



National Centre for Polar & Ocean Research Indian Scientific Expedition to Antarctica

Dear Participant,

Here, we bring you the experiences of one of our expedition member which might help you prepare better for the pre-Antarctic Snow Ice Acclimatisation training at ITBP, Auli. The information provided in this advisory has been compiled by the author with utmost care. Nonetheless, National Centre for Antarctic & Ocean Research cannot assume liability for the topicality, accuracy, completeness or quality of the information provided. The organization and the author of this advisory cannot be held liable for material or non-material damage caused by incorrect or incomplete information, provided that the deficiencies in question are not deliberate or due to gross negligence.

Group Director (Antarctic Operations and Infrastructure)

TRAINING AT ITBP MOUNTAINEERING AND SKIING INSTITUTE, AULI

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Introduction

The training at ITBP mountaineering and skiing institute at Auli in Uttarakhand is the second step towards visiting Antarctica (First one being Medical examination at AIIMS). Its successful completion is mandatory for ensuring the ticket to Antarctica. The purpose of this training includes physical training, observing your conduct as a team, and gets you acquainted with your team members who will be accompanying you to Antarctica. This is the first place where your queries will be dealt in detail.

About Auli

Auli is an important ski destination in the Uttarakhand Himalayas, India. About 500 km from Delhi by road is also known as Auli Bugyal, in Garhwali, which means meadow, is located at an elevation of 2500 to 3050 meters above sea level. The ITBP Mountaineering and Skiing Institute imparts specialised training in Mountaineering, Skiing, Survival in High Altitude, Rescue Operations and River Rafting. Specialisation of the Institute in these disciplines attracts trainees from Central and State Police Forces, including Defence Forces and members of the Indian Antarctic Expeditions.

Preparation

Your stay at Auli and Badrinath will be etched in your memory forever due to the most beautiful and serene surroundings. The entire staying and food arrangements are done by NCAOR through the team leader. You are not expected to carry cash and shall carry the same only in moderate amounts to cater for your purchases at Badrinath. The nearest ATM is at Joshimath where you will visit twice only during to & fro journey to Badrinath.

The Auli training is usually clubbed with Medical examination at AIIMS. Once the medical examination is completed (Usually medical examination takes 3 days). The dates of medical examination and proceeding to Auli are given in advance so you come prepared for both.

The weather at Auli is very pleasant from September onwards. Mild chill is expected in early morning and late evening or following mild rains during that time and also temperature drops down to 12°C. It is suggested to travel light and carry clothes for journey and night wear. One sweater and a balaclava/woollen cap may be carried to manage the mild cold there. The entire duration of training at Auli will be in clothes that will be provided to you on your arrival day itself.

If you are into photography then must carry your camera with lots of memory backup (Carry 1-2 TB Hard disk). You can carry laptop but the safety is your responsibility. When you go to Badrinath the laptops and other valuables can be deposited at Auli for safe keeping.

Mobiles do work at Auli as well as Badrinath but data services are poor at Auli and non-existent at Badrinath. One computer with Internet access is provided at mess for use of entire team to enable you to access your email etc.

Badrinath is 'No alcohol' zone and alcohol is not served at Auli except for course completion party where one should consume alcohol responsibly. If you are a smoker then you should carry your requirements with you and remember not to litter the place with cigarette butts.

Advised to travel light and considering your activity schedule during the training you may carry the following:

- Jeans Pants and casual shirts / T Shirts 2-3 pairs
- Formal Trousers and Formal shirts – 1 pair
- Warm Jacket / Sweater – 1
- Waterproof wind cheater – 1
- Sneakers / walking / running shoes – 1 pair
- Undergarments and cotton socks – 4 pairs
- Toilet accessories as necessary
- Adequate supplies of medicines / supplements prescribed (If any).

Journey

The journey to Auli from Delhi takes two days. On the first day the journey begins at 7.00-7.30 am from Ministry of Earth Sciences, Prithvi Bhavan and a team leader nominated by NCAOR is the incharge of entire trip. He is entrusted with finances for the trip. First day journey is of approximately 10-12 hours duration and ends up at Srinagar where night halt is done. The breakfast and lunch break are done at Muzaffarnagar (Cheetal Grand) and Rishikesh (GMVN Rest house) respectively. The second day journey begins at 6.30-7.00 am from Srinagar where the packed breakfast is carried. The break is taken at a roadside Dhaba where you can have breakfast with hot tea / coffee. The journey takes 7-8 hours and we reach Auli by 2.00 pm where hot lunch will be awaiting you.

Boarding & Lodging

The staying arrangements at Auli are in Antarctica huts which are dormitory kind of arrangement and 6 twin sharing rooms. Your name list will be affixed outside them where you can keep your personal effects. The stay will be comfortable with beds and blankets. After lunch you will be introduced to your instructors and will be issued with kit that will include the clothing and mountaineering accessories. The timetable for next 12-13 days will be affixed at notice board outside Mess. The rules to be followed by you during your stay at Auli will be informed to you which you are expected to adhere to at all times. Shaving kit should be carried as daily shaving is part of training at Auli.

Day 2-14 will include welcome address by commandant, M & SI, ITBP Auli, daily trekking, familiarization with knots, demonstration of rock craft, films on Maitri and Bharati and classes on various theoretical aspects dealing with your visit at Antarctica. First 6-7 days will be at Auli while last 5-6 days training will be conducted at Badrinath which will mainly include Rock craft, Snow craft and pitching of snow tents. The training at Badrinath ends with a camp fire where everyone will be asked to contribute in some form by exhibiting their fun side.

Last day at Auli will be light and will include depositing back your issued kit and a farewell dinner organized by Commandant, M & SI, ITBP, Auli.

By last day of your training at Auli your medical reports would have been received by team leader who will inform you of your status and further action to be done by you as instructed by Board of doctors at AIIMS. You should plan your departure from Delhi only after you have met with all requirements and been declared medically fit, otherwise you will have to come back for the same.

Washing clothes is an individual responsibility and washing soap should be carried for the same. No washing machine is provided however ironing of clothes is arranged by washer man of M & SI, ITBP, Auli.

Return Journey

Return Journey will start at 6.30-7.00 am from Auli with packed breakfast to be taken at Roadside Dhaba, Lunch at GMVN, Rest House Srinagar and night halt and dinner at GMVN rest house at Rishikesh. The journey ends at Prithvi Bhavan around 2.00-3.00pm from where one bids farewell to new made friends and proceed to respective destinations.

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