Manaslu Circuit

Nepal | 5,213m

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Nepal | 5,213m

The **Manaslu** region is one of **Nepal**'s best kept secrets and the **circuit trek** around the world's eighth highest mountain, is a wonderful, rarely-travelled alternative to the **Khumbu Valley** and **Annapurna trekking** circuits. The route follows an ancient salt-trading trail which, even today, is used more by merchants and Buddhist monks than western trekkers.

Our trek starts in a landscape more reminiscent of Indiana Jones than Seven Years in Tibet. We enter the magnificent **Buri Gandaki** gorge, and encounter dozens of waterfalls plunging into the dense jungle covered valley below. We meet welcoming Gurung villagers and cross swing bridges spanning wild, tumbling rivers. As we ascend, the untouched landscape opens to reveal the mighty Manaslu ('The Mountain of the Spirit' to the Gurung) which dominates the jagged horizon. Gradually, Tibetan influences increase as mani stones, prayer flags and precariously positioned monasteries dot the landscape. The highest and toughest part of the trek is the **Larkya La** pass at **5,213m**. Digging deep to reach this remote objective the sense of having achieved something unique becomes tangible.

Supported by our incredible Sherpa team, this trek allows you to take part in **a challenge few have experienced** and to savour a Nepalese way of life that has barely changed for thousands of years.

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Physical - P3

This trip is physically tough. Frequent exercise is necessary to prepare properly for this expedition. Regular walking mixed with training at the gym to build up endurance and cardiovascular fitness is key. Expect to be able to do 8 hour days in hilly and often steep train, carrying a pack of 6-10kg in weight with the occasional extra long day.

Technical - T2

Consider this a trek, although there may be occasion to use hands for short sections of easy scrambling. No previous climbing or trekking experience is necessary.

Please note that the grading system used is a rough guide only.

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ITINERARY

DAY 1 : Depart UK

Overnight flight from Heathrow, your guide will normally meet you at the airport.

DAY 2 : Arrive Kathmandu

Arrive Tribhuvan airport in Kathmandu. We will be met at the airport and taken to our hotel in the heart of Kathmandu. Great souvenir shopping and Durbar square with its numerous temples and markets are nearby. During the rest of the day you will have an opportunity to settle after your flight. That evening we receive a comprehensive brief by our 360 Leader on the adventure we are about to experience.

DAY 3 : Drive from Kathmandu to Soti khola (710m)

We set off early today for Soti khola. It's a long drive of a good eight hours on paved road from Kathmandu to Dhading Bensi, district headquarters of Dhading then on rough road to Arughat, a reasonably large and prosperous bazaar, and onwards towards Soti khola. Overnight in Soti Khola.

DAY 4 : Soti Khola - Maccha Khola (900m)

First day of walking today, we trek through the beautiful Sal forests, then climb onto a ridge above huge rapids on the Budhi Gandaki. Continuing past two tropical waterfalls on a steep, rocky trail clinging to the side of a cliff, it eventually makes its way down and past a few rice terraces, then up and around to the Gurung village of Labubesi. We further climb behind a rocky outcrop, where the valley opens up and the Budhi Gandaki meanders among wide gravel bars. We follow the river and cross another suspension bridge to reach Maccha Khola village. Overnight in Maccha Khola.

DAY 5 : Maccha Khola - Jagat (1,410m)

Beneath us the river flows fast and furious and we continue through the gorges, climbing in and out to follow the trail before we reach the confluence of the Buri Gandaki and Yara Khola and a fine view up the valley. We continue to climb to ridges and descend all the way to river level within the gorge, crossing the Yara Khola as we go in order to regain the Buri Gandaki, crossing that over another suspension bridge. We finally reach Jagat, a neat village with strong Buddhist influences (although still Gurung people).

DAY 6 : Jagat - Deng (1,804m)

We continue to track the river, crossing several of its tributaries, passing occasionally through millet fields as the valley opens up temporarily before we cross a long suspension bridge to the opposite bank and meander up a steep path to reach Philim, a relatively large Gurung village amidst fields of corn and millet. The trail involves a lot of climbing to ridges and descending back down to contour the river, interspersed with a number of Mani walls of carved prayer stones that indicate the increasing Tibetan influence and our proximity to the border.

From Philim we stay high above the river to Ekle Bhatti before heading into a steep and uninhabited gorge lined with pine trees and narrow waterfalls. At the end of a steep stepped climb we enjoy views of the Shar Khola and Tsum Valley before it eventually opens out and we enter bamboo forest for a more gentle pace albeit still high above the river to reach Deng hanging on the steep side of the valley.

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ITINERARY

DAY 7 : Deng - Namrung (2,630m)

From Deng we cross the Budhi Gandaki and climb to Rana at 1,910m, cross the bridge to join the trail from Bhi heading west up the Budhi Gandaki valley. The trail also passes through forests and mani stones as it contours to Ghap and Prok village with its panoramic view of Siringi Himal. The trail crisscrosses Budi Gandaki and passes gompas en route following the river upstream through dense forest. After our final crossing the river over a thunderous waterfall down a narrow gorge, the forest becomes less dense and the trail opens out into a pleasant walk – with one final steep climb – to reach Namrung. Overnight in Namrung.

DAY 8 : Namrung – Samagaon (3530m)

Namrung village is a good viewpoint for Siring, Ganesh Himal and also Himal Chuli to the south. We climb steadily passing through forests to reach Lihi, a fine village with many chortens and terraces of barley. The trail drops and crosses the valley of Simnang Himal, through Sho, Lho and Shyala villages before reaching Sama Village. We enjoy extraordinary views of Manaslu from Lho village and also explore the famous Ribung Gompa. Today's journey ends in Samagaon where we spend the night.

DAY 9 : Samagaon - Pungyen gompa - Samagaon

The first section of trekking will have been tough and by now we will all feel like a bit of a break. We spend the day in and around Samaguan to rest, acclimatise and do as much or as little as we like. On a little hill near the Sama village is an old Gompa (Pungyen Gompa), a monastery with great views of the glacier. It is named after Manaslu, Pungyen means bracelet, a good description of the two peaks. It was destroyed a year after the first unsuccessful Japanese attempt to climb Manaslu. The locals believed that the climb angered the gods, and when the Japanese came back a year and met with a lot of resistance that they had to give up their attempt. They were finally successful in 1959.

DAY 10 : Samagaon – Samdo (3,875m)

We descend to the Budhi Gandaki River and follow it to a bridge over a side stream. The trail to the left leads to the Manaslu Base Camp. The Larkya La trail passes several mani walls as the valley begins to widen. It is an easy trail on a shelf above the river passing the juniper and birch forests of Kermo Kharka. We drop off the shelf, cross the Budhi Gandaki again and climb steeply onto a promontory between two forks of the river. Finally passing through a large white ornate arch or Kani we reach Samdo.

DAY 11 : Samado (3,875m) - Dharamsala - Larkya La (5,160m) - Bimthang (3,720m)

We have a very early start today. We progress towards a wooden bridge over Budi Gandaki and walk up and around the Salka Khola valley in sight of the Larkya on to a shelter called Dharmshala, also known as Larke Phedi.

After a rest we have a short climb and reach a valley on the north side of the Larkya Glaciers with great views of Cho Danda and Larkya Peak. We walk up the glacial moraine to Larkya La. From the pass, there are outstanding views of Himlung Himal, Cheo Himal, Kangguru and the huge Annapurna II. It is a long day to Bimthang, but to walk into the low pastures with the evening mist forming and Manaslu looming overhead is quite an experience.

Overnight in Bimthang.

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ITINERARY

DAY 12 : Bimthang - Dharapani (1,860m)

From a ridge above Bimthang, we have great views of the sun rising over the mountains. We cross high pasture (Sangure Kharka) then reach a bridge over the Dudh Khola. Proceeding through rhododendron forest we follow a trail through a narrow valley until we reach the highest cultivated land of this valley at Karche, 2,785m. We make our way across the fields before climb steeply to over a ridge. The trail comes off the ridge in a big, sweeping arc to the river bank at 2,580m. passing through a beautiful village, then cross a bridge over the Dudh Khola and climb up through a chorten-shaped arch, pass a mani wall and reach Thonje village. At the village, we go through a police checkpoint and continue to Dharapani. We have now entered the Annapurna Circuit, and this is where our amazing trek concludes.

DAY 13 : Dharapani - Kathmandu

We drive from Dharapani to Kathmandu through dramatic mountain landscapes, terraced fields and precipitous villages, much of it tracking the Marsyangdi and Trishuli rivers. In Kathmandu, we'll find our hotel and the rest of the day kicking back or catching up with some last minute shopping. That evening we'll have an amazing celebration meal. Overnight in Kathmandu.

DAY 14 : Kathmandu - UK

Either a day flight out of Kathmanadu, arriving back in the UK the same day, or spend the day exploring this vibrant city and take the night flight back to UK.

DAY 15 : Arrive UK

Arrive UK if on the overnight flight.

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KIT LIST

Bags & Packs

Kit bag

A 80-120L duffel bag to transport kit. A duffel bag is a strong, soft, weather resistant bag without wheels but with functional straps for carrying. Suitcases and wheeled bags are not suitable

Daysack

Approx. 40L capacity. Your day to day pack that you carry with your daily essentials, fitted with shoulder straps and importantly a waist belt

Waterproof rucksack cover

To protect rucksack from rain

Drybags

Nylon rolltop bags that keep fresh clothing and other important items like passports and iPods dry in the event of a total downpour that seeps into your kitbag. Good for quarantining old socks. Please note that many countries are now banning plastic bags. We would always advise buying re-usable nylon rolltop bags for keeping your kit dry (and sustainability).

Small kit bag or light bag

This is for any kit you intend to leave at the hotel and could even simply be a heavy duty plastic bag

Padlocks x 2

For use on your kit bag for travel and on the expedition plus your hotel bag

Sleeping Gear

4 Season sleeping bag

You should get a sleeping bag rated to -10C and choose a sleeping bag that functions within the comfort rating of this temperature. A silk sleeping bag liner will enhance this rating on the coldest nights

Sleeping bag liner

Silk is best for keeping the bag clean and you a little warmer

Headwear

Warm headgear

This can be a warm hat, beanie, balaclava, anything to reduce the heat loss from your head

Wide brimmed hat

Keeps the sun off exposed areas like ears and the nape of the neck

Buff/Scarf

Essential for protection from the sun and dust

Sunglasses

Worth spending money on good UV filters. Julbo is our preferred supplier

Sunblock

Buy the highest SPF you can find as UV intensifies with altitude

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KIT LIST

Lip salve

Sun cream will not work on your lips and they are very susceptible to burn without proper protection

Upper Body

Base layer x 3

This is the layer closest to the skin and its principal function is to draw (wick) moisture and sweat away from the skin. You can also get thermal base layers for use at higher altitudes that provide an additional insulative layer while still drawing sweat during times of high exertion

Mid layer x 2

These are typically lightweight microfleeces or similar technology that provide varying degrees of warmth and insulation without being overly bulky or heavy to pack

T-shirt (optional)

A light weight trekking T shirt is advisable for this expedition as some of the days can be hot

Gilet (optional)

Optional - A great low volume additional layer to keep your core warm, whether down, primaloft or fleece

Light insulated jacket

A lighter jacket such as a Primaloft or lightweight down which can be worn at lower to mid altitudes is a great addition to your kit offering greater flexibility with layering

Soft Shell

These should be windproof (not all are) and insulative. They are mostly made of soft polyester and sometimes resemble a neoprene finish which makes them very mobile and comfortable to wear. While offering a degree of weather repellence, they are not waterproof

Hard Shell

Essential waterproof, windproof kit, should be big enough to fit over several other layers and breathable. Heavy and bulky ski jackets are not suitable for this expedition

Down jacket

Generally made using feathers, these are the ultra-warm and insulated layer that are used when sitting in the tea houses or in extremely cold environments. Those with a windproof outer fabric will provide the best insulation. Ask advice in the shop (or from us) when buying the jacket and mention you want it rated to -25C and the assistant will recommend the correct fill for you

Warm gloves

Consider liners or a light polartec pair for lower altitudes and evenings, and a thicker waterproof pair like ski gloves for higher altitudes

Down mitts & waterproof mitts

Essential for higher altitudes and cold temperatures. To be worn with a liner glove underneath and waterproof & windproof layer over the top.

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KIT LIST

Lower Body

Trekking trousers x 2

These tend to be polyester so they dry quickly after a shower and weigh little in your pack. Consider perhaps a pair with detachable lower legs as an alternative to shorts

Shorts (optional)

Light weight shorts are advisable for this expedition as some of the days can be hot. Zip off trekking trousers are the most versatile. Consider buying this

Softshell trousers

Windproof or thermal lined trekking trousers for higher altitudes and the summit phase. Thermal leggings can still be worn underneath if necessary

Long Johns

Thermal insulation for the lower body

Waterproof trousers

Like the jacket, an essential piece of kit to stay dry and should also be Goretex

Underwear

Merino or wicking material, not cotton. How many pairs you take is entirely up to you

Feet

Walking boots

Well worn in 4 season waterproof boots with mid to high ankle support

Comfortable trainers

For evening use and to give your feet a break once we reach the lodges

Trekking socks x 5

Start with lighter socks lower down, working up to thicker pairs for higher up as it gets colder. Some people like a clean pair every day, others are happy to change every other day – that's a personal choice

Spare laces

Just in case

Micro crampons

A smaller style of crampon, designed to give you a bit more grip on more icy terrain when full crampons are too much, or if you're wearing lighter boots. Microspikes can be invaluable on slippery slopes, and we would suggest they are carried in your day pack with you when higher up on the hill. Please note these cannot be hired in situ – but as they are only around £15, hopefully a good little investment for you anyway! (An example here, though other brands and styles are of course available.)

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KIT LIST

Hydration

Water bottles/bladder

Camelbaks are useful at lower altitudes but have a tendency to freeze up at higher altitudes without insulation tubes, Nalgene bottles are better at altitude. We suggest a combination of a 2L bladder and 1L bottle or 2 x ½L bottles which are useful for the teahouses and to put in your jacket for higher up the trail

Water purification

Although generally all water is boiled some prefer to double up and add purification tabs as well. Always good to have in your bag

Toiletries

Wash kit

Keep it simple on the mountain. Essentials are toothbrush, toothpaste and deodorant. Moisturiser is advisable, everything else is a luxury!

Personal first aid kit

The 360 med kits are designed to be used in emergencies and akin to an A&E rather than a pharmacy on Expeditions so please come prepared with useful meds for yourself such as painkillers (Ibuprofen if you can take it and a Paracetamol) plus blister plasters, plasters, antiseptic, rehydration sachets and any muscle rubs you wish to use.

Personal medication

Keep this in your daypack

Travel towel

Travel towels from the likes of Lifesystems are perfect

Wet wipes

These are great for washing when shower facilities become a thing of the past

Alcohol gel

A must have for good camp hygiene

Insect repellent

For early stages and once back down

Nappy sacks or dog poo bags

Only needed to bag your toilet paper if you are caught short in between camps and for keeping your rubbish tidy in your tent

Miscellaneous

Head torch

We recommend Petzl head torches. Bring spare batteries.

Trekking poles

These tend to be a personal preference but help with your stability and can dampen the pressure on the knees coming down hill

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KIT LIST

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Camera

Bring plenty of spare batteries and memory cards

Penknife (optional)

Snacks

You will be fed very well and given snacks each day however we advise bringing a small selection as a little bit of comfort. Extra snacks can be bought en-route if needed. Energy gels and protein bars are not suitable

Entertainment

Of course optional, but most trekkers like to bring an iPod, book, Kindle, cards etc for evening entertainment.

Documentation

Passport

Don't forget this! Your passport should have at least 6 months validity. With your passport expiry date at least six months after the final day of travel.

Copy of passport

Just in case

Passport photos x 4

You will need this for visas and other bureaucratic impediments. For Himalayan countries a copy of your passport photo is needed for your expedition permit

Visa

Granted on arrival, it costs $50 USD for 1 month stay, $ 90 USD for 3 month stay; subject to change, you will need one passport photo to staple to your visa application upon arrival

Dental check up

We recommend you have a dental check-up before your trip. New fillings can be an issue at altitude if there is an air pocket left in the gap

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KIT LIST

Money

We recommend you take at least US$200-$300 onto the mountain in small denominations. This will allow for $160 tip money plus any extras such as satellite phone calls and emergency funds. Small denominations are recommended as it may be difficult to obtain change and it will be easier to divide tip money

Travel insurance

Copy of own travel insurance details. And relevant contact numbers. We have a partnership with True Traveller and would recommend that you contact them when looking for travel insurance for your trip with 360. However, it is vital that you ensure that the insurance cover they offer is suitable for you, taking your personal circumstances (items to be insured, cancellation cover, medical history) into account. Many other insurance providers are available and we do recommend that you shop around to get the best cover for you on the expedition you are undertaking. It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the appropriate insurance for your intended trip. To include medical evacuation and coverage up to the maximum altitude of this trip.

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FAQ'S

Country

What information can you give on Nepal?

Nepal, officially the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, is located in the Himalayas with a population of approximately 27 million. Bordered to the north by the China, and to the south, east, and west by India and across the Himalayas lies the Tibet. A monarchy throughout most of its history, Nepal was ruled by the Shah dynasty of kings from 1768, when Prithvi Narayan Shah unified its many small kingdoms. However, a decade-long Civil War by the Communist Party of Nepal and several weeks of mass protests by all major political parties led to elections for a constituent assembly in May 2008 which overwhelmingly favored the abdication of the Nepali monarch Gyanendra Shah and the establishment of a federal multiparty representative democratic republic.

Kathmandu is the nation's capital and the country's largest city. Kathmandu Valley itself has estimated population of 5 million. Nepal has a rich geography. The mountainous north has eight of the world's ten tallest mountains, including the highest point on Earth, Mount Everest, called Sagarmatha in Nepali. It contains more than 240 peaks over 6,096 m above sea level. The fertile and humid south is heavily urbanized.

The Sherpa People

The Sherpa people are the predominant ethnic group living in the eastern Himalayan region of Nepal. In 2001 there were approximately 150,000 Sherpas in Nepal. Their language is a variant of Tibetan. Sherpas belong to the Nyingmapa, the "Red Hat Sect" of Tibetan Buddhism. Allegedly the oldest Buddhist sect in Tibet, it emphasizes mysticism and local deities shared by the pre-Buddhist Bon religion, which has shamanic elements, in addition to Buddha and the great Buddhist divinities. The Sherpa also believe in numerous gods and demons who are believed to inhabit every mountain, cave, and forest. These have to be worshiped or appeased through ancient practices that have been woven into the fabric of Buddhist ritual life. Indeed, it is almost impossible to distinguish between Bon practices and Buddhism.

Sherpas are highly regarded as elite mountaineers. They were immeasurably valuable to early explorers of the Himalayas, serving as guides at the extreme altitudes of the peaks and passes in the region, particularly for expeditions to climb Mt. Everest.

Today, Sherpa is a term often used casually to refer to almost any guide or porter hired for mountaineering expeditions in the Himalayas. Sherpas are renowned in the international climbing and mountaineering community for their hardiness, expertise, and experience at high altitudes. It has been speculated that a portion of the Sherpas' climbing ability is the result of a genetic adaptation to living in high altitudes.

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FAQ'S

What is the climate?

Daytime temperatures in Kathmandu will be warm and can reach as high as over 30°C. On trek the daytime temperatures can warm to over 20°C when the sun is out. At higher elevations, if there is little sun or during evening, temperatures can be well below freezing.

What is the local time?

GMT + 5 hours 45 mins

Food and Water

What is the food like on the mountain?

We stay in lodges known locally as tea houses and these have basic kitchens. Apart from generators there is no electricity in the region and the food is usually cooked on big stoves and ovens fuelled by wood or yak dung. Despite this the range of food produced is fantastic and the menus are very comprehensive. The majority of the meals focus on fuelling the hungry trekker by providing plenty of carbohydrates. Pastas, rice based dishes, spring rolls and pizzas are the staples. Every single ingredient is brought up either on a yak or by a porter and as such the menus get a little simpler as you get to the higher lodges. Most of our midday meals are also eaten at trailside restaurants and are usually accompanied by a hot drink or two.

On top of well-balanced meals clients are provided with coffee, tea and snacks upon arrival into the lodge and at all mealtimes. Clients are invited to bring along any of their favourite snacks and goodie bags from home as buying additional snacks from the lodges can be expensive. Concentrate on high energy foodstuffs such as Jelly Babies to give you that little boost on an arduous day.

I have food allergies, can these be catered for?

Absolutely, please inform the office of any allergies or intolerances and we will ensure that these are taken into account on the trek.

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FAQ'S

Where does the drinking water come from?

For the first days bottled drinking water will be used. At the higher lodges we will use locally sourced drinking water from streams or springs. These are usually fresh being topped up from melt water above or by rainfall but we also increase their purity by treating the water with purification tablets and by boiling it. We always ensure that our drinking water is 100% bug free.

How often is fresh water available for replenishing during the day?

Before leaving the lodge in the morning you will fill your water bottles or camel bladder. If this runs low you will have ample more water to replace it with. For most walking days water can be replenished at the lunch time site.

Accommodation

What kind of accommodation is there on the trek?

The teahouses vary in their quality and style depending on their location. Generally, they have a communal room downstairs, with one or two bedrooms above them. Some have shower facilities, some will just have a stand pipe, and there are shared toilet facilities. They use a type of wood burning stove in the main communal area. Other rooms are generally unheated. There are no facilities for changing money in the teahouses. We recommend that you organise sufficient cash in Kathmandu, your local guide can advise on this. There is electricity in many of the teahouses at lower altitudes, but not when you get higher and the teahouses become more basic. A top tip for making your batteries last a little longer is to put them in the inside pocket of your coat or under your pillow at night. Cooler temperatures drain battery life so keeping them warm will ensure they last longer.

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FAQ'S

Will I have my own room?

Most altitude related symptoms manifest themselves at night. We therefore recommend room sharing from the onset of all our expeditions. Room share is always organised according to sex and where possible age groups. Obviously if you are climbing this mountain with a friend or partner then share rooms with them. If you have joined the team by yourself then it is highly likely that you will be sharing a room with your pre-assigned room buddy unless prior arrangements have been made.

The Trek

How fit do I need to be for this expedition?

Trekkers are expected to be in good physical condition. The better your physical shape the more you will be able to handle and enjoy the demands of trekking the circuit.

How out of my comfort zone will I be?

On a day to day level remember that you will be hunkered down in lodges at altitude. You are likely to be cold, washing and toilet facilities will be limited and basic, along with your accommodation. Your appetite may be affected by the altitude and as you get higher on the trek you are likely to suffershortness of breath and many people experience difficulty sleeping. Remember that everyone on the trek is likely to be experiencing exactly the same symptoms, physical and mental.

Health and Safety

What happens if there is a problem on the trek?

All our guides are in communication with each other by phone and radio. In addition the national park operates a rescue service. This service is linked by radio to the park headquarters. In the vast majority of cases of emergency rescue the problems can be attributed to altitude and if so the solution is immediate descent to lower altitudes. Our local mountain crew are all experienced in dealing with any problem that might arise. Our guides are either doctors or hold the highest standard of wilderness first aid qualifications and can handle any emergency to the highest level of competency, rarely requiring national park assistance.

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FAQ'S

Am I likely to suffer from altitude sickness on this expedition?

There are different types of altitude sickness. Although our acclimatisation regime ensures that everybody enjoys the best possible chance of getting high on the mountain, altitude related problems can happen. The most common of this is high altitude sickness – AMS (Acute Mountain Sickness). Symptoms for this can include headaches, nausea and vomiting.

This sounds quite dramatic but generally this is just the process your body naturally goes through to adjust to the higher altitudes and the reduced partial pressure of the atmosphere. For some people the acclimatisation process takes a little longer than others.

For our guides this is all part and parcel of ascending to these altitudes and, although we assess each client's personal situation carefully, we also further consider the compounding effects of dehydration brought on by excessive vomiting and loss of appetite.
AMS might sound frightening but our guides are fully trained (and highly experienced) in helping relieve your personal symptoms and providing advice on how to best proceed.

What can I do to help prevent AMS?

In most cases AMS can be avoided by following guidelines:

- Drink lots of water
- Walk slowly
- Stay warm
- Eat well

We recommend that you familiarise yourself with the various affects that altitude can cause. During your pre-climb briefing, we describe altitude sickness to you in detail, and advise you how to cope with it.

The most important thing is not to fear it, but to respect it and to know how to deal with it and more importantly tell your guides how you feel. Our guides have seen every condition that can occur on this trek, and they will always know how to deal with problems.

Is there a risk of getting HACE (High Altitude Cerebral Edema) and HAPE (High Altitude Pulmonary Edema) on the mountain?

HACE and HAPE rarely occur on this trek and our guides are fully trained in recognition of the onset of these problems and will deal with them at the first sign of their development.

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FAQ'S

Should I bring Diamox on the expedition with me?

Although we recommend you come armed with a course of Diamox or other high-altitude drug on this expedition, we do not recommend that take you these as a prophylactic during the trek or climb. We view Diamox as a treatment drug rather than a preventative medicine. Most adventure medics give similar advice, however we do appreciate this can be confusing, as many GPs (who aren't necessarily mountaineers) do suggest taking it as a prophylactic.

We pride ourselves on designing all our itineraries with acclimatisation very much front and centre and this expedition itinerary has been carefully designed to allow for your body to adjust to the altitude gradually, safely and comfortably. However, if you find that you are still having problems adjusting to the altitude (see our FAQ on Altitude Sickness) then your expedition leader or expedition medic will recommend the correct course of action regarding taking Diamox.

Should I take Diamox?

It is far preferable to take Diamox if and when needed during the course of the expedition. If you are already taking it and then start having altitude related problems you are left with few options but to descend to a more comfortable altitude which sadly often means that the summit is not attainable.

Furthermore, Diamox is a diuretic, meaning you will have to drink a lot of fluid to prevent dehydration. Of course, the upshot of this is you'll have to pee more which means you'll probably be having to get up more in the night and take cover behind rocks during the day. Another quite common side-effect is that it can cause your extremities to "buzz and tingle" including your fingers, toes and lips which can feel quite unsettling. Other side-effects can include dizziness and light headedness with loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea. Although all these side-effects are manageable when you have symptoms of altitude sickness, we personally believe it is counter-intuitive to take it unless necessary.

Of course, it is totally up to you, this is just our recommendation and we're not doctors. If you do decide to take Diamox on the advice of your doctor then please do let your leader know in situ so they are aware of this. We also suggest you take the drug for a couple of days a few weeks before travelling so you can experience the symptoms before taking them during the trek.

Manaslu Circuit

Nepal | 5,213m

FAQ'S

What happens if I am unable to complete the trek due to ill-health or altitude sickness?

Unfortunately people can get ill on the trek. Your expedition leader is constantly monitoring your health and should you get ill with either altitude sickness or any other illness he/she will be discussing your options with you from an early stage. Should it become apparent that you are unlikely to be able to complete the circuit (without it being a life-threatening situation requiring a medivac) you will be turned around and accompanied by one of our experienced Sherpas at all times until you rejoin the group. As this is outside the itinerary you would need to meet any additional costs incurred as a result, and that is why we insist on travel insurance.

Do I need to take Malarial drugs?

The Malaria protozoa generally do not survive over an altitude of 1,500m so once we have started the trek malaria poses no threat. (Lukla is at 2,700m). When visiting the lowland regions of Nepal or going to India it may be advisable to seek advice about if and when to take the malarial prophylactics. When visiting these places the chances of contracting malaria can be reduced by standard precautions such as sleeping under mosquito nets, applying insect repellent and wearing long sleeve shirts and trousers.

We advocate you visit your local doctor before departure to get the latest advice, MASTA Travel Health clinics, or many larger local hospitals have travel clinics.

You advocate taking a small first aid kit, what should it have in it?

We advocate a little bit of self-help on the trek. If you have a blister developing for example then please stop take off your boot and treat it before it becomes a problem. Your own first aid kit should contain:

A basic blister kit, plasters, antiseptic, sun-protection, your own personal medication (sometimes your porter might get to the Tea House after you and if he is carrying your medication you may not be able to take it according to the regime you are used to), basic pain relief (aspirin, paracetamol and Ibuprofen,) a personal course of antibiotics if prone to illness etc. Foot powder in your socks every morning is great for preventing blisters.

Generally the best approach packing your first aid kit is to include such basic medications as if you would on a family or personal holiday.

Your 360 expedition leader and/or a local porter (we call the ambulance man!) carries a very comprehensive first aid kit which contains a wide range of supplies and medications. They are fully trained to use whatever is needed for any emergency that may arise. We advocate keeping this in mind when packing your own first aid supplies and keeping your own FA kit as compact and light as possible.

Manaslu Circuit

Nepal | 5,213m

FAQ'S

What vaccinations do I need?

The following vaccinations are recommended:

- Hepatitis A
- Typhoid
- Diphtheria
- Tetanus
- Polio

This list is not absolute and it is important you should see your GP Surgery or travel clinic for latest recommendations and to ensure you are up to date on necessary vaccinations.

Kit

What clothing should I wear in the mountains?

We advocate the beg, steal and borrow principle for first timers, instead of buying brand new stuff that may never get used again. The cost of equipment is usually a major deterrent for people coming onto trips in the first place.

Kathmandu has hundreds of gear stores selling stuff at very cheap prices. A majority of them sell imitation clothes and equipment but 360 Expeditions guides will be on hand to show you the shops selling the good quality stuff. Our guides usually start the walk wearing long, lightweight trekking trousers and T-shirts. Long trousers are recommended as a deterrent to insects, stinging plants and to act as sun protection. Sunglasses are worn for most of the trek as well as suitable sunhats.

Shorts can also be worn on the lower altitude days of the trek as the temperature is usually warm. Ensure that you apply sun protection frequently, or buy a once a day product such as P20 if you're not very good at remembering to apply it.

The prevailing conditions on the mountain will dictate what you will wear: if it is cold when you leave the Tea House in the morning then wear your fleece. As things warm up take advantage of the zipper system which most trekking clothing has – open and close the zips to adjust to your own preferred temperature. If you get too warm then take a layer off.

Waterproofs: are needed on hand at all times. It is not unusual to be caught out in an afternoon rainstorm low down on the trek. Waterproofs should be Goretex material or similar.

Manaslu Circuit

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FAQ'S

What do your guides wear on summit day?

As we gain altitude it gets cold and daytime temperatures of -10 to -15 C are not unusual. At the highest points it could get really cold and temperatures of -20C are not unusual.

Typically our guides wear 2 sets of base layers (long johns), a thick fleece layer (top and bottom) and then on the legs waterproofs whilst on the upper torso a down jacket is worn. As the wind picks up near the summit ridge our guides will put on their windproof layer to ward of the wind chill. On their hands they'll wear a thin layer of fleece working gloves over the top of which a thicker set of "ski gloves" or mittens is worn.

Their heads are covered by a thermal "beanie" hat or a thick balaclava and the hood of their down jackets. On their feet the guides wear one pair of thin socks and one pair of thick.

On Kala Patthar summit day these are used as an invaluable windshield to protect you against the effect of wind chill when a strong wind blows.

What is the best type of footwear to use?

Because of the huge variety of terrain encountered when doing this trek it is very important to wear the right footwear. Boots should be sturdy, waterproof, insulated against cold temperatures and offer adequate ankle support. In addition it is highly recommended that your boots are well worn in to prevent the formation of blisters. A wide range of suitable boots are on the market and further advice as to which brand names are available can be found online or at your local gear store. When in-store try lots of boots on, use the ramps in the shops to test their traction, make sure they are comfortable as you will be almost living in them for days on end and they are very important. To do this trek it is not necessary to buy technical boots with crampon clips as crampons are not used at any time unless you plan to progress to bigger things.

What clothing and footwear is appropriate when staying in the Tea houses and lodges?

There is no electricity higher up the valleys and lodges are heated by a pot-bellied stove fuelled with either wood or yak dung. These provide adequate warmth for the dining rooms but are not connected to the bedrooms. A thick fleece or light down jacket provides adequate warmth for inside the buildings. For footwear we suggest using either trainers (sneakers) or crocs. It is nice to get out of your trekking boots and to have something light to wear for the evenings.

Manaslu Circuit

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FAQ'S

How much will my pack weigh during the trek?

A daysack is worn by the climber at all times during the trek. The content of this is mandatory and should include: a fleece (for when taking breaks or weather changes); a full set (top and bottom) of waterproofs; sufficient water for the day; snacks; camera equipment; personal medication and a head torch. Your day-to-day rucksack will weigh no more then 3 – 4 kilo's and a rucksack of around 40L capacity will more than suffice. This rucksack can be filled to the brim with extra stuff when you check in at the airport. Our guides put their down jackets or a thick fleece and a pair of mountain socks in this bag to free up space in their hold luggage.

It is important that your day sack has an adjustable waist belt to transfer the weight of your daily load onto your hips and from here onto your legs (strongest muscles) to do most of the carrying. Another handy feature would be a compartment in which to fit a Platypus / Camelbak.

What do the porters carry? What is the correct porter weight?

Your porter bags should be of a soft material duffel bag or at a push a rucksack variety and should not be a suitcase or hardbodied metal case. Furthermore they should weigh around 15 kg when packed for the trekking phase of the trek. We have found this weight to be ample and usually everybody can plan to take only enough clothes and equipment needed for the mountain. Please bear in mind that on top of your load, porters will also have to carry a share of the food, kitchen equipment, camping equipment and their own survival gear. Inside the porter bag should be a change of clothing, your clothing for higher up the mountain, a sleeping mat (thermarest), sleeping-bag, personal toiletries etc. (see equipment/clothing list). Also take a pair of light footwear to wear in the Tea House at night (crocs etc.) and consider bringing a book or playing cards.

Are down jackets necessary?

They are highly recommended and are worth their weight in gold on summit day. Our guides wear them every evening at higher altitudes.

A layer system comprising of several layer of base layers, fleeces, jumpers and a thick coat will just about suffice on the climb but nothing beats the efficiency of a good down jacket (especially when topped with a water proof layer).

Manaslu Circuit

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FAQ'S

How warm does my sleeping bag need to be?

Sleeping bags should be rated within the -15C comfort zone. From the first tea house upwards, it is not unusual to experience frosty nights and a good night's sleep is important to give you the best chance to climb this mountain. Ensure you get a sleeping bag that has this temperature rating at this comfort zone rather then as its extreme zone.

Our guides take sleeping bags rated to well below -15C to ensure that they are warm at night. A 3 season sleeping bag can be enhanced by using an inner silk or fleece bag (or similar). The idea is to be as comfortable and warm as possible for the night and henceforth to ensure plenty of sleep for the arduous days ahead.

It is important to remember that down sleeping bags work by your own body heating the down that's inside the bag. Once you have warmed up the bag the down will retain the heat and ensure that you sleep at a temperature that's your own body temperature. For best results it is best to wear as little as possible when inside your sleeping bag. Our guides will often only wear a set of thermals in their bag. It is important for the bag to trap the heat. By wearing multiple layers of clothing your clothing will trap this heat and your bag will not function properly.

What clothing is suitable for when we come back from the mountain?

Kathmandu is at a relatively low altitude and daytime temperatures are warm. When in Rome do as the Romans. Shorts and T-shirts are fine to wear during the course of the day. Evening wear generally tends to be casual with long trousers and casual shirt appropriate for all hotels and restaurants. Nepalese are generally quite conservative in their dress code and are generally well dressed despite their situation in life. Your town and party clothes can be left in a safe lock up at the hotel and do not need to be taken up the mountain.

What other gear will I need?

Please review the equipment list. While all items are required there may be times when some of the items on the gear list may not be used (such as warm weather or changing conditions).

Is it possible to rent equipment before I go?

It is also possible to hire clothing and equipment before you leave from our partners Outdoor Hire (www.outdoorhire.co.uk) where 360 Expeditions has a 6,000m peak kit list set up and you can pick and choose hire items from this. We recommend that you buy your own boots which are worn in prior to the trek.

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FAQ'S

The Weather

What is the best time of year to trek the circuit?

The optimal climbing seasons are late March through to early June when the daytime temperatures are the warmest and there is a reduced cloud cover. Late September through to December is also good as the daytime conditions are generally cooler but still clear.

How cold can it get?

The temperature at the top of Larkya La can vary widely. Sometimes it is only a degree or two below freezing, but climbers should be prepared for possible temperatures as low as minus 25 degrees Celsius, especially in conjunction with wind chill. On the trek expect cold mornings (sometimes frosty). An afternoon rainstorm and warm weather is not unusual at the lower altitudes.

Travel

Where do I meet my Leader?

Your guide will generally meet you at the airport. At the check-in desk look for someone wearing a 360 logo.

Do I need to book my own flights to Nepal?

360 Expeditions will be booking flights on your behalf. We provide confirmation of flight times and departure terminal approximately eight weeks before your departure date. Please be aware that flight schedules are subject to change. Please ensure that you have checked flight details before setting out for your flight.

Insurance

Do I need special travel insurance for the trek?

You must carry individual travel insurance to take part in the expedition. We cannot take you on the mountain without proof of insurance.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the appropriate insurance for your intended trip. To include medical evacuation and coverage up to the maximum altitude of this trip.

Your insurance details are requested on the booking form, however this can be arranged at a later date. 360 Expeditions will be requesting your insurance details 8 weeks before your departure.

Manaslu Circuit

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FAQ'S

Entry into Country

My passport runs out 3 months after the trek, is this OK?

Your passport should be valid for 6 months after the date the trek starts. If it runs out before you may be refused entry. It is also advisable to have a couple of photocopies of your passport in case of loss.

Do I need a visa for Nepal?

Visas are compulsory for entry into Nepal for all foreign nationals. You can either apply for your visa on arrival in Nepal, or in the UK before you travel.

If you decide to apply before you go, you may be selected to attend the Nepalese Embassy to collect your visa. If this is the case, you'll be given a set day and time when you have to do this. If this happens and you can't make it to the embassy, there are a couple of options:
1. you can nominate someone to go on your behalf.
2. you can ignore the request to go to the embassy and sort your visa on arrival. There will be no issues getting your visa on arrival even if you've already started the process in the UK.

It is very easy to get your visa on arrival in Kathmandu and there are now electronic visa booths at the airport which take your photo, allow you to fill in all the relevant information and spit you out the completed visa application. You then just queue to pay your fee!

A 15 day visa costs US$30 and a 30 day visa costs US$50.

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FAQ'S

Training

Any tips on how a trekker can maximise their chances of success?

The 360 training programs have been devised to be expedition specific. Use these as a guide but also feel free to contact us for individual advice on how to best incorporate the best suitable fitness program with your own lifestyle.

The idea is to increase the intensity of the exercise over 4 to 6 months before you leave for the expedition. Concentrate on cardiovascular work-outs during the initial weeks by taking short runs when time allows and try to spend at least 2 weekends a month going on long duration walks (longer than 6 hrs) carrying a rucksack of around 10kg. As you get stronger increase this rate of exercise and the duration by walking every weekend and running 5km every second day.

A focused regime will not only prepare your body for carrying minor loads but will harden your body against the big days on the mountain itself. In addition the weekend walks will help break in your boots and get you used to your equipment. In combination this will pay dividends when you reach Nepal because even though you can't train for altitude your body will be ready for arduous days and you will be familiar with how to best use your equipment.

Finance

When is the money due for this expedition? What kind of payment do you accept?

Generally speaking deposits are due upon booking to secure your place as we need to book the international flights well in advance. The full amount should be paid 4 months prior to departure. However having said this our aim is to get you out there and we understand that everyone's personal financial situations can vary.

Please contact our friendly office crew to discuss a suitable payment plan should you find raising the funds to be difficult. We have been in your shoes and go by the motto of where there's a will there's a way.

What is your cancellation and refund policy?

Please read our terms and conditions careful before you depart. 360 Expeditions highly recommends trip cancellation insurance for all expeditions. Due to the nature and heavy costs of government and operator permits we must adhere to a stringent refund policy.

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FAQ'S

How much do we tip our local crew?

Our local crew work extremely hard to ensure that your expedition runs well. Although tipping is not compulsory once you see how hard the crew work and realise the minimal amount of money they get paid relative to us, tipping will seem the least you can do to say thank you. As a general rule we suggest around $180 per client for the entire local crew to be shared amongst them.

Tipping your 360 leader is entirely at your discretion.

Money: am I correct in thinking we only need to take US Dollars with us?

US dollars are readily recognised and are easily converted to the local currency. Upon arrival there will always be a bureau de change at the airport. These provide a better rate of exchange than your hotel. Buying gifts or small goods such as drinks or snacks with small denomination US dollars is not a problem. Getting change for a $20 bill when buying a $1 coke will be a problem. Larger bills are good for tipping your porters at the end of the expedition and a sufficient amount should be carried with you. Your 360 leader will remind you in the pre-expedition brief of the correct amount to take on the trip with you.

What additional spending money will we need?

The amount of money you will need depends on how many presents you wish to buy or how much you have to drink when you come off the hill. As a basic rule of thumb $250 should be more than adequate for any post expedition spending. Nepal is a relatively cheap place and when indulging in the local custom of haggling goods can be bought for very good value for money. Your 360 leader will be happy to point out the relative bargains and the suitable prices and where to get the best value for money.

The only cash you'll need to consider taking with you on the mountain is the local crew tips which are presented to them before we return to Kathmandu (see above) and for any additional snacks and soft drinks you wish to purchase from the Lodges encountered en route. Additional supplies can be quite expensive though as all this is brought in by porters.

Electronics

Do we need a travel adaptor for the plug sockets in the hotel or are they the same as UK?

The voltage is 220v / 50Hz like the UK. Rectangular or round three-pin plugs are used. It is possible to recharge your electronic items and batteries for a small cost at all the lodges.

Manaslu Circuit

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FAQ'S

General

Can I contact the others on the climb? How about the guide?

You can always call our offices and one of our guides will contact you to discuss any aspects of the expedition. Generally about 1 month before your trip departure we mail a list of other team members to you.

Will I have time for shopping?

You have a day in Kathmandu before the trek begins which will give you plenty of time to pick up souvenirs. You will be able to leave any purchases safely stored at the hotel in Kathmandu.

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Manaslu Circuit

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TRAINING PROGRAM

To begin 6 months prior to the expedition where possible.

1. CVS: Cardiovascular exercise which is low impact such as swimming, cycling, cross trainer, rowing.

2. Weekend walk should be done over undulating terrain. Only a light rucksack needs to be carried.

3. For specific exercises it is worth doing static squats and heel raises on a regular basis to improve leg muscles prior to the trip. Static squats are especially useful to help protect the knees. Please remember that it is still important to have a well balanced workout using a variety of muscle groups.

4. It is worth winding down and resting in the week leading up to the trip, doing several light walks to keep things going.

5. When walking going at a pace of a brisk walk with a light sweat and enough to feel breathless is recommended

6. During the program, rather than step up suddenly each month (example, going for 3 one hour walks each week during the weekdays in April to 3 one and half hour walks suddenly in May) it is better to build up gradually each week so there isn't a large transition (example, going for 3 one hour walks during week 1 in April, going for 3 one hour and ten minute walks during week 2 in April, going for 3 one hour and fifteen minute walks during week 3 in April, going for 3 one hour and twenty minute walks during week 4 in April)

6. It is important you seek medical advice prior to starting any training program, especially if you are not used to regular physical exertion

All the best with your training!

MONTH 1

OPT 1	OPT 2
2 x 30 mins weekday walk 1 x 1 hour weekend walk 1 x 10 mins CVS	1 x 30 mins weekday walk 2 x 1 hour weekend walk 1 x 10 mins CVS

MONTH 2

OPT 1	OPT 2
2 x 45 mins weekday walk 1 x 2 hours weekend walk 2 x 10 mins CVS	1 x 45 mins weekday walk 2 x 2 hours weekend walk 2 x 10 mins CVS

MONTH 3

OPT 1	OPT 2
2 x 45 mins weekday walk 1 x 2 hours weekend walk 2 x 10 mins CVS	1 x 45 mins weekday walk 2 x 2 hours weekend walk 2 x 10 mins CVS

MONTH 4

OPT 1	OPT 2
3 x 1 hour weekday walk 1 x 4 hours weekend walk 3 x 15 mins CVS	2 x 1 hour weekday walk 2 x 4 hours weekend walk 3 x 15 mins CVS

MONTH 5

OPT 1	OPT 2
3 x 1.5 hours weekday walk 1 x 5 hours weekend walk 3 x 20 - 25 mins CVS	2 x 1.5 hours weekday walk 2 x 5 hours weekend walk 3 x 20 - 25 mins CVS

MONTH 6

OPT 1	OPT 2
3 x 2 hours weekday walk 1 x 6 hours weekend walk 3 x 30 mins CVS	2 x 3 hours weekday walk 2 x 6 hours weekend walk 3 x 30 mins CVS

360 EXPEDITIONS

"Life should not be a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in a pretty & well preserved body, but rather to skid in broadside in a cloud of smoke, thoroughly used up, totally worn out & loudly proclaiming 'Wow! What a Ride!' "

Dream it. Plan it. Live it.

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