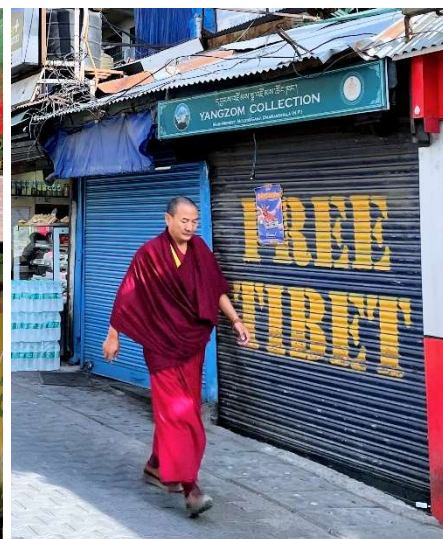


# HIMALAYAN MOUNTAIN TREK

TREKKING IN THE HIMALAYAS, NORTH INDIA, NOVEMBER 2023



This trek, my 20<sup>th</sup> to raise funds for Teenage Cancer Trust, was billed as the Dalai Lama Himalayan Trek, as the trip started from Dharamsala, home to the Dalai Lama and the exiled Tibetan community. Until 1949, Tibet was an autonomous kingdom, ruled by successive Dalai Lamas, believed to be living incarnations of the Buddhist deity of compassion, Avalokitesvara. Following the Chinese invasion, over 250,000 Tibetan refugees fled over the Himalayas to seek sanctuary in India. We walked around the site which includes the residence of the current Dalai Lama and Buddhist temples, with prayer wheels and flags along the path. In the town, there are more Tibetan temples, market stalls and shops.

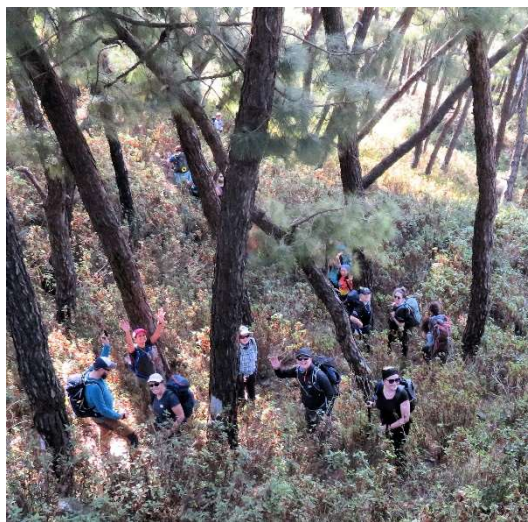


We moved on by road from Dharamsala to Bir, a town close to where our trek was to begin. This is also a world-renowned centre for paragliding, and on an acclimatisation walk we passed by a landing field. The walk also took us to a local temple, where a noisy ceremony involving drums and horns was underway. We stayed overnight in Bir, in local houses, before rising early the next morning (the first of many early starts) to begin the trek.





The first day was one of the toughest as we entered into the foothills of the Himalayas. Overall we ascended 1,100 metres (3,600 feet) during the day - roughly equivalent to climbing Scafell Pike or Snowdon from sea level. We walked through forests where the sap was being collected from the trees, past a snake temple, and a real (but dead) snake.



We stayed at campsites where there were some limited basic facilities, such as a communal dining area and toilet huts, but I slept in a tent for the first three nights.



While during the day the sun gave some warmth, in the evenings and nights the temperature was close to freezing.

Our route took us through small villages communities, where subsistence farming was obviously a key part of everyday life. We saw cabbage patches, large areas devoted to growing maize which had just been harvested, and cows, sheep and goats.



In some villages we visited local schools, where the teachers and children were happy to spend a little time with us as unexpected visitors. In some cases the children enjoyed practising the English they had learned, and in others they lined up to perform their school drill.



The mountain paths we followed were often steep and rocky, and even the wider tracks were strewn with rocks.



On day 4, we headed away from the villages and deeper into the mountain range towards the high peaks. This meant crossing areas where there had been landslides and where the paths were sandy and slippery. We reached our goal of some mountain huts where the support team lit a fire and cooked a lunch of pasta, pesto and cheese.



It was just as well we'd had something hot, as this was when it began to rain, which turned to sleet, which turned to snow. We had about a 3-hour walk back to our campsite in the torrential rain and snow, and we all discovered that our "waterproofs" were not very waterproof after an hour or so. Pretty much everyone was soaked. And paths which were sandy on the way to the huts, were now a quagmire. Thankfully some space was found in a communal room in the campsite hostel, and I didn't have to spend this night in my tent.



[I've had to borrow another trekker's photo here, as my hands were too cold, and my phone too wet, to take one myself.]

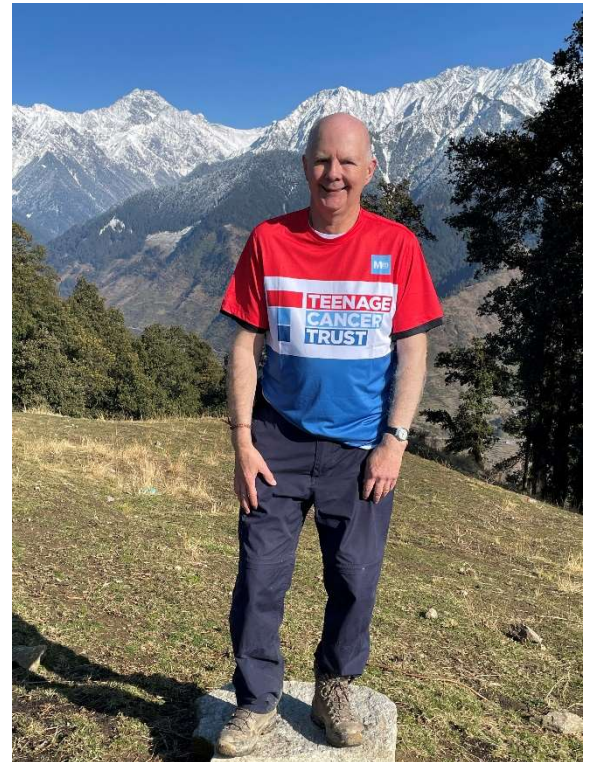




But every cloud has a silver lining. The next day, our last trekking day, was bright and sunny, and the mountains had a fresh layer of snow from the day before. We walked along a ridge with stunning views of the mountain range, and up to the highest point of the whole trek, at just under 3,000 metres (9,800 feet). At that point there is a small shrine, and we spent a few minutes in silence to reflect upon what had brought us to these mountains, and what we had achieved.



Teenage Cancer Trust funds specialist nurses, youth support teams and hospital units within the NHS to provide the very best care and support during treatment and beyond, making sure cancer doesn't stop young people living their lives. Much of this has been possible through the generosity of people such as yourselves in supporting fundraising efforts like mine. At the time of writing, having recently returned from India, I have raised £2,620 (plus around £400 in Gift Aid). My fundraising page currently remains open at: [www.justgiving.com/fundraising/nigel-turner-trek2023](http://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/nigel-turner-trek2023)



THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR SUPPORT

*Nigel*

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