

Nepal Treks

Information for Trekkers



Introduction

The seduction of Mount Everest has long been known to travellers, climbers and adventurers alike. The region of the Sherpa people is famous not just for its fabulous peaks but also for its people, those of the Khumbu region whose tremendous ability have been the lifeline for many Westerners wanting to climb in their home area. Surrounded by the world of Tibetan Buddhism this expedition is more than just a trek, it is for many a pilgrimage to one of the most remarkable countries on earth.

Reaching Everest Base Camp is a feasible goal for most fit trekkers; it is a well trodden path but this should not put you off. Each individual will leave with memories that will last a lifetime. Added to that the convenience and camaraderie of a staff of Sherpas and porters who will make the necessary arrangements for food and accommodation along the route, leaving you to enjoy the stunning mountain scenery that each day will bring.

There will be an exciting opportunity to visit the Base Camp of the highest mountain in the world, trekking easily through lush forests and stunning mountain scenery over a period of three weeks. It is not technical and much of the enjoyment is in immersing yourself in such a slow and easy routine, with only the elements, the mountains and the quiet character of the people to accompany you.

Teams

Groups can be any number but normally number 15. Small groups can be catered for very easily though. People of all ages decide to make the trek to Everest Base Camp and from all walks of life. Much of the experience is in meeting like-minded people and enjoying the company and craic while hiking through the valleys of this country.

Adventure Alternative strongly supports the charter of Tourism Concern and we actively ensure that all our staff are properly insured, equipped and paid an excellent salary, enabling them to look after their families. We have set the mark in Nepal and East Africa when it comes to porter's rights. We also work hand in hand with the charity Moving Mountains and are 100% supporters of Pro-Poor Tourism. Adventure Alternative covers all of the charities overheads and researches and implements their constructional projects often using Adventure Alternatives clients to do so. We do not outsource, and our office in Kathmandu promotes environmental concern for the region you are visiting. Chhongba is our dedicated sirdar and is an old friend of Gavin's. With him you will find your trek highly rewarding and interesting and very amusing!

Trek support and points

You will be required to carry only a daysack into which you can put essentials such as camera, water bottle, rainjacket and hat. All other gear is carried by yaks or porters and food is provided morning, noon and evening. We stay in lodges generally, unless people specify a preference for tents.

Generally each day will start early to make the most of the clearer weather and the lodge is reached by about 2pm. There are acclimatisation days incorporated into the trek so there is time to appreciate the way of life in Nepal and meet some of the people. In particular Namche Bazaar is a popular port of call being the Sherpa capital. Above the start of the Khumbu Glacier itself, which leads directly off Everest, the villages are bit more spartan and generally seasonally occupied but by then we are deep into the Khumbu region with the mountains all around and of course, the biggest in the world at the head of the valley.

Board games will be useful because the evenings can get long and are generally spent in the lodge where there is always lots of socialising, because it's too cold outside. We will have storm lanterns for light or electricity in the lower villages. Dinner is usually finished by 7pm and bed by 9pm for an early rise at 5.30/6am every day.

Fitness

On the way up, the paths can be steep and unforgiving. You may get sick of going up! It is highly recommended that you embark on a good fitness programme that builds up stamina and leg muscles. There is nothing like hiking with a rucksack to train for hiking, so the best advice is to get out into the hills as often as you can.

This is not a forced march though and the pace is always slow, the days generally shorter than a days hike at home. We do not gain height too quickly but the terrain cuts across the grain of the land so you tend to go up and down a lot within one day but the net gain at the end is always within the margins of safety and proper acclimatisation.

Health and Medical issues

Number one on our list of priorities will be your general health. One slip-up over drinking water or bad food will affect your whole trip. Diarrhoea is debilitating and may well stop you in your tracks. Food provided in the lodges is always of good quality and water is boiled, vegetables treated. However take your Immodium, but far better to make sure you don't get it in the first place. Of course we presume you will all have been to see your doctor for the correct jabs prior to the trip.

Bring a good supply of headache tablets (Aspirin) and a general antibiotic like Ampicillin if you can. The most common causes of complaint are headaches (caused by a combination of the altitude and dehydration) and upset stomachs which, if left untreated, can develop rapidly,

Trekking in Nepal is largely about looking after yourself and it will require self-discipline to ensure your own daily health. Drinking water is boiled or steeped in iodine crystals and all food is prepared in treated water. Common sense is the answer as always and if you keep yourself clean and be careful with drinking water and food then all will be fine. Moisturising cream is a real must aswell, as are wet wipes, nail scissors and brush, plasters, a good antiseptic liquid (not cream) like gentian violet or iodine and blister pads.

For those who fancy trying to beat altitude with Diamox or Dexymethasone, be advised that the best way to beat it is with a good easy pace and plenty of proper acclimatisation. If you want to help, try thinning your blood along the way with a half or one Aspirin each morning. Our treks are designed to offer everyone the safest and optimal chance of reaching the mountains without falling ill from altitude and our track record is successful. There is no need to worry that we are going too fast. The pace has been tried and tested many times. Having said that, it is not uncommon to suffer mild altitude-related complaints such as headaches, loss of sleep, increased urine output and occasional nausea. These are the first signs of altitude sickness but can be easily dealt with by waiting a day at any one place, resting and drinking plenty of liquid. The next stage of the ailment is more serious and will require a descent. Loss of co-ordination, change of character, increased sickness and worse headaches will quickly indicate that need. Unfortunately a persons susceptibility to altitude sickness or the more serious oedema is more or less random, and is to do with a persons metabolic rate of acclimatisation. It is not all to do with fitness, but recent tests have shown that an aspirin can help with thinning the blood and vitamins can help with assisting the body in combating the effects of less oxygen in the air. Particularly vitamins C and B. Antioxidants are also very helpful in ridding the blood of radical agents which inhibit the process of acclimatisation. Using Diamox is not something we entirely recommend since it is a strong drug that has a diuretic side effect, meaning you go to the toilet a lot more ! This in turn can cause dehydration which can only be harmful at altitude. Diamox is best used when symptoms become evident, rather than a 'cure-all' preventative. At the end of the day the best prevention is to go slowly, and the best action in the event of contracting more serious symptoms is to go down.

Some teams climbing the higher mountains carry Gamow bags, essentially portable hyperbaric chambers. A person suffering from serious altitude sickness can be put inside the chamber, which is collapsible and must be kept pumped to a certain pressure, but again the treatment remains to go down. With our slow pace it is highly unlikely that a Gamow Bag would be necessary, especially when it is easy to porter or carry a person out quite rapidly, and ensure a speedy descent.

We always carry a medical kit with us to Base Camp for emergencies and there is the opportunity of helicopter rescue as far as Base Camp if there is a serious accident. Your insurance policy must include this provision.

Insurance

You will need to get your own travel insurance for a trekking holiday to Nepal. We can help to advise you on reputable companies.

Travel

You will need to purchase your own ticket to Kathmandu and we will give you a date on which we would like all the team to arrive. There are many airlines flying in and out of Kathmandu and a visit to your local travel agent or a look on the internet should be the best course of action. You then inform us of your flight times so that we can arrange an airport pick-up. Please be advised that airlines can, and do, alter their schedules up to a month before departure. Be prepared for a last minute change of times, perhaps of several hours.

Baggage Limit

Flights to Kathmandu are strict on excess baggage costs, primarily because so many climbers attempt to fly out with 80kg+. Please be spare with your packing. Try to keep your bags to a maximum of 20 kgs. Remember that all camping/cooking equipment is being supplied so only bring clothing, sleeping bag, mat and personal gear.

Visa

On arrival at Tribhuvan airport you will be required to get a holiday visa for Nepal. Make sure you have the correct money (at present, \$20), one passport photograph and a valid passport. Your address while in Nepal is "Nirvana Hotel, Thamel" or Kathmandu Guest House. We will inform you closer to the time which of these two we will be using.

Hotel

The hotels are situated in the area of Thamel, a central district of Kathmandu which is close to all the most famous 'haunts' of climbers and backpackers. There will be ample opportunity to wander round, buy souvenirs and go to the various bars and clubs.

The hotel will provide breakfast but it is up to you to provide your own dinners. There are a huge number of restaurants and all are reasonably priced by our standards. Menus are endless and some well-known eateries include Rum Doodles, KC's and Tom'n'Jerrys.

Rooms will be shared doubles, each ensuite with hot showers. The hotel has a storage facility for left gear while you are on trek. Please inform us if you wish to have a single room, for which there is a small supplement.

Reading

Please take the opportunity to read about Nepal and in particular the Solu Khumbu before going. Trekking in Nepal is a major experience and better by far if you have some prior knowledge of the country and its customs. There will be chances to visit monasteries, temples, schools and local houses in the high villages where many of your best memories will be from interacting with the people there.

Camera Kit

Photography is never more vital than on a trek to Everest. Some of the views are the most spectacular mountainscapes in the world and the people, their villages and their lives are equally as photogenic.

The compact camera, with an incorporated zoom, will give you fairly good shots and is obviously lightweight and handy. You will find the finished product frustrating if you don't at least have a wide angle facility of about 28mm which can attempt to show the grandeur of the place.

With an SLR, there are a few things which are important: a tripod for taking long exposures on slow film (quite useful at dusk for instance or with a timer), a filter rack and a couple of colour filters like tobacco, polariser and maybe a blue and yellow. It does make all the difference to a shot and there will be plenty of time to enjoy creating your effects.

Other filters which you probably already have are a sunlight or UV filter which is pretty much essential.

For lenses, you are going to want a good wide angle lens with a fairly low f-stop, so something like a 18mm f1.6 would be perfect, but a 28mm f2.8 (much more common) will suffice. Even if you could borrow a fisheye lens, that would create a lovely effect.

An 80 -210mm zoom will be a good idea aswell for those long shots but again bear in mind that the cheap ones have a high f-stop (normally around 4.5) which will limit your opportunities (unless you use a very fast film and a tripod). If you can afford a 210mm zoom with a low f-stop then it is well worth the money.

Your film is going to be vital. For slides a good saturation Fujicolor of about ASA100 is an excellent all-round choice but you are going to want a fast film aswell (ASA400). Photography on snow is notoriously difficult and I generally use a filter with a fast film. The camera will often over-expose on the snow instead of the figure and the photo will be spoilt.

Take some B/W film aswell as some of the Nepalese faces and people reproduce perfectly on monochrome. Even mountain shots at dawn with B/W, developed onto a high contrast, grainy paper will create stunning effects. Remember to bring a yellow filter for sure with B/W - virtually essential.

Don't forget dustblowers, even an aerosol can of air, cloths, dark bag, spare batteries (lithium and AA), lens caps and spare film. You will take more than you think and film is expensive in Nepal.

I always use slide film for projection, publication and better colour saturation. Print copies from your slide are about £1 each so you may want to take a selection of films to cover your needs. Also bear in mind that you can chip in with some of the others and buy discounted bumper packs of film at Duty Free for a lot less than in the High Street.

Camcorders

By all means bring a camcorder, but consider it's safety. You will have to carry it yourself all the time and look after it. Batteries are a problem as there are few facilities for charging above Namche Bazaar (day 2 of trek). It would be worth getting a filter for the lens and a wide angle lens which can clip on easily. Also take a tripod.

You will have to be fairly committed to bring one, so be sure. There is a chance that you will be charged at the Sagamartha National Park gate for bringing one in.

Spending money

You are going to need £20 for the visa on arrival at Tribhuvan airport (or you can apply for it before from the Nepalese Embassy in London).

Your accommodation is B & B and an evening meal in a goodish restaurant is about £4/£5. Your average bottle of beer is about 70p and things like chocolate, mineral water, sweets and so on are all about UK prices. Souvenirs to watch out for are things like cashmere and textiles ranging from stratospheric prices to about £1.50 for a pair of trousers. The clothes are extraordinary and you'll definitely want to buy something. If they don't have the style you want they'll make it for you on the street for no extra charge. Yak hair jackets are popular. I suggest about between £50 and £100 for a really good selection of gifts and mementoes. You can get money on your credit cards by the way if shopping fever takes over.

Everest Trek Equipment List & Itinerary

Below is a guide for equipment needed. The symbol '*' denotes that it is available for hire or purchase in Kathmandu.

Boots

For hiking on the trails, a good pair of well worn-in leathers will be fine. Your leather boots will suffice as long as they have a good sturdy sole. A good pair of well-cushioned insoles is also necessary. A pair of trainers for walking round villages is also a good idea, or a pair of sandals.

Rucksacks or Duffle bags

Your main rucksack of around 70 litres will spend most of it's time with the porter, and the bulk of your gear will go there. You will not be carrying it at all. This means you can easily just take a large duffle bag instead of a rucksack which might be easier to get into every day. Make sure it has a good zip on it and is quite waterproof and strong. If porters carry the bag they put it in a large wicker basket and hang it off their heads, so duffle bags again are fine.

You will be carrying a daysack a lot, so make sure it is comfortable and has ample space for small items such as fleece, camera, water bottles etc. Around 35 litres will be ample, and don't forget a water proof bag or liner in case it rains.

Waterproofs

Jacket and trousers. Mid-range and preferably breathable

Warm jacket / fleece

For up high and the colder nights. A duvet or down jacket* will be useful at Base Camp although a good fleece and layers will suffice just as well.

Sleeping bag*

At least 3 to 4 season. You are sleeping in lodges which have comfortable beds with mattresses and blankets. So a 3 season sleeping bag is quite adequate.

Clothing and Miscellaneous
 2 pairs Trousers/skirts (one can be fleece trousers)
 2 Polartec/fleece tops or tops
 2 Hiking shirts
 Underwear & socks
 Set Thermals (longjohns are fine or a long-sleeved T-shirt)
 Hats, sun & warm
 Gloves
 Washkit
 Water bottle
 Sunglasses, UV protection
 Headtorch, spare batteries can be bought on the trail
 Camera kit
 Passport, money, tickets
 Money Bag for safety
 Hiking sticks, very useful
 Umbrella, for sun and rain
 Gaiters, optional
 First aid kit, personal

Expedition Itinerary for Everest Base Camp Trek 16 days in total

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| Day 1 | Depart home |
| Day 2 | Arrive Kathmandu, transfer to Kathmandu Guest House |
| Day 3 | Day sightseeing - temples, Bhaktapur, Durbar Square |
| Day 4 | Flight to Lukla (2866m) and same day to Phakding (2640m) from where technical trekking peak Kusum Kangoro is visible. The hike follows the edge of the Dudh Kosi river. |
| Day 5 | Phakding to Namche Bazaar (3440m). Namche Bazaar is the heart of the Khumbu region. You will rest here to acclimatise. From Namche you can see Mt Thamserku (6377m) and also Mount Everest framed in the pine trees. A must to visit here is the Everest Museum. |
| Day 6 | Rest day in Namche Bazaar. |
| Day 7 | Namche to Khumjung (3790m). At this beautiful village you can see the famous yeti scalp, now kept in a monastery, and also the Kunde Hospital. |
| Day 8 | Khumjung to Tengboche and Deboche (3850m). This is a steep climb from the Dudh Kosi. At the village you can go into the famous monastery and watch the monks performing their puja. Overnight in a beautiful lodge with a stream and set in a glade of trees. |
| Day 9 | Deboche to Pheriche or Dingboche (4252m). We ascend a broad valley to this small village where you can visit the Himalayan Rescue Association |

hospital. From here it is possible to see Mt Tauche, Lobuje Peak, the back side of Ama Dablam (6856m) and far away the summit of Cho Oyu in Tibet (8201m).

- Day 10 Rest day in Dingboche or Pheriche, time to walk up the valley, visit the Rescue station for their daily talk on altitude illnesses and just acclimatise.
- Day 11 Pheriche to Lobuche (4930m). The hike takes us up to the Thukla Hills where there are many stupas erected in memory of Sherpas who have died on expeditions. The hike then turns onto the snout of the giant Khumbu Glacier and further up the left hand side of the glacier to a small village with some lodges and outhouses. Close by is Lobuje Peak and the famous Italian research station, built as a glass pyramid.
- Day 12 Lobuche to Gorak Shep. We hike up the side of the Khumbu Glacier on mountains of moraine through which an easy path meanders. The views are incredible and Nuptse dominates the other side of the valley, behind which the peak of Everest is just visible. Ahead are the peaks dividing Nepal from Tibet, like Shangri-La. Gorak Shep is the last outpost, a small collection of huts just below Kala Patthar which is the finest viewing point for Everest itself. The hut is comfortable though and you will want to rest here as altitude will be obvious in increased and faster breathing and a generally slower pace of everything.
- Day 13 Gorak Shep to Kala Patthar and back at dawn. Kala Patthar means Black Rock and is 5550 metres high. The views from there of Everest are quite stunning; you will clearly see the route through the Khumbu Icefall, into the Western Cwm and up the Lhotse Face to the South Col. The SE Ridge route is then visible on the skyline right of the summit. With binoculars you might be able to view climbers on their way up. To your left is Pumo Ri, an amazing peak which seems to hang over Kala Patthar, and as you pan right the most incredible mountainscape unfolds to the far horizons in every direction. Ama Dablam dominates, as does Thamserku and slightly further away the bulk of Makalu, 5th highest in the world. After this a rest day at Gorak Shep with lunch and dinner.
- Day 14 Gorak Shep to Everest Base Camp. We follow the edge of the Glacier again for about 4 hours to reach the Camp where all the Everest climbers will be. Sometimes this route is impassable due to rockfall or very slippy conditions, it will just depend on the day. You need to take water and food and go very slowly on this day, it can be quite exhausting.
- Day 15 Gorak Shep back to Pheriche. A long descent of about 6 hours back the same way as we came up.
- Day 16 Pheriche back to Namche Bazaar, another longish day but you will now feel much better with more oxygen to breathe.
- Day 17 Namche Bazaar to Phakding and onto Lukla. A last long day of around 7 hours which finishes with quite a punishing uphill stretch back to the airport.

- Day 18 Lukla flight to Kathmandu.
 Day 20 Kathmandu. Could depart for home on this day or stay on for visits to
 Chitwan or a relaxing day or two in the Park View Spa.
 Day 21 Flight to London, arriving same day in evening or next day.

There is an opportunity for people to stay on themselves in Nepal and go rafting and elephant trekking in Chitwan National Park. Please let us know in advance if you require this option and we will arrange this. There is also rafting which starts about 2 hours out of Kathmandu and lasts the full day (an unforgettable experience). The Bandarjholra Island Jungle Resort is a 3 day programme including travel and the chalets are on an island where there is the opportunity to go elephant trekking, bathing the elephants and jungle trekking. Contact us if you wish to book these add-ons.

We also have the Park View Spa and Resort for a few days which is only 40 minutes from Kathmandu. Here you will find Jacuzzis, saunas, yoga, massage, steam rooms, restaurants with fine cuisine and utter peace and tranquillity.

Another option would be to take a flight over Everest and see the route you just came!

Payments notes:

Deposit of £250 sterling or 350 Euro to accompany application form

All payments will be receipted and monies held in a dedicated clients account

Cheques or drafts must be made payable to 'Adventure Alternative'

Bank transfers acceptable, details on request.

A system of instalments following the deposit of £250.00 is allowable providing the final payment is made at least eight weeks prior to departure.

Payment can be made online through our secure website PayPal page but please be aware that there is a charge by PayPal for this service.

Adventure Alternative reserves the right to cancel a trip due to bureaucratic problems, low numbers or for reasons outside of our control, offering either another expedition in lieu of Nepal or a refund of monies paid excluding deposit.

Expedition Fee includes –

Airport transfer

2 nights in the hotel at the start and end of trip, room only

Internal flight from Kathmandu to Lukla

All trek costs including permit, porters, sirdar, meals and accommodation

Nepalese staff and office back-up, UK organisation

Fee excludes –

International flight to Kathmandu

Visa

Travel Insurance

Meals in Kathmandu

Tips

Personal expenses