



# MANASLU CIRCUIT

Trek to Upper Manaslu and Larkya La pass



2015 dates



COST **\$2050**

### GRADE/FITNESS

Prior trekking experience is recommended for this trip as it begins at 530m and reaches a maximum altitude of 5106m (4576m gain). Good fitness is required as most days will involve 6 hr of trekking carrying a 5kg day pack over some steep ascents and descents. The trail is non technical but some sections are exposed.

### INCLUDES:

Trekking permits, 4 nights Kathmandu hotel, trekking guides, transport in Nepal, extensive high altitude wilderness first aid kit, all lodging on trek, all meals outside Kathmandu, porters to carry personal gear, down jacket, sleeping bag and expedition duffel.

### EXCLUDES:

international flights to Kathmandu, meals in Kathmandu (USD 10-15 per meal), aerated and alcoholic beverages, personal items (e.g. phone calls, laundry), tips, travel insurance (incl. early departure and rescue) and personal trekking gear.



## OVERVIEW

Quietly tucked away in the centre of Nepal along the Tibetan border, between two of Nepal's more popular national parks is the protected Manaslu Conservation Area. Despite being situated above Nepal's most historic city, Gorkha (origins of Nepal's first king) and being home to its namesake Himalayan giant, Manaslu, this region is only just beginning to gain trekking popularity.

Unlike other popular trails in Nepal, this trail begins close to sea level in a subtropical climate at 530m! We follow the Budhi Gandaki river upstream into Upper Manaslu via a deep and narrow gorge trail with countless cascading waterfalls that feed into the river in summer and autumn. The trail meanders through traditional Gurung farming villages and dense sal forests on both sides of the river by crossing suspension bridges. We steadily climb into low and high alpine climates, to lands inhabited by Bhotia people (Tibetan descendants). In Sama gaon we take an extra day to acclimatise and explore Pung Gyen monastery, or for those feeling energetic, a day hike to the base camp of the 8th highest mountain and a beautiful glacier lake. We will then make a long traverse of Larkya La pass (5106m) from which you will enjoy a panoramic vista including Manaslu, Cheo and Himlung. Over the pass we walk out through the Marshandgi valley, following the Dudh river in now the Annapurna Conservation Area in Manang through Magar villages.

The significant altitude range involved in this trek requires good fitness. Some days include long steep ascents and descents. Prior trekking experience is recommended to join this trip.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Stunning views of Manaslu
- Beautiful gorge trek through subtropical forests
- Buddhist culture of Bhotia tribes
- Traditional farming villages of Gurung and Magar hill tribes
- Manaslu base camp and Pung Gyen monastery
- Crossing Larkya La pass



## ITINERARY

### Day 1 Arrive in Kathmandu

A Himalayan Ascent representative will collect you from the airport. It's a free day to recover from your international flight. Later in the evening, there will be a group briefing and welcome group dinner.

### Day 2 In Kathmandu

This is a free day for you to explore the crazy, yet wondrously beautiful city of Kathmandu. Home to 5 World Heritage sites, Kathmandu is a stunning landscape of handcrafted wooden palaces (durbar or palace squares of Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur) and glorious Buddhist stupas (Swayambu and Boudhanath). It's a city that stimulates all senses, so be prepared because Kathmandu is a city that demands attention.

### Day 3 Drive to Arughat (530m) ~6 hrs

We drive out of the Kathmandu valley exiting via the busy west gate of the city, and down the hillside with direct views of the Langtang mountain range. The windy road eventually turns right into Gorkha district and up to

Arughat, our trailhead. We have the afternoon to explore this little riverside town as we prepare for our trek.

### Day 4 Trek Arughat (530m) to Khursani bari/Liding (860m) ~6 hrs

We follow the Budhi Gandaki river north passing Gurung and Magar farming villages, and through forests noisy with monkeys. During summer especially and also autumn, large waterfalls stream down gorge cliffs feeding the Budhi Gandaki river. It's a refreshing sight in the heat at this low altitude. However, be prepared for fun and wet stream crossings!

### Day 5 Trek Khursani bari (860m) to Machha Khola (930m) ~ 6 hrs

We continue to follow the undulating trail along the river and through sal forests. The gorge narrows against steep cliffs and dense forest, and then widens for pleasant riverbeds. There's a steep climb up to Machha khola or "fish river" for our night's stop.



**Day 6 Trek Machha khola (930m) to Dobhan (1070m) ~5.5 hrs**

At Tatopani or “hot water” you can stop to enjoy a natural hot spring bath under a cliff. After crossing a suspension bridge to the other side of the river, there’s a climb up stone steps to Dobhan.

**Day 7 Trek Dobhan (1070m) to Philim (1570m) ~6 hrs**

The trail continues on the true left of the river until Thado Bharyang just below the town of Jagat. We cross the river to Jagat, and to more prominent Buddhist communities as seen by chortens and mani walls in the villages. The route crosses the river again and up to Philim.

**Day 8 Trek Philim (1570m) to Deng (1860m) ~6 hrs**

From Philim we enjoy more thunderous waterfalls and a sensational gorge walk high above the river. The trail then wanders through pine and bamboo forests to the Gurung town of Deng.

**Day 9 Trek Deng (1860m) to Namrung (2582m) ~6 hrs**

The Budhi Gandaki river thins further as we continue the journey now high in Upper Manaslu. We trek north-west in parallel to the Tibetan border only 5km north when we reach Ghap. Maniwalls and chortens welcome and well wish travellers through villages inhabited by Bhotia tribes, Tibetan descendants who migrated into the Nupri valley. We trek through forests filled with alpine rhododendrons and oak trees up to Namrung.

**Day 10 Trek Namrung (2582m) to Sama gaon (3525m) ~6 hr**

As we journey deeper into the Nupri valley, the Bhotia way of life and devote Buddhist culture can be appreciated in each village. Old monasteries or “gompas” can be seen positioned high above the trail route. Look south-west for your first views of the twin peaks of Manaslu (8163m), and south to take in Himachuli (7893m, 18th highest mountain).



### **Day 11 Acclimatisation in Sama gaon**

To allow for adequate acclimatisation before crossing our highest point at Larkya La pass, we will spend an extra day in Sama gaon. You can visit the local monastery that offers splendid views of Manaslu, spend the day hiking the steep trail up to Manaslu base camp (4500m, 7-8 hr for the 1000m climb and return) that passes the beautiful Birendra Tal glacier lake or stay in with a good book.

### **Day 12 Trek Sama gaon (3525m) to Samdo (3860m) ~3 hrs**

Today is an easy day that traverses north up the valley through birch and juniper forests. We pass stone huts, mani walls and cross wooden bridges to reach Samdo. Samdo is the old trading centre for routes between Tibet and Nepal.

### **Day 13 Trek Samdo (3860m) to Dharmsala (4460m) ~3.5 hrs**

It's a slow but short climb towards Larkya glacier and our pass crossing. We walk to the glacier terminal moraine passing through a barren high altitude landscape consisting mostly of juniper shrubs. The popular north-west ridge route to Manaslu can clearly be seen as we hike up to Dharmsala.



### **Day 14 Trek Dharmsala (4460m) to Bimthang (3610m) via Larkya La pass (5106m) ~8 hrs**

Depending on conditions, the pass is a long snow and rock traverse on Larkya glacier. To avoid unpleasant afternoon winds, we start the crossing early in the morning. Walking first up the rocky glacier moraine and then onto the pass itself, it's a slow trudge at high altitude. However, the panoramic view from the high point is a spectacular scene encompassing Himlung, Cheo and Kang Guru. The 1.5 hr descent follows steep switchbacks on a rock scree. Trekking poles are advised, and even crampons if conditions are icy. Eventually the track drops into a grassy meadow which we follow to Bimthang.





**Day 15 Trek Bimthang (3610m) to Tilje (2300m) ~4.5 hrs**

This is mostly a downhill day except for a crossing of Karche pass (2710m) as we now follow the Dudh river or “milk river” south into Manang and the Annapurna Conservation Park. The trail to the classic Annapurna circuit trek connects at Dharapani. We see the familiar sights of Gurung villages in Tilje as we move further south from the Tibetan border and Bhotia communities.

**Day 16 Trek Tilje (2300m) to Tal (1707m) ~4 hrs**

Our last day of trekking is another gorge trek down the beginnings of the mighty Marshyangdi river. The evening meal at Tal will be shared with our portering staff whom we will farewell the next day.

**Day 17 Drive Tal to Besisahar ~5 hrs**

Everyday on a trek is an adventure in Nepal, even a humble bus drive! We take an interesting drive down a new road that connects Tal to Besisahar along the river. You’ll be happy to see the small town of Besisahar, our rest for the night.

**Day 18-19 Drive Besisahar to Kathmandu ~6 hrs and in Kathmandu**

We return to Kathmandu via the same route. Once in Kathmandu, you have the afternoon to rest. A massage is recommended! The next day is a free day to catch up on shopping and sight seeing before your departure home.

**Day 20 Depart Kathmandu**

We bid Kathmandu and Nepal farewell....until next time.

Note: daily walking hours include a lunch break



# WHY HIMALAYAN ASCENT?

Himalayan Ascent is owned and managed by local Nepalese guides Sumit Joshi and Lakpa Sherpa. With more than 40 years of guiding experience between the pair across the Himalayas in Nepal, Tibet, India, Pakistan and Bhutan, Himalayan Ascent know the Himalayas, its challenges, people and mountains.

As avid rock climbers with a passion for the mountains, Sumit and Lakpa have led numerous expeditions to Everest, K2, Broad Peak, Cho Oyu, Manaslu and Ama Dablam. Raised in the outdoor wonderland of the Solukhumbu, the Himalayan Ascent difference is a guiding and support team of personnel who are intimately familiar with the Himalayas, who actively enjoy the outdoors and love sharing the experience with others. With a growing reputation for providing affordable, international standard complete guiding service for challenging treks in remote areas or demanding 8000m expeditions, Himalayan Ascent has the experience to deliver the type of service that's desired by international outdoor adventurers.



## OTHER INFORMATION

### Sleep and food

Whilst on the trail, you'll sleep in local friendly teahouses. These provide basic accommodation (twin-share), common toilets and a large common dining hall. Teahouse kitchens cater for international and local tastes, from pizzas/pastas to typical Nepali favourites. Other facilities including showers, internet, battery charging and laundry are sometimes available for an extra cost. Your Kathmandu accommodation is a mid-range 3.5 star hotel, but we can adjust according to your budget (i.e. budget to 5-star). Note that meals in Kathmandu are not included in the cost. Plan for USD 10-15 per meal on these days.

### Gurung and bhotia culture

The hill and mountain ethnic groups of Nepal are ancient descendents from Tibet, hence their variant facial features from Hindu Indo-Aryo tribes. "Gurung" people primarily reside in the hill regions of central Nepal below the Annapurna range. They practice a hybrid religion of Hinduism and Buddhism. Gurung people with other hill tribes (e.g. Magars) have a proud Gurkha history of service in the British and Indian Army. In comparison, "Bhotia" people are relatively recent arrivals and practice a culture very similar to ancient Buddhist Tibet. They live a harsh lifestyle in the high Himalayan mountains alongside Nepal's highest peaks.

### Health tips

This trek reaches a maximum altitude of 5106m at Larkya La pass. As such, you may experience some effects of high altitude (e.g. headaches, increased breathing, disturbed sleep) as your body adapts. The trek schedule

has been designed to allow for proper acclimatisation. However, everyone responds to high altitude differently, so the best advice is to walk slow, drink plenty of water (~4L/day), listen to your body and alert your guide if you are feeling unwell.

Nepal is a developing country so some travel vaccines are advised. Obtain these at least 2-6 months before arrival to ensure good immunity. Typhoid, Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B and Japanese Encephalitis are recommended. Ensure that you are up to date with routine immunisation (MMR, DPT). Malaria tablets are not needed.

Your guide will be carrying a well stocked first aid kit along the trail. It will contain commonly used medication including ibuprofen and general antibiotics. It is easy to stay healthy and avoid bacterial or parasitic infections by eating from hygienic venues, and avoiding salad (raw) and unpeeled fruits.

### What's A typical day on the trail?

You will be woken up with a knock on your door around 6am by a staff member. You'll get dressed and packed for the day's walk, and have your duffel ready for your porter before breakfast ~7am. The aim will be to leave the teahouse and hit the trail by 8am.

On the trail, you'll carry a small day pack (20-40LL, ~5kg) with your personal items, water, warm clothing and wet weather gear. Generally lunch is at the rest stop for the night, which leaves the afternoon free to rest and soak in the views.

Dinner is ~7pm, and most trekkers then either read/play cards or head to bed early ~8-9pm to prepare for the next day's adventure.

## Climate

At the start of the trek close to sea level, the weather will be warm and humid due to the subtropical climate. As you climb into higher altitudes, be prepared for sudden changes in weather including rain, cold and strong winds. Below 2000m, temperatures can reach ~28°C in the day. Whilst, above 4000m, day temperatures can range 15°C-20°C. Nights are cool and may drop to -10°C during storms. Prepare cool and warm attire as suggested in the packing list.

## Packing list

- 20-40L day pack
- Trekking clothes (1 shorts, 2 t-shirts, 2 pants, etc)
- 1 set windproof/waterproof shells
- 1 fleece (mid-heavy weight)
- 1 mid layer shirt or fleece
- 1 fleece pants
- 2 sets thermal underwear (top/bottom)
- 1 pair of insulating gloves
- 5 pairs of trekking socks
- 2 pairs of liner socks
- 1 pair of waterproof trekking boots
- 1 pair of sandals (e.g. Crocs)
- 1 set of trekking poles
- 1 warm hat (wool/fleece)
- 2 sets of buff/scarf
- 1 sunglasses (category 3)
- 1 sunhat
- 2 One litre water bottles (e.g. Nalgene)

- 1 head torch (plus batteries)
- Personal toiletries (including sunscreen, hand sanitiser, body wipes, etc)
- Passport, travel insurance (including mountain rescue) and copies of passport
- Entertainment (e.g. books, notebook, camera, cards)
- Sleeping bag, down jacket, tents and duffel will be provided by Himalayan Ascent

## Visas

Tourist visas can be obtained directly at the immigration department of Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu. Bring at least 2 passport sized photos, a copy of your passport and USD 40 cash for a 30-day tourist visa. You can also prearrange a visa from your nearest Nepalese consulate.



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