He enjoys His water-sports. May Yamunä-devé, the daughter of Sürya the sun-god, always purify me."

9

tuñöa-buddhir añöakena nirmalormi-ceñöitäà

tväm anena bhänu-putri! sarva-deva-veñöitäà

yaù stavéti vardhayasva sarva-päpa-mocane

bhakti-püram asya devé! puëðaréka-locane

"Hey Sürya-putré! Devé! O Yamune, whose forceful waves are so purifying and who is surrounded by all the demigods! Please increase the current of bhakti for the lotus-eyed Çré Kåñëa, He who liberates people from their sins, of that contented, intelligent person who recites this prayer—this is my supplication at your feet."