

“Fit@50+ Summits and Steering Wheels” Unwinds at Kaziranga After 18-Day Himalayan Trek

The team of “Fit@50+ Summits and Steering Wheels” comprising 14 ladies, all aged over 50 years, led by Ms. Bachendri Pal visited the UNESCO World Heritage site of Kaziranga National Park on Sunday to complete their expedition with a dose of wildlife tourism in the state post completing the arduous 18-day Gori Chen trek.

In an extraordinary demonstration of valour and unwavering resolve, the Tata Steel Adventure Foundation (TSAF), in partnership with the Indian Army and Ministry of Tourism concluded the expedition of 'Fit@50+ Summits and Steering Wheels' on October 28 (Saturday).

This 18-day Himalayan adventure serves as a testament to the bravery and determination of women aged 50 and above. Led by veteran mountaineer, Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan awardee, Ms Bachendri Pal, the expedition was flagged off on October 12 from Dirang. The event resonates with the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's idea of transforming India's hinterlands into vibrant villages, promoting the culture of the place, and developing eco-tourism with a touch of adventure, the expedition is also by Modi's border tourism initiative.

Inspired by the Fit India Movement, spearheaded and launched by PM Modi in 2019, Ms Pal conceived the notion of promoting wellness among women aged 50 and beyond. The expedition set in Arunachal Pradesh resonates with all the aforementioned ideas being carried out by iconic ambassadors of the Fit@50 team. In a triumphant culmination of their expedition, the team has accomplished its inaugural major ascent, reaching a formidable altitude of 10,300 feet. Along their journey, they had the privilege of visiting Dirang Monastery, where they received blessings from the esteemed Head Lama Rinpoche. They also visited the Jaswant Garh Memorial and Sela Pass en route to Tawang, where they were greeted by the season's inaugural snowfall.

In Tawang, the team explored the historic Bumla Pass and also interacted with the locals. Their expedition continued to Zemithang, where they ventured to the captivating Sangetsar Tso, renowned as Madhuri Lake, and were captivated by the serene splendour of the lake, immersing themselves in the idyllic atmosphere. This lake, which emerged following an earthquake in 1973, presents a challenging trek featuring 52 perilous hairpin bends. They also trekked the enchanting Shoktsen Village and visited Gorsam Chorten. This uncharted village

in the heart of Arunachal Pradesh is a veritable paradise, characterized by its pristine beauty nestled amidst dense forests of bamboo and pine trees, enchanting waterfalls, and a vibrant local culture.

The presence of Gompas, monasteries, and prayer flags scattered throughout the region imbued the entire experience with a profound sense of spiritual elevation. The Fit@50 team explored the mountains of Zemithang on foot before embarking on their journey to the Gori Chen glacier. The team visited Lumpo, the historic site of the battle of Namka Chu. Continuing their remarkable journey, the team moved forward to the historical Bailey's Trail, tracing their path through the Eastern Himalayas. They traversed Monpa villages, savoring the stunning landscapes of Gori Chen and Kangdo peaks from the zenith of their trek.

Now upon their return journey and to unwind, The team visited the UNESCO World Heritage site Kaziranga National Park in Assam, to complete the expedition with a dose of wildlife tourism. The Kaziranga National Park is a UNESCO World Heritage site known for the Great Indian One-Horned Rhino and is also vulnerable to the poaching of rhinos and other endangered species in the region. The team took a morning Jeep Safari at Bagori and later interacted with the forest frontline at Dunga Watchtower and APC. Ms Bachendri Pal inspired and motivated the newly recruited women frontline by interacting with them. "The mountain does not distinguish between a man or a women, hence one must do the duty towards nature without any gender biases" was her advice to the newly recruited forest guard women.

In a remarkable odyssey that spanned breathtaking landscapes, cultural immersion, and physical feats, the team achieved new heights and forged unforgettable memories. Their journey stands as a testament to the spirit of exploration, resilience, and the indomitable human will and a celebration of womanhood breaking all stereotypes.

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