

Below is the proposed itinerary for the trip. As is true on any adventure travel trip, plans for any specific day may be modified due to weather considerations, unforeseen circumstances, new opportunities, and group interests.

DAY 1

Arrive Kathmandu, Introductions and Welcome Dinner

Welcome to Nepal! It's been a long journey, but it will be so worth it! You will be met at the Kathmandu airport and transported to our hotel, located in the tourist area known as Thamel. Anything you forgot to bring, you can buy here. We'll gather at 6pm to begin getting to know each other, and then go out for a Welcome dinner together at a Nepalese restaurant.

Elevation: 4,500 feet. Overnight: Kathmandu

DAY 2

Tour of Kathmandu sites, Trek Orientation

Today as we start to overcome jet lag and adjust to a very different time zone (yes, you will wake up early), we'll enjoy some sight-seeing in Kathmandu. We'll visit the giant Buddhanath Stupa, one of Asia's largest Buddhist shrines. From there we'll walk through neighborhoods to Pashupatinath Temple, one of the holiest Hindu Temples in entire South Asia. The temple is situated on the bank of the sacred Bagmati River, a tributary of the sacred Ganges. Admission to the temple is reserved for Hindus only, and we can have close up view of the temple from the other side of the river. Return to the hotel in the afternoon, our local partner will meet us to brief us about the trek and answer any questions we have about our upcoming adventure. There will then be time for last minute shopping for our trek and packing.

Overnight: Kathmandu

DAY 3

Fly to Lukla, Trek to Phakding: 3-4 hrs, Elevation 8,563 feet

We leave early for the airport and fly to Lukla, the most renowned mountain airstrip in the world. The 40-minute flight is spectacular as we view the foothills all the way to snowline of the Himalaya, possibly including some of the world's highest mountains. We'll meet our trekking crew in Lukla (9,318 feet) and after packing our gear, we begin our trek with a fairly short day to Phakding to help with our acclimatization.

For anyone interested we can take a side trip to a nearby monastery. There are no roads or vehicles in the Khumbu so you can expect to see numerous other people on the Lukla-Namche "highway". This is the most densely populated area in the Khumbu, and we will go through numerous small villages

Hiking: 3 - 4 hours. Elevation at Phakding: 8,563 feet. Overnight: Phakding

DAY 4

Trek to Namche Bazaar: 5-6 hours

We continue trekking along the banks of the Dudh Koshi, crossing this roaring river on a variety of amazing bridges laden with prayer flags. After entering Sagarmatha National Park, the trail climbs steeply, part path and part steps (over 2,200 feet). About halfway up the hill, a gap in the trees allows for our first glimpse of Everest. If the weather is clear, the top of the Southwest face will be just visible behind the long Lhotse-Nuptse ridge. A plume can often be seen stretching away from the summit.

We continue on to Namche Bazaar, the gateway to the Khumbu region. Namche is the most prosperous and the largest town in the Khumbu. Thamserku (6,648 meters / 21,800 feet), Kwangde Ri (6,187 meters/20,299 feet) and Khumbila (5,707 meters/ 8,901 feet) surround the natural bowl in which Namche sits.

Hiking: 5 - 6 hours. Overnight: Namche Bazaar. Elevation at Namche Bazaar: 11,300 feet

DAY 5

Rest and Acclimatization Day

We'll take today off to allow our bodies to adjust to the rarefied atmosphere before ascending to higher altitudes. The secret of safe acclimatization is to 'climb high, sleep low' so if you feel like some exercise, it is safe to hike up the hill behind Namche to the airstrip at Syangboche, perhaps even all the way to Khumjung, or stroll across to the excellent museum behind the police post. Or if you prefer, you can visit one of the lodges for a freshly baked cinnamon roll, spend time shopping or photographing, visit the Tibetan traders, or actually rest! Namche is a busy and bustling trading place and there is always plenty going on.

Overnight: Namche Bazaar

DAY 6

Trek to Tengboche: 5 - 6 hours

Today we really know we're in the Himalaya. As we set out for Tengboche, we'll enjoy superb views of Everest, Nuptse, Lhotse and Ama Dablam. Initially the trail has only short ups and downs and then goes gradually down to Sansa, the major trail junction to Gokyo valley or Everest Base Camp. Trekking through pine forests, we cross the prayer flags festooned bridge over the Dudh Koshi River, and then reach Phunki Thenga, a small settlement amidst the alpine woods. After having a relaxed lunch at Phunki Thenga, we gear up for a tougher climb steadily up to Tengboche. Tengboche is home of the world-famous Buddhist monastery where the Rimpoche (lama reincarnate) resides.

If we arrive in time, we can choose to attend the daily 3 p.m. prayer service. This is a cultural and religious center for the people of the Khumbu region, and for the trekker, it is also the place to see one of the best mountain panoramas in the world. Kwangde, Tawoche, Nuptse, Lhotse, Kangtega, and Ama Dablam all loom high above.

Hiking: 5 -6 hours. Elevation at Tengbochez: 12,670 feet. Overnight: Tengboche

DAY 7

Trek to Dingboche: 5 - 6 hours

With mountains as backdrop, the monastery at Tengboche looks even more spectacular in the morning. We'll choose the upper trail for better views on the way to Pangboche village. We pass through several Chortens and Mani walls, and small villages. Our lunch stop not only serves delicious food but also allows a fantastic close-up view of Ama Dablam. In the afternoon, we might walk north to Pheriche or take the eastward trail beneath the towering north face of Ama Dablam. From here onwards, the walk is fairly moderate as we enter the Imja Valley. The valley gradually unfolds as we approach the confluence of the Lobuche River. We descend into the river and begin the last and steepest climb of the day up to Dingboche. On arrival at Dingboche, we will see a beautiful array of fields enclosed by stone walls to protect barley, buckwheat, and potatoes from the cold winds and grazing animals.

Hiking: 5-6 hours trekking. Elevation at Dingboche: 14,469 feet. Overnight: Dingboche

DAY 8

Rest and Acclimatization in Dingboche

We spend our second day of acclimatization at Dingboche. A refreshing breakfast while admiring a looming Ama Dablam (6,856 meters/ 22,493 feet) to the south is really fantastic. To better appreciate Ama Dablam, Lhotse and numerous other peaks visible from Dingboche, we climb the ridge on the north behind the village. This will be an ideal acclimatizing excursion. Upon this juncture, we can see three of the world's six highest peaks, Lhotse, Makalu and Cho Oyu. To the west, loom the towering peaks of Cholatse (6,440 meters/21,126 feet and Tawoche (6,542 meters/ 21,463 feet). As we look northwest, we see an array of peaks rising at the head of the Khumbu Khola valley. The Lobuche West and Lobuche East peaks are most dominant along with Lhotse, which stands over 8,500 meters (8,501 meters/27,890 feet). From a vantage point high on the ridge, we can scan the sweeping Imja Khola valley as well as the picturesque fields and pastures of Dingboche. Our hike is about four hours so there will also be time to rest in the afternoon.

Hiking: 4 hours. Overnight: Dingboche

DAY 9

Trek to Dughla: 3 - 4 hours

We start the day with a climb to Dughla through the Khumbu Khola valley. The walk along the arid terrace is rewarding with awesome views of mountains on all sides. As we come to a yak herder's place called Dusa, the valley begins to narrow and we continue through Phulung Karpo, the camp site of the first successful Everest Expedition in 1953. As we move on, the majestic view of Pumori (7,138 meters/23,418 feet) comes into view. As the trail descends and curves, Mount Pumori disappears from view and we come across a roaring stream. After crossing a small wooden bridge, we ascend to Dughla. We can see the tip of Nuptse from here as well as Cholatse, Thamserku, and several other magnificent peaks.

Hiking: 3 - 4 hours. Elevation at Dughla: 15,100 feet. Overnight Dughla

DAY 10

Trek to Lobuche: 3 - 4 hours

Beyond Dughla, we climb up the steep terminal moraine of the Khumbu Glacier. We pass through boulder-strewn slopes as we ascend Chupki Lhara, an eerie ridge top with dramatic mountain views. At the top of the ridge, we will find many stone memorials built to honor fallen climbers, including those lost in the May 1996 Everest storm such as Scott Fischer, and 10 times Everest summiteer Babu Chiri Sherpa (a Nepali mountain guide) who perished on a mission to climb Everest. As the trail drops to the Khumbu Glacier moraine, we find ourselves facing several great peaks - Khumbutse, Lingtren, Pumori and Mahalangur Himal. We are now in the vicinity of Everest, but the great mountain still remains elusive. Mt Nuptse towers to the right as the trail crosses the Khumbu Glacier. As we pass along a murmuring stream leaving the Khumbu Glacier behind, we definitely will feel out of breath due to high altitude if we haven't before. We could have gone from Dingboche to Lobuche in a day but breaking it into two days will help conserve our strength for the arduous days ahead.

Hiking: 3 -4 hours. Elevation at Lobuche: 16,200 feet

DAY 11

Trek to Gorak Shep and Everest Basecamp: 5 - 6 hours

Early this morning, depending on conditions, we continue up the moraine trails to Gorak Shep, the highest settlement in the Khumbu. You can stop here or, after a break, continue on to the Everest basecamp area at the toe of the Khumbu Icefall. It will be a long day: the trail to base camp is challenging and affords magnificent views along the way. We may even see an avalanche! We aren't here during the main climbing season, so Basecamp is likely to be fairly quiet, possibly completely

empty, which means we are free to walk through it. Only upon reaching the camp do we really appreciate the Everest climbers who brave the hazardous route through the Khumbu icefall. Nuptse, Khumbutse and Pumori are the mountains we can view from the base camp; Everest actually is not visible from here. We'll spend this night in Gorak Shep. There is nothing like watching the sunset on the southwest flank of Mt. Everest from this spectacular vantage point.

Hiking Lobuche to Gorak Shep: 3 - 3.5 hours, Gorak Shep to Everest Basecamp: 5 - 6 hours. Elevation at Gorak Shep: 17,598 feet. Overnight Gorak Shep
DAY 12

Climb Kala Patthar, descend to Dughla: 8 - 9 hours

Today is the high point (literally!) of our trip. We start early in the morning to catch the dramatic views from Kala Patthar and witness the first light of day caress the peaks of the mountains, particularly Mt. Everest. However, we need to be prepared for an early morning departure, amid predawn darkness and cold temperature (5-15 degrees F). Further, there is always the potential for chilly winds which are quite common. Familiar peaks such as Khumbutse and Changtse tower to the east even as Everest begins to reveal itself. During the ascent to Kala Patthar, we can pause to catch our breath at several outstanding viewpoints from where we can snap great pictures. After several hours of ascent, we reach Kala Patthar. From Kala Patthar, we scramble up to the top of a rocky outcrop marked by cairns and prayer flags. A mind-blowing Himalayan panorama unfolds before our eyes as they wander from one mighty massif to another. We definitely want to take the time to imprint this vista into our mind's eye so that it lasts a lifetime. Upon return to Gorak Shep, we'll share a celebratory lunch together. We descend in the afternoon and arrive at Dughla in time for a well-earned night's rest.

Hiking: 8 - 9 hours. Elevation at Dughla: 15,100 feet. Overnight: Dughla
DAY 13

Trek to Deboche: 5 - 6 hours

Since we are no longer worried about acclimatizing, our descent down the Khumbu is much faster. Continuing the descent from Dughla, we reach the village of Pangboche, the barley-growing center of the Khumbu area. Beyond Pangboche the trail descends past some magnificently carved Mani stones to the Imja Khola, which we cross via a steel suspension bridge high above the river at a spot where it rushes through a narrow cleft. Finally, we reach Debouche, a nunnery at the base of the mountain on which Tengboche sits. We'll enjoy breathtaking views of the sunset and sunrise, as well as a magnificent view of Everest.

Hiking: 5 - 6 hours. Elevation at Deboche: 12,533 feet. Overnight: Deboche
DAY 14

Trek to Namche Bazaar: 4.5-5.5 hours

After breakfast, we continue to retrace our steps with a short steep climb to Tengboche through a forest of birches conifers and rhododendrons. We then continue through the hillside blanketed by rhododendron and juniper trees. After crossing the prayer flag festooned bridge over the Dudh Koshi River, the trail follows the Dudh Koshi gorge, ascending rapidly through the pine forests. The path eventually reaches Sansa where we have lunch. After lunch we continue our trek to Namche Bazaar. After passing a Chorten, we reach the army camp at of Namche Bazaar. Here we'll stop to take a long last look back to Lhotse, the tip of Everest, and Tengboche as tomorrow we'll descend further, and they will no longer be in sight. Upon reaching our lodge, we'll enjoy a hot shower and undoubtedly will sleep deeply.

Hiking: 4.5 - 5.5 hours. Elevation at Namche Bazaar: 11,130 feet. OvernightL Namche Bazaar.
DAY 15

Trek to Phakding: 3 - 4 hours

This morning after breakfast we retrace our steps down the steep Namche hill, along the Dudh Kosi and out of Sagarmatha National Park. The air feels rich with oxygen as we descend. Although we are traveling the same route down, the views are completely different. We reach Phakding in time for lunch and some afternoon rest.

Hiking: 3 - 4 hours trekking. Elevation at Phakding: 8,563 feet. Overnight: Phakding
DAY 16

Trek to Lukla: 3 - 4 hours

Compared to what we have just accomplished, the rest of our trek is relatively easy, and we'll have time to notice the impressive faith in Buddhism and the culture of prayer stones and prayer flags as we walk through the Sherpa villages. At Lukla we'll celebrate with dinner, say goodbye to the staff that has taken such good care of us, and undoubtedly have mixed feelings about the end of the trek - happy to have completed it safely and somewhat sad to say goodbye to the simplicity and beauty of the last 2 weeks.

Hiking: 3 - 4 hours. Elevation at Lukla: 9,300 feet. Overnight: Lukla
DAY 17

Return by air to Kathmandu

We prepare to fly out early. Back in Kathmandu by early afternoon, there's time for hot showers, shopping in Thamel, and relaxing at our hotel.

Overnight: Kathmandu. Elevation at Kathmandu: 4,500 feet
DAY 18

Tour more of Kathmandu and Bhaktapur, Farewell dinner

As is customary, we have put in an extra day here in case weather has delayed our return. But there is plenty more to see in Kathmandu and the day will not go to waste. We'll make a 40 minute drive to Bhaktapur, one of the three medieval principalities of Kathmandu valley and the best preserved one. Bhaktapur, with its Durbar Square and beautiful temples, intricate wood carving in the balconies and windows, fabulous stone sculptures, and clean, brick paved streets gives the impression of being an open air museum. There will be some time for last minute shopping or sightseeing before going out for our Farewell dinner at a Kathmandu restaurant.
DAY 19

Return anytime

Home, or on to your Next Adventure! We will get you safely to the airport three hours before your scheduled flight and on your way.