



THE GREAT HIMALAYA TRAIL



Guide Book & Blog
Great Himalaya Trail Low Route



SNV Nepal

The Great Himalaya Trail

Low Route



SNV Nepal

Special Contribution:

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Publisher's Note

People, places, things and events are in constant flux in Nepal and the greater world, and therefore the publisher cannot guarantee the accuracy of information in this book. As with any activity in a foreign country, both seen and unseen risks abound. Although the publisher made every effort to provide valid material, safety is the reader's responsibility. We specially thank Linda Bezemer, Tourism Product Development Advisor of GHTDP for her tireless hardwork to compile this guidebook.

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SNV Nepal

SNV is a not-for-profit international development organisation. Founded in the Netherlands nearly 50 years ago, we have built a long-term, local presence in 38 of the poorest countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. We help people overcome poverty in developing countries worldwide by enabling access to the tools, knowledge and connections they need to increase their incomes and gain access to basic services.

SNV began working in Nepal in 1980, providing professional services in business development, agriculture and forestry practices, financial investment solutions, market research and policy advice.

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Forewords

Nepal offers unique tourism attractions. Almost a million tourists visit the country every year, making tourism one of Nepal's key sources of foreign currency earnings. However, tourism revenues remain poorly distributed, particularly among disadvantaged communities.

Since 2010, SNV has worked with the government, private sector, and host communities to create a new globally significant 'great trek' - a truly spectacular trail that spans the length of the country from Kanchenjunga in the East to Darchula and Humla in the West. Through the Great Himalaya Trail Development programme, SNV has been working on private sector development and the promotion of socioeconomic activities along the trail by supporting and strengthening private initiatives that generate income, deliver better services and improve access to drinking water and renewable energies. By attracting foreign and domestic visitors to less-visited areas, the GHT is helping transform geographical remoteness and rugged landscape into real economic assets with the potential to benefit more than 1.8 million Nepalese who live in the mountains.

Through the GHT Development Programme, the Ministry of Culture, Tourism & Civil Aviation (MoCTCA) – with the technical support of SNV and funding from UKAID – has worked closely with the tourism industry, civil society and host communities to ensure that the GHT is developed and managed in line with responsible tourism best practices, generating vital jobs and income for host communities and contributing to the conservation of the country's natural and cultural heritage.

This Practical Guidebook of Low Route of the Great Himalaya Trail (GHT) is the result of GHTDP's participation in the Climate Smart Trek that took place from January to April 2012. The trek was led by the Guinness Book of World Records holder Apa Sherpa, who climbed Mount Everest 21 times, and participated by other climbers, GHTDP representative and journalists. The objective of the trek was to raise awareness for the Great Himalaya Trail Low Route as a new eco-friendly trekking product in Nepal and to perform initial research on the effects of climate change in the lower parts of the Himalaya.

We would like to thank the Ministry of Culture, Tourism & Civil Aviation for leading the GHTDP, UKAID/DFID for funding support and to congratulate our partners from Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) and the Trekking Agencies Association of Nepal (TAAN) for continuously supporting SNV GHTHP team, while implementing the programme and of course in developing this very useful publication

SNV would specially like to thank Ms. Linda Bezemer – Tourism Product Development Advisor of GHTDP, who contributed her valued time and hard work to collect data and information about the routes and trekking destinations, and compiled and developed this Guidebook.

We would also like to express our sincere thanks to the GHTDP team in Kathmandu and the five districts (Taplejung, Solukhumbu, Gorkha, Dolpa and Humla) for making this guidebook possible.

This could not have been a complete work without valuable inputs from our key stakeholders at the district and national level including Nepal Trust, DESERT Dolpa, Nubri Cultural and Youth Promotion Committee – Gorkha, Young Star Club – Solukhumbu and Environment Conservation and Development Forum - Taplejung, the DDCs of all the five districts, NTB and the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation.

Rem Neefjes

Country Director

SNV Netherlands Development Organisation, Nepal/Bhutan

About the Guide Book

This guidebook is the result of the Climate Smart Trek that took place from January to April 2012. The trek was led by the Guinness Book of World Records holder Mr. Apa Sherpa, who climbed Mount Everest 21 times, and Dawa Steven Sherpa, Director of a trekking agency in Nepal and initiator of the Everest cleaning campaign “Cash for Trash”. The objective of the trek was to raise awareness for the Great Himalaya Trail (GHT) Low Route as a new eco-friendly trekking product in Nepal and to perform initial research on the effects of climate change in the lower parts of the Himalaya. The trek was part of the Great Himalaya Trail Development Programme, of which you will find more information in this guidebook.

As Tourism Product Development Advisor of the GHTDP team, I joined the Climate Smart Trek to develop trekking itineraries for the Low Route, gather GPS data and as much information as possible about the available tourism goods and services along the route. Besides, there is a blog about my experiences, so readers can get a feeling of what it is like to be trekking along the Low Route of the Great Himalaya Trail. The result is this guidebook. Besides, the waypoints of the route and detail itineraries can be downloaded from the GHT website, www.thegreathimalayatrail.org.

I gathered a lot of information, but I have to mention that due to the fact that we covered quite big distances per day, I was not always in the position to visit each and every guesthouse I encountered along the way, and note down their facilities and/or contact numbers. Therefore, in some places, the guidebook provides more information about the available accommodation than in other places. Another point worth mentioning is that there is not just one Low Route of the GHT. The route we followed is just one of the many possibilities. Besides, you can choose to combine the Low Route with the High Route of the GHT. Finally, I have done my best to give good directions regarding the trail we followed. However, changes occur continuously: trails change into dirt roads, there may be landslides covering existing trails which force you to take another route, or new trails may have been built. Your updates are welcome and can be sent to the publisher and/or info@thegreathimalayatrail.org and/or info@snvworld.org

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to the Great Himalaya Trail Development Programme (GHTDP) for provid-

ing me an opportunity to join the Climate Smart Trek, various field trips to the GHTDP working districts and providing all necessary logistics. I am grateful to all my colleagues in the GHT Development Programme team: Tej Raj Dahal, Bhavna Adhikari, Shanker Raj Pathak, Bachchu Narayan Shrestha, Gyaneshwar Mahato, Paul Stevens, Mim Hamal, Stephanie Grosser, Bhawana Subedi and Sheetashma Thapa for their continued encouragement and support to complete this important task.

A big thank you to my editor, Tiku Gauchan, whose level of accuracy I am very much impressed with, and the skillful and helpful people of Himalayan Maphouse, particularly Pawan Shakya, Santosh Maharjan and Era Shrestha.

Thanks as well to my expedition team members, Apa Sherpa, Dawa Steven Sherpa, Samir Jung Thapa, whose beautiful pictures you can admire in this guidebook, Saurav Dhakal, Paribesh Pradhan and my roomy for the biggest part of the trek, Elizabeth Fox. Of course, my thanks to the trekking crew goes beyond anything else. Without their help none of us would have been able to make it. Last but not least, I want to thank all the hospitable people of Nepal who lent us a place to stay. In some places we really had to knock on somebody's door and ask if we, quite a big group of people, could please stay for the night. And nobody refused us!

I hope you will enjoy reading the blog and that all the itineraries and practical information will be useful for your trek. Most of all, I hope that this guidebook will encourage potential trekkers to embark on this beautiful journey, and in this way help lots of people in remote areas to earn some extra income.

Linda Bezemer
SNV/GHTDP Advisor
December 2013, Kathmandu

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The Great Himalaya Trail

The Great Himalaya Trail (GHT) is one of the longest and highest walking-trails in the world. Winding beneath the world's highest peaks and visiting some of the most remote communities on earth, it passes through lush green valleys, arid high plateaus and incredible landscapes.

The trail covers the full distance of the Himalayan Range in Nepal, from the district of Taplejung in the east to Humla and Darchula in the west and ultimately continues through Tibet, India and Myanmar to the east of Nepal and Tibet, India and Pakistan to the west.

In Nepal, trekkers can choose between two routes. The GHT High Route, winding through high mountain ranges with an average altitude of 3,000 to 5,000 m, provides breath-taking views of the country's towering peaks. The GHT Low Route, also referred to as the cultural route, goes mostly through the mid-hills between 1,500 and 2,500 m. It offers great views of the Himalaya as well and gives tourists the chance to visit small communities and villages and learn about the culture and traditions of Nepal's various ethnic groups.

Both the High Route and Low Route are divided into several connecting treks, which take two to three weeks each on average to complete. The treks can be done in a series or completely separate from each other. Besides, each GHT section features a number of side-treks of varying duration and difficulty. Some treks require camping equipment and others can be done teahouse style. With numerous trekking options and new tourism attractions, each GHT section forms a distinct trekking and adventure destination in itself.

High Route

Trekking along the GHT High Route makes for an unforgettable adventure and the trip of a lifetime.

The trail stretches over a distance of about 1,700 km and passes through spectacular high- altitude mountain landscapes, going through some of the most remote villages on earth, where life remains as it was centuries back.

Trekking along the GHT High Route requires that one crosses high passes with altitudes up to 6,146 m, and the whole trek takes about five months on average. Proper trekking gear and mountaineering equipment are needed to undertake this trek, and anyone attempting this trek should be physically fit and have trekking, and ideally, some mountaineering experience. For safety, a local mountain guide who knows the terrain is definitely recommended, especially in high altitudes. Due to the remoteness of the trek, camping is required for most parts of the adventure, and it is necessary that you (or your porter) carry a tent, food and cooking equipment. But what could be better than pitching your tent in a scenic area surrounded by the mighty snow-capped Himalaya and sleeping under the star-lit sky?

The High Route in Nepal starts north of the Kanchenjunga Base Camp and ends in Hilda, at the Nepal-Tibet border in the western district of Humla.

Low Route

The GHT Low Route—also called the cultural route— has a distance of about 1550 km and winds through the country's mid-hills, with an average altitude of 2,000m. However, there are many passes to cross, with the highest being the Jang La Pass, at 4,519 m, between Dhorpatan and Dolpa in west Nepal.

Trekking along the GHT Low Route means walking through beautiful lush forests, pastures, green rice-terraces and fertile agricultural land—the region where Nepal’s rich culture and civilisation can be experienced in living colour. You will come across local settlements of many different cultural groups, and you will have the chance to see what authentic Nepali village life is all about.

For most parts of the trek, you will be able to stay in small guesthouses or homestays, but make sure to still take your tent for some of the more remote sections of the route. With lots of local restaurants around, you will find a place to eat almost everywhere, so you don’t necessarily need to carry large amounts of food. Shorter than the High Route, the GHT Low Route stretches over a distance of 1,500 km, and the whole trek will take around 100 days.

This guidebook describes the Low Route, broken up into 11 packages. The day-by-day descriptions are quite detailed and written with the aim to help you find your way along the entire trail. However, it is recommended that you go with a guide, as this will make your travel a lot smoother and safer.

In the second half of the book, you will find the travel experiences of the author, who hiked the entire trail in 2012-2013.

For more information about the Great Himalaya Trail, please go to www.thegreathimalayatrail.org.

The GHT Development Programme

Tourism and development in Nepal

Tourism is a vitally important economic sector for Nepal. Over eight hundred thousand tourists visit Nepal every year, and the total contribution of Travel & Tourism to the GDP was Rs147.2 billion (US\$1.43 billion / 9.4 percent of the GDP) in 2012, providing 553,500 jobs (according to the World Travel & Tourism Council).

Requiring relatively low levels of capital investment, tourism can also yield high levels of employment and income for the poor, particularly in rural areas where biodiversity and indigenous cultures have not yet been significantly eroded. If sensitively planned and managed, tourism can thus transform geographical remoteness and rugged landscapes—normally obstacles to development in Nepal’s remotest districts—into economic assets.

At present, however, tourism flows—and with them the benefits to local people that are derived from tourism—are concentrated in a “tourism triangle” comprising the Kathmandu Valley, Pokhara, Chitwan and Lumbini and the established trekking destinations of the Annapurna, Everest and Langtang regions.

Spreading tourism’s benefits more equally over the country and in particular to remote and impoverished mountain districts—and thereby providing new business and employment opportunities—has therefore been declared one of the priorities of the Government of Nepal.

The GHT Development Programme

The GHT has a huge potential in providing a significant boost to Nepal’s tourism industry and associated support sectors. It can help

channel tourism investments and pro-poor-tourism investments to less-visited and under-developed districts, thereby spreading tourism's benefits more widely and inclusively among impoverished mountain communities.

Through the GHT Development Programme, the Government of Nepal—with the support of SNV and funding from the UK Department for International Development, UKAID—has been working closely with the tourism industry, NGOs and host communities to ensure that the GHT is developed into an iconic and globally significant tourism product for Nepal. The programme is managed in line with responsible tourism best practices, generating vital jobs and income for local communities and contributing to the conservation of the country's natural and cultural heritage.

History of the Great Himalaya Trail

The beginning of cross-Himalaya trekking

Not many people have walked the length of the Himalaya in the last few decades (and written about it). However, there have been some expeditions with the goal of either traversing Nepal, or going further, trying to traverse the greater Himalayan Range.

In 1980, one inspirational Mr Shirahata is mentioned in the classic book *Trekking in Nepal*, by Toru Nakano, as having walked the length of the country from “east to west” in Nepal, but no further references or information about Mr Shirahata have been found.

In 1982, Arlene Blum and travel-and-adventure writer Hugh Swift became the first Westerners to complete a 4,500 km great Himalayan traverse across Bhutan, Nepal and India. Starting from the eastern border of Bhutan, Swift and Blum, climbed up and down the Himalayan Range—over 6,000m passes and down to river valleys at 600m—gaining and losing an average of 1,000m each day to reach Ladakh. This is documented in Blum's book *Breaking Trail*.

In 1983, two British brothers, Richard and Adrian Crane, ran the Himalaya, from Kanchenjunga to beyond Nanga Parbat, in less than 100 days. According to the Cranes' book *Running the Himalayas*, "...in 1980 an Indian army team set out from Arunchal Pradesh in India's north east corner and, after one and a half to two years of travel along a high mountain route, they finished their journey just north of Leh in the Ladakh region of the Karakorams.... it progressed in 'relay' fashion and possibly no one member stayed with the expedition for the full course". On their way, the Crane brothers met the British Women's Trans-Himalaya Expedition, who set off from Sikkim in January 1983 and used buses where necessary on their journey. The Cranes themselves were, however, "travelling super-light. One rucksack, one sleeping bag, one set of clothes, one pair of shoes, and shared between us: map, diaries, camera, penknife, water jar and two plastic teaspoons. No guides, no porters, no shelter, no food, no water. And we would be running. Looked at logically, the idea was preposterous".

Similarly, in 1994, the French duo of Paul-Eric Bonneau and Bruno Poirier made a crossing of the Himalaya in Nepal in 42 days (October 21 – December 1, 1994) and called their adventure "Trans-Nepal-Himalaya". They travelled 2,000 km (+ / -55,000 m) between Pashupati-nagar (on the eastern border) and Mahakali (on the western border) including Everest Base Camp.

Then nearly one decade later, in 2003, Rosie Swale-Pope ran the length of Nepal, on an early Great Himalaya Trail route, with a support team, doing an estimated 1,700km in 68 days to raise money for the charity Nepal Trust.

In 2007, Dr Gillian Holdsworth walked a similar route, a feat that is documented on the British Nepal Medical Trust website. Between 2008 and 2011, Jean-Claude Latombe walked a winding trail across Nepal in two sections of 56 and 53 days. His website has a wonderful collage of images of the people and landscapes he encountered.

However, it was early 2009 that truly gave birth to the Great Himalaya Trail in Nepal. Robin Boustead—supported by his wife, Judy Smith, and friends—walked the trail in stages, beginning in September 2008. It took them a lot of research to identify a true high-alpine route that was feasible for trekkers. Robin had then said: “If someone gathered enough information on that area, it would be a great trek for everyone”. Robin turned out to be that someone, for he documented his route meticulously using GPS. The route, distances, elevations, water sources, villages and campsites are all detailed in his *Great Himalaya Trail Guide Book* (published by Trailblazer Publications).

Since then more and more people have been walking the GHT. In 2010, another adventurer, Sean Burch, completed a route across Nepal, in 49 days, with the help of Nepal Trust. In 2011 Sunil Tamang from Nepal walked the GHT completely by himself. Also in 2011, Shawn Forry and Justin Lichter walked an unsupported trek of 57 days across Nepal. Between 2011 and 2013, the Dutch mountaineers Katja Staartjes and Henk Wesselius trekked the entire Upper Route of the GHT in four stages (see www.greathimalayatrail.nl). In 2012 the German lady Gerdapauler hiked the High Route in one go in 123 days, in order to raise awareness for autism in Nepal. She wrote a book about her experiences, called *Great Himalaya Trail; 1,700 kilometres across the roof of the world* (see also www.gerdapauler.info). Besides, Doc McKerr walked the entire route in one go in spring 2013, making a combination of the High Route and the Low Route (see www.east2westnepal.org).

In 2012, a team led by the Guinness World Record holder Apa Sherpa, who has climbed Mount Everest an incredible 21 times, hiked the GHT, following mostly the Low Route. Linda Bezemer was part of this team. She hiked only the Low Route, gathering the information for this guidebook.

And there must be many more hikers who hiked the GHT that we are not informed about, as the GHT is getting more popular by the day.

Tourism for development

In 2006, the Dutch development agency SNV and the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) in Kathmandu proposed to the Government of Nepal to develop an official Great Himalaya Trail, from near Kanchenjunga in the east to Api-Saipal in the far-west of Nepal, and to harness the trail for pro-poor development in Nepal's remote mountain regions. The idea was well-received by the tourism industry and development actors alike, and in 2010, after a successful pilot project in Humla and Dolpa, the Government of Nepal, with the support of SNV, created the Great Himalaya Trail Development Programme (GHTDP), a public-private initiative led by the Nepalese Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation.

Still, the Great Himalaya Trail is new and will evolve over the coming years through the preferences and suggestions of trekkers completing the route or sections of it. This is why it is so exciting to get on the trail now.

Practical Information

When to trek?

Nepal has four seasons: spring, from March to May, is warm and quite dusty with few rain showers. Summer, from June to August, is the monsoon season, and it normally rains a lot. Autumn, from September to November, is cooler with clear skies. In winter, from December to February, it is cold at night and it can be foggy in the early morning. The afternoons are usually clear and pleasant at lower altitudes, although in the mountains it gets quite cold.

October and November are the most popular trekking months in Nepal. During these months, the skies are mostly clear with great mountain views. In the mountains, the nights are usually cold, but the bright sun makes for pleasant day temperatures: above 20° C, falling to 5° C at night between 1,000 m and 3,500 m while at higher altitudes, temperatures range from about 15° C to 20° C during the daytime to -10° C at night. Mornings are usually clear, with clouds building up during the afternoon and disappearing at night to reveal spectacular starry skies.

December, January and February are very good for trekking below 3,500 m. Above 3,500 m, it gets very cold, and the trails are often covered with snow. It is usually about 10 degrees colder than in autumn. High passes (above 4,000 m) are generally closed from mid-November to mid-March. March and April are good months for trekking too. The sky is a bit more dusty, but you normally get good views of the mountains. With the rhododendron, Nepal's national flower, being in full bloom, walking through the forests is particularly nice. May is also rather good for trekking, although it can get quite hot at lower altitudes and there is a higher chance of rain.

During the monsoon, from June to August, trekking is not very popular due to the heavy and frequent rain showers. However, the vegetation becomes very green and lush, which makes for beautiful sceneries. In Upper Mustang, Humla and Dolpa, summer is an excellent time for trekking. These areas lie in the rain shadow of the main Himalayan Range and are therefore not affected by the monsoon. Getting there might be a challenge, though, due to unpredictable weather conditions in the lowlands, which generally affect flight schedules.

Trekking permits

To trek in Nepal you will need to obtain one or more permits, depending on the area that you plan to visit. Some permits are required in advance and some can be bought on the spot.

There are different types of permits and/or fees:

- ☐ Special Trekking Permit for restricted/controlled areas
- ☐ Trekkers' Information Management System/TIMS card
- ☐ Conservation-Area entrance fee
- ☐ National-Park entrance fee
- ☐ Trekking peak-climbing and mountaineering permit
- ☐ Filming and documentary-shooting permit

Special Trekking Permit for restricted areas/controlled zone

Special Trekking Permits are needed for most trekking areas besides the Annapurna and Everest regions and for Langtang and Helambu. Trekking permits are issued by the Department of Immigration and have to be obtained in advance of the trek. They can only be obtained through an authorised trekking or travel agency. Besides, in areas where trekking permits are needed, you are not allowed to go trekking without a guide. The trekking permits are issued for groups of two persons and more. Special trekking permit fees vary for different destinations.

An overview of the areas where you need a trekking permit can be found on the website of the Ministry Home Affairs, Department of Immigration of Nepal: www.immi.gov.np/appendix (on the webpage, scroll down to Appendix 12).

Trekkers' Information Management System/TIMS card

In the trekking areas where a trekking permit is not needed, you need to obtain a TIMS card. The TIMS cards have been introduced to create a proper record of trekkers in order to increase their safety and security: in case of natural calamities and other accidents, the information gathered by TIMS helps rescuers to carry out search-and-rescue operations for trekkers.

There are two types of TIMS cards: green cards for independent trek-

kers (US\$ 20) and blue cards for trekkers in an organised group (US\$ 10). The TIMS card has to be obtained in advance of the trek. Independent trekkers can obtain their TIMS card at the offices of Nepal Tourism Board in Kathmandu and Pokhara, TAAN Secretariat at Maligaon in Kathmandu and TAAN Pokhara Secretariat in Pokhara. You need to bring a copy of your passport and two passport-size photographs and fill in a TIMS application form.

You can find more information at www.timsnepal.com.

Conservation-area entrance fee

Many popular trekking destinations are part of a conservation area. For the areas being managed by the National Trust of Nature Conservation (www.ntnc.org.np), you need to obtain an entrance permit in advance of the trek at the office of the National Trust, which is inside the NTB office in Kathmandu and Pokhara. You need to bring a copy of your passport and one passport-size photograph. The entrance fee is Rs 2,000. The areas are:

- ☐ Annapurna Conservation Area (ACA)
- ☐ Manaslu Conservation Area (MCA)
- ☐ Gaurishankar Conservation Area (GCA)

For Gaurishankar Conservation Area, you can also buy the entrance permit at the destination (this may change in the future).

One conservation area is not under the management of NTNC—the Kanchenjunga Conservation Area (KCA)—which is being managed by the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC). You can obtain the entrance permit at the DNPWC or at the KCA office at Lelep, Taplejung.

National-park entrance fee

Many treks take you into national parks, for which you have to pay a national-park entrance fee. Nepal has the following national parks (NP): Sagarmatha NP, Langtang NP, Makalu Barun NP, Rara NP, Shey-Phoksundo NP, Chitwan NP, Khaptad NP, Bardiya NP and Shivapuri NP. Usually, the entrance fee for the national parks is Rs 3,000 for foreigners. However, there are different entrance fees for national parks in the Tarai region.

Besides the national parks, Nepal also has a few wildlife reserves: Shukla Phanta Wildlife Reserve, Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve and Parsi Wildlife Reserve, for which the entrance fee is Rs 1,000 per day. Finally, Nepal has one hunting reserve, Dhorpatan Hunting Reserve, for which the entrance fee for foreigners is Rs 3,000.

Trekking peak-climbing and mountaineering permit

All mountaineering permits need to be arranged through a travel or trekking agency. You are not allowed to apply individually for a peak-climbing permit. You will need to fill in a bio-data form and hand this over to your agency. You can do this online and add your signature and photograph to the form when you are in Kathmandu. The Nepal Mountaineering Association (NMA) is authorised to issue a trekking peak-climbing permit for 33 peaks up to 6,500 m (except Mera Peak). Climbing permits for other peaks can be obtained from the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation (MoCTCA).

Filming and documentary-shooting permit

A special permit is needed for filming and documentary shooting at trekking destinations inside national parks and conservation areas. You need to apply for this permit through a trekking agency. The permit is obtained from the Ministry of Information and Communication (MoIC), and the fee depends on the camera and technology you will use. For more information, please visit: <http://www.moic.gov.np/application-forms.php>.

Health and Safety

Trekking in the mountains is a rewarding and unforgettable experience. However, it is important to keep your safety in mind. Weather conditions can change at any moment, and in case of an accident, medical help is not always easily available. Have a look in the following section for some guidelines and tips on health and safety during your trip. Keeping these in mind will also help you enjoy your trip more.

Preparation

- Read about the destination you are going to and make sure you know the details of your trek.
- Make sure you have proper clothing for all weather conditions (warm clothes, rain gear and hat, scarf and gloves).
- Make sure you have the necessary equipment suitable for the specific terrain (especially pertains to gear needed for mountainous terrain).
- Be prepared for challenging weather conditions, especially if you go trekking in high- altitude areas (above 3,000 m). Wind chill—the combined effects of high winds and cold air—can dramatically lower the body temperature. This is dangerous and potentially fatal. It is therefore very important to be properly equipped when walking high up in the mountains in bad weather.
- If you go trekking in altitudes above 3,000 m, educate yourself about altitude sickness (more information in the following section).
- Make sure someone knows your trekking itinerary and when you are supposed to be back from your trek.
- Make sure you are properly insured and take your insurance details with you, including emergency numbers. Leave your insurance details with somebody at home as well.

- Take your mobile phone with you; if you go to very remote places, you may want to consider taking a satellite phone.
- Especially if you go without a guide, make sure you know the basics of first aid.
- Carry a whistle with you (if you get lost, it is easier to get attention with a whistle).

While trekking

- Never walk alone; go with a friend or a porter/guide.
- Always carry warm clothes and rain gear with you.
- Always carry a first-aid kit with you.
- Always carry enough water and snacks; make sure you know when you can restock/refill your water.
- Remain hydrated: drinking between two and four litres of water per day will help prevent altitude sickness and improve your body's recovery time.
- Don't rush! There are no prizes for coming first on the trail, and rushing will probably over-stress your body and may increase your chances of suffering from altitude sickness. Stop regularly to drink water and rest. Turn your rest stops into moments to enjoy the view, take pictures or chat with locals.
- Trekking poles reduce the pressure on your knees, and they can help you balance while going downhill. However, be aware that your pole tips could hurt fellow trekkers if you are swinging your poles back and forth!
- Always carry a flashlight (and spare batteries) with you.
- Personal hygiene is important in order not to get sick: always wash your hands after using the toilet and before eating (if no water and soap are available, use disinfecting gel).
- If possible, try to get information about the weather forecast.
- You will regularly encounter caravans of mules or yaks during

your treks in the Himalaya: stay on the mountainside while you wait for them to pass, and don't go too close to the ridge. The animals usually carry heavy and wide loads, and they might push you off the mountain if you don't watch out!

- In warm weather, the principal hazards are sunburn, windburn and dehydration. Sunhats, sun cream, and ample water can prevent serious sunburn or heatstroke.
- Make sure you have a map and compass and/or GPS and know how to use them (especially if you go without a porter/guide).
- Don't take unnecessary risks by taking overly long or difficult routes.
- As far as possible, register yourself in the guesthouse/homestay where you stay and/or tell where you are going next.

If going with a guide or porter

- Share your insurance details with your guide/porter/travel company.
- Listen to the advice of your guide/porter, who knows more about the specific conditions of the trek.

Altitude Sickness/Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS)

Altitude sickness, also called Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS), generally occurs above 2,500 m, but serious altitude illness is rare below 3,000 m. It ranges from a mild headache and weariness to a life-threatening disease, when fluid in the lungs (HAPE) or brain (HACE) is built up. AMS is caused by the body's having difficulty adapting to the lower oxygen level at higher altitudes. Usually, this is due to a too-quick ascent, and sometimes, personal sensitivity. As AMS can be fatal, it is important to know about the disease, its symptoms, and how to prevent and treat AMS.

Acute Altitude Sickness

Acute Altitude Sickness is the mildest and most common form of altitude sickness. Patients afflicted with it usually have a (mild) headache and/or less appetite and nausea. These symptoms are quite common above 3,000 m. When you notice these symptoms in yourself, there's nothing to be extremely worried about (yet), but it is important to tell your guide or trekking companion about your symptoms and keep close watch that they don't get worse.

Symptoms:

- ☐ Headache
- ☐ Fatigue
- ☐ Dizziness
- ☐ Insomnia
- ☐ Shortness of breath during exertion
- ☐ Nausea
- ☐ Decreased appetite
- ☐ Swelling of extremities
- ☐ Lack of sleep
- ☐ Social withdrawal

High-Altitude Pulmonary Edema (HAPE)

HAPE occurs when fluid builds up within the lungs, a condition that can make breathing extremely difficult. The onset of HAPE can be either gradual or sudden. HAPE typically occurs after a person has spent more than one day at high altitude. If left untreated, it can progress to respiratory collapse and ultimately lead to death.

Symptoms:

- ☐ Shortness of breath at rest
- ☐ Extreme fatigue
- ☐ Gurgling respirations

- ☐ Dry cough or wet cough with frothy sputum
- ☐ Possible fever
- ☐ Respiratory failure

High-Altitude Cerebral Edema (HACE)

Another severe form of altitude sickness is high-altitude cerebral edema (HACE), in which fluid builds up within the brain. As the brain swells with fluid, the person's mental state changes. HACE can lead to loss of coordination, coma, and, finally, death, if the symptoms are not recognised and the patient is not treated promptly.

Symptoms:

- ☐ Difficulty with balance and coordination
- ☐ Hallucinations, lethargy, confusion
- ☐ As the brain continues to swell, unconsciousness or coma will develop.

How to identify if someone is seriously suffering from AMS, HAPE or HACE:

- ☐ Ask the person to close his eyes and bring his finger to the tip of his nose.
- ☐ Ask the person to walk in a straight line.
- ☐ Ask the person to put on his pants (put his leg into one of the trouser legs).

If they are not able to do so, the situation is serious!

How to treat AMS

- ☐ In case of mild symptoms, stay at the same altitude. Ascend only when the symptoms have resolved completely.
- ☐ In case your symptoms are getting worse while resting at the same altitude, descend.
- ☐ In case of serious symptoms, **go to a lower altitude im-**

mediately! Helicopter rescue may be necessary.

- If the patient is not able to walk (due to serious symptoms) and can't be carried down, an inflatable high-pressure bag (Gamow Bag) can help. The bag restores the oxygen level and air pressure and is used as a treatment in acute situations. Some trekking groups carry a pressure bag; they are also available in some lodges, especially in the Khumbu/Everest area.
- Never let a patient descend unattended.
- If available, consult a doctor, even if symptoms are not yet very serious.

How to prevent AMS

The best way to prevent AMS is to ascend gradually. Above an altitude of 3,000 m, you should not ascend more than 300 m a day. If due to the itinerary this is not possible, a rest day to acclimatise is recommended. Drinking lots of water can help to prevent AMS. Per day, you should be drinking one litre of water for every 1,000 m of altitude. This means that at an altitude of 4,000 m, you should be drinking four litres of water a day (or tea, juice or other fluids, *except alcohol*).

More and more, people have been using Diamox (Acetazolamide) as a prophylactic to help the body acclimatise more quickly. You could start taking Diamox shortly before you start to ascend above 3,000 m and continue taking it until you descend again. Consult with your doctor if you are considering using Diamox. Persons with allergy to sulfa drugs, however, should not take the drug. Drink extra amounts of water, as Diamox dehydrates the body.

Travel responsibly

The Great Himalaya Trail is all about responsible travel, bringing you closer to the heart of the places that you visit and contributing to the sustainable development of Nepal's Himalayan regions.

Responsible travel means getting to know the local culture, finding hidden places, respecting local people and the environment and, where possible, supporting communities by using their services and buying the products that they offer, paying a fair price. It's also about minimising any negative effects of your visit to the local culture and the environment.

In other words: *Don't take anything but pictures. Don't leave anything but footprints.*

Code of Conduct

One of the best things trekkers can do to reduce their impact is to lead by example. By electing to stay in lodges that have solar-powered showers or use biogas- or kerosene-powered stoves instead of firewood, you are providing an example to other travelers and an incentive for other lodges to adopt the same practices.

Even small gestures can have big effects. By picking up rubbish that you find on trekking routes, you will provide an example to local people who might never have considered the environmental impact of dumping waste beside the trail. Until recently, there was no plastic waste in the mountains—the massive litter problems seen today are a direct consequence of demand from trekkers for water, soft drinks and snacks that come in plastic packets.

By following a few simple rules and Do's and Don'ts, you will ensure that your visit will leave nothing more than smiles on the locals' faces and that you return safe and sound and with only the best of memories.

Before going on a holiday

We advise you to take the following items on your trek:

- ☐ Enough warm clothes
- ☐ A refillable water bottle
- ☐ Biodegradable soap
- ☐ Iodine and flavouring to ensure safe drinking water (vitamin-C tablets neutralise the iodine taste).

During the trek

Rubbish

- ☐ Carry away all your rubbish or dispose of your trash responsibly. Don't overlook easily forgotten items, such as foils, cigarette butts and plastic wrappers. Take into account how long items take to degrade. For example, aluminum cans take 80 to 100 years and plastic bottles take up to 450 years. Besides, while degrading harmful chemicals end up in the ground water.
- ☐ Collect rubbish where you see it on walking trails. If you cannot carry it out of the area, take the litter to a local rubbish-collection depot or incineration centre.
- ☐ When buying things from shops, do not accept plastic bags.
- ☐ Never bury your rubbish. Digging disturbs soil and ground cover and encourages erosion, and buried rubbish may be dug up by animals, who may be injured or poisoned by it.
- ☐ Minimise waste by taking minimal packaging and no more food than you will need. Take along reusable containers or stuff sacks.
- ☐ Take back your used batteries home to your country.
- ☐ Respect local regulations.

Eating and drinking

- Eat in local restaurants and try the local cuisine.
- Don't buy bottled mineral water on a trek.
- If water from streams, wells, cisterns and taps is not safe to drink, purify your water with iodine or a portable water filter and carry it in a reusable bottle.
- The easiest and cheapest way to ensure safe drinking water is to treat it with iodine. If you don't like the taste of iodine, bring flavoured vitamin-C tablets to neutralise the iodine taste (note that you need to let the iodine do its work before you add the vitamin or flavouring).
- Seek out lodges that use kerosene, biogas or other alternative fuels for cooking, instead of firewood.
- Try to order the same food at the same time so that lodges can do all the cooking at once in order to reduce the amount of fuel.
- Use locally produced goods and pay a fair price.
- Never throw rubbish into the fire used for cooking—this is strictly taboo.
- When camping, cook on a lightweight kerosene, alcohol or Shellite (white gas) powered stove and carry your own fuel.
- Avoid stoves powered by disposable butane gas canisters unless you carry all the spent canisters out with you when you leave.

Campfires and showers

- Do not use firewood for heating or cooking in natural reserves.
- The use of open fires should be discouraged even where it is not directly prohibited. Firewood gathering is the main cause of deforestation in many areas and wind-blown embers are a major cause of forest fires.
- At high altitude, ensure that all members of your group are outfitted with enough clothing so that fires are not a necessity for warmth.

Human-waste disposal

- Where there is a toilet, please use it. Where there is none, bury your waste. Dig a small hole 15cm deep and at least 100m from any watercourse. Cover the waste with soil and a rock. In snow, dig down to the soil. Ensure that these guidelines are also applied to portable toilet tents.
- Please encourage your porters to use toilet facilities as well.
- Toilet paper should be buried, or preferably burned, not left on the surface. If you can get used to the local “hand and water” technique, even better.
- If you use a toilet in a lodge, put your used toilet paper in the container provided.

Washing

- If possible, avoid lodges and teashops that use wood for fuel, and only take hot showers with solar-heated water.
- Don't use detergents or toothpaste in or near watercourses, even if they are biodegradable.
- For personal washing, use biodegradable soap and a water container (or a lightweight, portable basin) at least 50m away from the watercourse.
- Disperse the wastewater widely to allow the soil to filter it fully.
- Wash cooking utensils 50m away from watercourses using a scourer, sand or snow instead of detergent.
- Showing your private parts when bathing is offensive. Use a sarong, modesty screen or shower tent. When visiting a hot spring, try to behave modestly; for women it is recommended that you wear a t-shirt.

Erosion

- Stick to existing trails—walking off the track can damage plant life and expose new areas of ground to erosion.

- Do not trample or collect the flora.

Wildlife conservation

- Don't buy items made from endangered species.
- Do not feed the wildlife as this can transmit diseases and lead to animals becoming dependent on handouts, which leads to unbalanced populations.
- Do not kill rodents or other pests in huts or camps. In wild places, they are likely to be protected native animals.
- Discourage the presence of wildlife on tourist trails by not leaving food scraps behind. Place gear out of reach and tie packs to rafters or trees.
- Do not engage in or encourage hunting.

Cultural

- In Nepal, people greet each other with the traditional “Namaste”—a gesture made by folding their hands in prayer-like position in front of their chest. Sometimes they will shake hands, especially if they are involved in the tourism sector, but in general, you should avoid touching people, especially of the opposite gender.
- Dress moderately. For women, it is recommended that you cover your knees and shoulders, as it is considered offensive to expose your knees, shoulders and chest at all times and especially in any place of worship. For women, this means that wearing detachable leg pants is not very congruous with the local customs in the Himalaya, and cropped tops of any type should be avoided. Men can wear long shorts but should avoid exposing their chests.
- If you are a couple, don't show affection between yourselves in public.
- Always ask permission before taking photographs, and respect the answer you get. Many people prefer not to be photographed for personal, cultural or superstitious reasons.
- Show respect for local traditions and behave appropriately while at religious sites.

- When you enter a Buddhist monastery, please take off your shoes.
- With Hindu temples, there are different rules per temple. You are not allowed to visit some temples; some you can, but only if you take off your shoes, etc. Please respect the rules/signs.
- Never point the soles of your feet towards a person or a holy statue. This is considered highly insulting.
- We encourage you to buy souvenirs, paying a fair price, as this is good for the local economy and encourages local craftsmanship. However, please don't buy historic or religious artefacts that belong to the cultural heritage of the country.
- Don't buy any souvenirs made from threatened flora and/or fauna. For example, don't buy souvenirs that contain ivory.
- Encourage the locals to be proud of their culture.
- Don't pass out pens, sweets or other items to village children, as it encourages them to beg. Handing out candy (referred to as sweets, *mithai* or bonbons) to children who never clean their teeth is thoughtless and irresponsible. Giving money to young children in return for picked flowers is not recommended and is illegal in all national parks. If your conscience struggles with the wealth divide, then provide skills through training and education, or donate to one of the major charities based in the major cities. But do not just give away items along the trail and so perpetuate a habit that ultimately only reduces self-esteem and can cause long-term problems. If you aren't convinced about the negative effects of pandering to cute children, then trek away from the main trails and experience the genuine, openhearted joy that children there show tourists without the expectation of a "reward".
- If you really want to give money, make a donation to a foundation or to somebody who is in a position to do something useful for the community.
- Sometimes, giving gifts or making a donation is appropriate; this may be to a monastery or a shrine, at a wedding, or at a cultural programme. Whenever you are faced with needing to give a gift, it is recommended that you seek the advice of a Nepali to work out what is appropriate. The method of or the formality associated with

giving a gift is often as important as the gift itself, so make sure you are aware of any protocols.

- If you are not a doctor, do not give medicines to local people.
- Do not use your left hand to eat or pass objects. Traditionally, all Himalayan people eat only with the right hand, the left being considered unclean. Therefore give foodstuff to another person with your right hand and use your left as little as possible.
- When offering payment and/or gifts, it is respectful to use both hands; or use your right hand while you touch your right elbow with your left hand.
- Avoid touching the rim of a bottle with your mouth. Let the liquid arc into your mouth.
- Try to learn as much Nepali as possible. Learn some basic phrases and use them often.
- Do not argue in public, drink excessively or fight. Demonstrations of anger are considered an embarrassing loss of face on your behalf.
- The trail can be busy, especially at steep or difficult sections. A common courtesy is to give way to people walking uphill. Always give way to people who are using the trail in the course of their work, like porters, who are already struggling enough with their heavy loads.

Entering private property

- When camping in inhabited areas, always seek permission to camp from the landowners.
- Many trails pass through the gardens and fields of village houses. Show the same respect for private property that you would show at home.
- It is acceptable to cross private property without permission where public land is otherwise inaccessible, so long as safety and conservation regulations are observed.
- When you enter somebody's house, please take off your shoes.

- The cooking-fire area is often sacred, so always check if you can dispose of burnable rubbish before consigning it to the flames.

At the end of the trip

- If you are happy with the tour, it is appropriate to give a tip to the crew. The tourleader can advise you on how much to tip and the procedure for tipping.

GHT Low Route Day-by-Day itineraries

Note: Walking times provided are estimated walking times excluding breaks and will differ from person to person.

GHT Low Route Full Traverse

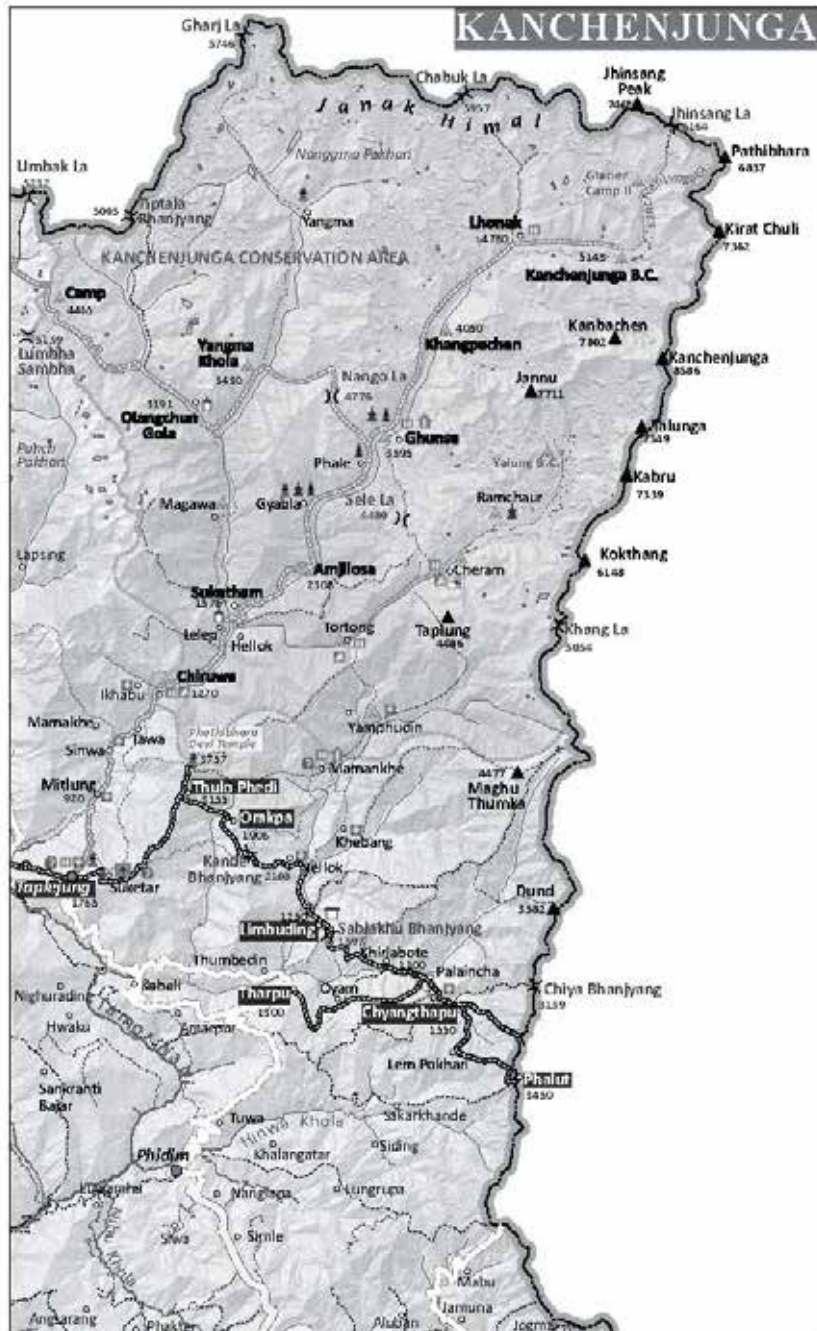
Day	Itinerary	Section
Day 1	Flight Kathmandu - Bhadrapur; drive to Tharpu; 7 hours	Kanchenjunga Section
Day 2	Tharpu (1,300 m) - Chyangthapu (1,550 m); 30 km	
Day 3	Chyangthapu (1,550 m) - Phalut/Simhalila Bhanjyang (3,450 m); 7 ½-8 hours	
Day 4	Phalut (3,450 m) - Chyangthapu (1,550 m); 6 ½ hours	
Day 5	Chyangthapu (1,550 m) - Limbuding (1250 m); 6 ½ hours	
Day 6	Limbuding (1,250 m) – Orakpa (Warappa) (1,906 m); 8 hours	
Day 7	Orakpa (1,906 m) - Thulo Phedi (3,155 m); 5 ½ hours	
Day 8	Thulo Phedi (3,155 m) - Pathibhara temple (3,757 m); return (2 ½ hours) and Thulo Phedi (3,155 m) - Taplejung (1,800 m); 5 hours	
Day 9	Taplejung (1,800 m) – Dobhan (717 m) 2 ½ hours	
Day 10	Dobhan (658 m)-Gorcha (2,013m); 4 ½ hours	Makalu Barun Section
Day 11	Gorcha (2,013 m)-Deurali Bhanjyang (2,800 m); 4 hours	
Day 12	Deurali Bhanjyang (2,800 m)-Nundhaki (1,540 m); 6 hours	
Day 13	Nundhaki (1,540 m)-Bhanjyang Pucha (824 m); 5 hours	

Day 14	Bhanjyang Pucha (824 m)-Khadbari (1,041 m); 6 hours	
Day 15	Khadbari (1,041 m)- Majuwadanda (800 m); 5 hours	
Day 16	Majuwadanda (800 m)-Salpa Phedi (1,530 m); 8 hours	Everest & Rolwaling Section (Everest)
Day 17	Salpa Phedi (1,530 m)-Sanam (2,834 m), crossing the Salpa Pass (3,340 m); 8 hours	
Day 18	Sanam (2,834 m)-Khiraule (2,535 m); 8 hours	
Day 19	Khiraule (2,535 m)-Sibuche (2,800 m), crossing the Surke La/Charakot Pass (3,070 m); 7 hours	
Day 20	Sibuche (2,800 m)-Paiya (2,767 m), crossing the Narkung La/Chaduk La (3,161 m) and Kari La (3,059 m); 7 hours	
Day 21	Paiya (2,767 m)-Lukla (2,840 m); 4 hours	
Day 22	Lukla (2,840 m)-Kharikhola (2,007 m); 8 hours	
Day 23	Kharikhola (2,007 m)- Ringmu (2,739 m), crossing the Taksindu La (3,062 m); 8 hours	
Day 24	Ringmu (2,739 m)-Sete (2,538 m), crossing the Lamjura La (3,532 m); 9 ½ hours	
Day 25	Sete (2,538 m)-Deurali (2,700 m); 7 hours	Everest & Rolwaling Section (Rolwaling)
Day 26	Deurali (2,700 m)-Jiri (1,930 m); 6 hours	
Day 27	Jiri (1,930 m)-Putchar Kharka (2,341 m), crossing the pass at 2,736 m; 7 hours	
Day 28	Putchar Kharka (2,341 m)-Laduk (1,790 m); 5 ½ hours	
Day 29	Laduk (1,790 m)-Bigu Gompa (2,500 m); 8 hours	
Day 30	Bigu Gompa (2,505 m)-Durumthali (1,970 m), crossing the Tinsang La (3,310 m); 9 hours	
Day 31	Durumthali (1,970 m)-Barabise (870 m); 3 hours	Langtang & Helambu Section
Day 32	Barabise (870 m)-Jalbire (830 m); 8 hours	
Day 33	Jalbire (830 m)-Khobre (2,435 m); 8 hours	
Day 34	Khobre (2,435 m)-Pokhare Bhanjyang (1,575 m); 9 hours	
Day 35	Pokhare Bhanjyang (1,574 m)-Gyalthung (985 m); 2 hours	

Day 36	Gyalthung (985 m)-Samundratar (915 m), crossing the Gul Bhanjyang (2,111 m); 8 hrs	
Day 37	Samundratar (915 m)-Betrawati (605 m); 9 hours	
Day 38	Betrawati (605 m)-Bungtang (1,294 m); 4 hours	
Day 39	Bungtang (1,294 m)-Chautara (1,591 m); 5 ½ hours	Manaslu and Ganesh Himal
Day 40	Chautara (1,591 m)-Arugath (490 m); 8 ½ hours	
Day 41	Arugath (490 m)-Kalikatang/Gorkha Palace (1,313 m); 7 hours	
Day 42	Kalikatang/Gorkha Palace (1,313 m)-Gorkha (1,075 m); 1-hour free day in Gorkha	
Day 43	Gorkha (1,075 m)-Appipal (1,140 m); 7 hours	
Day 44	Appipal (1,140 m)-Paudi (520 m); 6 hours	
Day 45	Paudi (520 m)-Besisahar (810 m); 7 hours	
Day 46	Besisahar (810 m)-Ghalegaun (2,078 m); 6 hours	Annapurna Section
Day 47	Ghalegaun (2,078 m)-Pasgaun (1,650 m); 6 hours	
Day 48	Pasgaun (1,650 m)-Yangjakot (1,450 m); 9 hours	
Day 49	Yangjakot (1,450 m)-Sikles (1,945 m); 6 hours	
Day 50	Sikles (1,945 m)-Ghalekharka (1,674 m); 6 hours	
Day 51	Ghalekharka (1,674 m)-Lwang (1,440 m); 5 hours	
Day 52	Lwang (1,440 m)-Ghandruk (2,040 m); 7 hours	
Day 53	Ghandruk (2,040 m)-Ghorepani (2,885 m); 6 ½ hours	
Day 54	Ghorepani (2,885 m)-Poonhill (3,193 m)-Tikot (2,278 m); 1 ½ + 3 hours	
Day 55	Tikot (2,278 m)-Beni (850 m); 4 hours	
Day 56	Beni (850 m)-Darbang (1,100 m); 6 ½ hours	
Day 57	Darbang (1,105 m)-Lamsung (2,160 m); 8 hours	
Day 58	Lamsung (2,160 m)- Chhentung(2,950 m), crossing the Jalja La (3,386 m); 8 hours	
Day 59	Chhentung(2950 m)-Thakur (3,309), crossing 2 passes (3,691 m and 4,160 m); 9 ½ hours	
Day 60	Thakur (3,309 m)-Guibang (2,768 m); 7 hours	
Day 61	Guibang (2,768 m)-Campsite Sen Khola (3,979 m); 7 hours	
Day 62	Campsite Sen Khola (3,996 m)-Campsite Purpang, Saure Khola (4,065 m); 5 hours	

Day 63	Campsite Purpang, Saure Khola (4,065 m)-Dunai (2,096 m), crossing the Jang La (4,519 m) 10 hours	Dolpa Section
Day 64	Dunai (2,096 m)-Chhepka (2,838 m); 6 hours	
Day 65	Chhepka (2,838 m)-Chunuwar/Amchi Hospital (3,130 m); 6 hours	
Day 66	Chunuwar/Amchi Hospital (3,130 m)-Ringmo/Phoksundo Lake (3,608 m); 3 hours	
Day 67	Free morning; Ringmo/Phoksundo Lake (3,608 m)-Chunuwar (3,130 m); 2 hours	
Day 68	Chunuwar (3,130 m)-Kageni (2,228 m); 6-7 hours	
Day 69	Kageni (2,228 m)-Liku (2,405 m); 6 hours	
Day 70	Liku (2,405 m)-Kaigaon (2,642 m), crossing the Balangra Lagna pass (3,822 m); 8 ½ hours	Rara & Jumla Section
Day 71	Kaigaon (2,642 m)-Chotra (3,103 m), crossing the Maure Lagna pass (3,900 m); 9 hours	
Day 72	Chotra (3,103 m)-Jumla (2,350 m); 9 hours	
Day 73	Jumla (2,350 m)-Nauri Ghat (2,700 m), crossing the Danphe Lekh (3,900 m); 7 hours	
Day 74	Nauri Ghat (2,700 m)-Jhyarigaon (2,672 m), crossing the Ghurchi Lagna Pass (3,447 m); 8 ½ hours	
Day 75	Jhyarigaon (2,672 m)-Rara Lake (2,986 m); 2 ½ hrs	
Day 76	Rara Lake (2,986 m)-Ratapani (1,431 m); 9 hours	Far West Section
Day 77	Ratapani (1,431 m)-Kolti (1,390 m); 7 hours	
Day 78	Kolti (1,390 m)-Martadi (1,591 m); 10 hours	
Day 79	Martadi (1,591 m)-Koth (1,962 m); 6 hours	
Day 80	Koth (1,962 m)-Tuti (2,020 m), crossing the Bateli Bhanjyang Pass (3,232 m); 8 ½ hours	
Day 81	Tuti (2,020 m)-Chainpur (1,290 m); 4 hours	
Day 82	Chainpur (1,290 m)-Jhota (979 m); 6 ½ hours	
Day 83	Jhota (979 m)-Jhapa (1,185 m); 9 hours	
Day 84	Jhapa (1,185 m)-Sela (988 m), crossing the pass at Ganayi Khan (2,126 m); 8 ½ hours	
Day 85	Sela (988 m)- Gogani (1,357 m), crossing Siptikhan Danda (2,094 m); 8 hours	
Day 86	Gogani (1,357 m)-Darchula (890), via Dhalek (2,139 m); 5 ½ hours	
Day 87	Darchula - Dhangadi (by bus); 20 hours	
Day 88	Flight: Dhangadi-Kathmandu	

KANCHENJUNGA



Kanchenjunga Section

Introduction

The Low Route of the GHT starts spectacular with an amazing view of the Kanchenjunga and Makalu Barun range from Phalut at the border with Sikkim/India. Besides, this section offers you an encounter with traditional Nepali village life. You pass charming villages, surrounded by rice terraces on which people are ploughing the land with oxen or planting rice.

Days: 10

Difficulty: Moderate

Maximum elevation: 3,582 m

Type: Teahouse/camping (taking a tent is recommended)

Permits needed: TIMS and a pass to stay in Phalut (India); to be obtained from the police station in Chyangthapu

Itinerary

Day 1: Flight Kathmandu-Bhadrapur; drive to Tharpu; 7 hours

Day 2: Tharpu (1,300 m)-Chyangthapu (1,550 m); 30 km

Day 3: Chyangthapu (1,550 m)-Phalut/Simhalila Bhanjyang (3,450 m); 7 ½-8 hours

Day 4: Phalut (3,450 m)-Chyangthapu (1,550 m); 6 ½ hours

Day 5: Chyangthapu (1,550 m)-Limbuding (1,250 m); 6 ½ hours

Day 6: Limbuding (1,250 m)-Orakpa (Warappa) (1,906 m); 8 hours

Day 7: Orakpa (1,906 m)-Thulo Phedi (3,155 m); 5 ½ hours

Day 8: Thulo Phedi (3,155 m)-Pathibhara temple (3,757 m); return (2 ½ hours) and Thulo Phedi (3,155 m)-Taplejung (1,800 m); 5 hours

Day 9: Drive: Taplejung (1,800 m)-Ilam (1,200 m); 6 hours

Day 10: Drive: Ilam (1,200 m)-Bhadrapur (100 m); flight to Kathmandu

Day 1: Flight Kathmandu-Bhadrapur; drive to Tharpu; 7 hours

It is a full day of travelling to get to the start of the trip, starting with a flight to Bhadrapur in the southeast of Nepal. You will drive for about 50 minutes in the flat lowlands before entering the hilly region, which is the district of Ilam, famous for its tea. You will drive through beautiful green hills full of tea and rice terraces.

It takes about two-and-a-half to three hours to reach Ilam, where you can choose to stop for the night. Two-and-a-half hours later, you will pass Phidim, which has a couple of hotels. .

After Philim, it takes another one-and-a-half hours to get to Tharpu, of which the last half hour goes over a dirt road. Tharpu is a small village with eight basic places to stay, all with shared facilities.

Day 2: Tharpu (1,300 m)-Chyangthapu (1,550 m); 30 km

On foot, it is difficult to reach Chyangthapu in one day. There is a dirt road all the way up to Chyangthapu, so you can take a public jeep from Tharpu if you would like to do so.

According to the people we spoke to in Tharpu, the only way to get to Chyangthapu is to follow the dirt road, which means making a long detour. However some people along the way claimed there was indeed a direct trail as well.

Following the dirt road, it is almost 15 km/three-and-a-half hours of walking to Oyam (1,310 m), passing the villages of Salapkhu (1,375 m) and Musepa (1,245 m)—as the crow flies it is only 4.2 km! In Oyam, there are a few basic restaurants. It is another 15 km to Chyangthapu (1,550 m), all along the dirt road, passing villages like Namreek (1,200 m), Gadhi (1,263 m) and Palaincha (1,362 m). Chyangthapu is a small village that serves as a junction point for the area. It has three basic hotels.

Day 3: Chyangthapu (1,550 m)-Phalut/Simhalila Bhanjyang (3,450 m); 7½-8 hours

This is a beautiful but heavy day. You will climb 2,574 m altogether, and when you get above 3,000 m you really notice the lack of oxygen in the air. Although on most maps Phalut is marked as if it were in Nepal, in reality it is in India, just at the other side of the border. Non-Nepali tourists need to obtain a special permit/pass from the police station in Chyangthapu if they want to stay overnight in Phalut (or have a visa for India).

It is recommended that you take a guide from Chyangthapu to show you the way, as there are hardly any villages along the route and it is thus difficult to find people to ask for directions. Take plenty of water,

as it takes about six hours before you find a place where you can refill your water.

You will leave Chyangthapu going eastwards, going down. After about five to ten minutes, you will arrive at a Y-junction (GPS Y1; 1,547 m); the stairs going up brings you to the border at Chiya Bhanjyang; the right trail going flat goes to Lempokhari and further to Phalut/Simhalia Bhanjyang. Just after the junction, you will cross a suspension bridge (1,541 m) over the Mewa Khola. You will walk on a beautiful small trail through terraced fields, gradually going up. The fields lead into a forest with cardamom plants, a very popular crop in east Nepal. The trees have actually been planted here to provide shade for the cardamom plants. You will cross a small bamboo bridge (1,642 m) over a wild-flowing river (the Moruwa Khola) and continue your climb in the forest, following the Moruwa Khola upstream.

After about half an hour, you will get to another Y-junction (GPS Y2; 1,771 m); go straight here. After 10 minutes, you will reach the tiny settlement of Moruwa Khola Ghari (1,806 m). From here it goes steeply up south/south-eastwards for another 10 minutes to the houses of Moruwa Khola Ghari chowk (2,181 m).

The trail keeps on climbing through a beautiful forest. After about one-and-a-half hours (about four hours/7.73 km after leaving Chyangthapu), you will reach an open field with a shepherd's hut, a place called Lem Pokhari or Suketab (2,769 m). At the time of our visit there was a big house being built (by TNA), which looked like it would become a kind of a guesthouse. In clear weather, you have a beautiful view of Mount Januu/Kumbhakarna (7,711 m).

Continue the trail going eastwards. The trail goes down a bit, through rhododendron forests and fields, and passes a small temple (2,743 m). You walk *Nepali flat*, and after about an hour, you will reach a small lake with a shrine dedicated to Shiva, which you could call "the real" Lem Pokhari (2,758 m), as 'pokhari' means lake in Nepali.

The trail climbs in the south-eastern direction and passes a kind of cave house (2,810 m). About five minutes later, you will pass a small waterfall, which is the first water-refill possibility of the day (2,820 m). The trail climbs steeply now. After about half an hour, you will climb to an elevation above the trees, at around 3,000 m. You will be walking mostly in a rocky, high-mountain landscape, passing some small forests once in a while. After another half an hour, you will pass a small

waterfall. After about 45 minutes, you will pass a shepherd's house; this place is called Menmeng (3,286 m). The trail keeps on climbing and after about half an hour, you will reach the border with India (3,408 m). From here, it is one km up to Phalut (3,467 m).

Phalut is on a trekking route in India (Sikkim) and lies in the Simhalila National Park. It has one big lodge and a small guesthouse at the forestry office.

Day 4: Phalut (3,450 m)-Chyangthapu (1,550 m); 6 ½ hours

Take plenty of water with you again, as the first water-refill possibility is only after almost six hours.

If you climb up a bit from Phalut north/north-westwards, you will arrive in about 15 minutes at a mani wall (3,582 m), which is a stunning viewpoint. The Himalayan mountains are spectacularly close, and you have 360 degree views deep into Sikkim, Darjeeling, Nepal, and even into Bhutan. It seems as if you can almost touch Mount Kanchenjunga, which at 8,586 m is the third-highest mountain in the world. Besides, you can see, among others, Mt Januu (7,711 m) and the Makalu Barun Range.

From the viewpoint, you will continue in northwards. After about half an hour, you will reach a Y-junction (GPS Y3; 3,403 m); this place is also called Phalut Thorepule. If you go straight (northeast) here, you will reach Chiya Bhanjyang, on the border. Left (northwest) brings you back to Chyangthapu (on this itinerary).

The trail goes down and passes a small pond (3,299 m; half an hour). Soon after, you will enter the forest again (at about 3,200 m). You will pass a small landslide (3,143 m; half an hour). After about 15 minutes, you will get to another Y-junction (GPS Y4; 3,130 m); take the right fork going up. You will climb for about 10 minutes/50 metres, after which the trail goes down again. After another five minutes, you will reach another Y-junction (GPS Y5; 3,171 m); take the right fork. Again after five minutes, you will reach another Y-junction (GPS Y6; 3,144 m); take the right fork.

For the next one-and-a-half to two hours, the trail is quite straightforward. You will see the nature changing around you, and huge beautiful pine trees appear. In clear weather, you regularly have good views

of Mount Kanchenjunga and Mount Januu. You will reach another Y-junction (GPS Y7; 3,045 m); go straight here.

After about 15 minutes, you will reach a pond called Garjuri Pokhari (2,956 m). One minute after, there is another Y-junction (GPS Y8; 2,946 m); take the right fork going down. In about 15 minutes, you will reach a nice resting place (2,892 m; also called Samajan Gajuri).

After another 45 minutes, you will arrive again at a Y-junction (GPS Y9; 2,337 m); take the right fork going flat. Shortly after, you will reach two houses; the place is called Chyanthapu Bhanjyang (2,270 m). Take the left fork going down at the next Y-junction, just after a water pipe (15 minutes; GPS Y10; 2,143 m). The trail is not very clear here, but it leads past a few houses of Chyangthapu Sumujung (2,067 m). After about 10 minutes, take the left fork at the next Y-junction (GPS Y11; 1,987 m). You will again pass some houses belonging to the village of Chyangthapu Sumujung, after which you will arrive at some stone steps. You will then get to another Y-junction (GPS Y12; 1,921 m). Don't take the stairs now, but take the flat trail (left fork). After only one more minute, you can choose again between two trails; take the right one going down. Just after this, there are again two options; take the flat trail (not the one going down), which soon starts going down as well. After about 15 minutes, you will reach Chyangthapu Nigale (1,794 m). This is the first water-refill possibility of today.

From here, it is a straightforward trail of about 45 minutes to Chyangthapu. There are some Y-junctions along the way; always go straight. You will cross the same suspension bridge (1,541 m) as you did on the way up, after which it is about 10 minutes to Chyangthapu.

Day 5: Chyangthapu (1,550 m)-Limbuding (1250 m); 6 ½ hours

The coming days are very different than the last two days. While earlier you went almost completely through the forest, you will now be walking mostly through a beautiful countryside, passing small villages.

The first part of today goes over a dirt road. After about half an hour (GPS Y13; 1,367 m), you will take a right towards the first houses of Palaincha (1,362 m). You will pass the houses and at the end of the street you take a trail going down (westwards). You will arrive at the dirt road again twice, which you will cross both times and continue

going down. It is about 20 minutes to Ghadi (1,263 m). From here you will follow the dirt road again for about five minutes, then take a right, down towards a suspension bridge (1,200 m) over the Iwa Khola. You will arrive back at the dirt road, where you will take a right, towards Namreek (also called Silesile; 1,200 m), which makes for a good teabreak spot. You will keep on following the dirt road, and pass a small waterfall (10 minutes). Just after the waterfall, take a right down to the next suspension bridge over the Mewa Khola (1,149 m); (during this research, the right fence here needed repairs as it was hanging down because a huge rock had fallen on it). After the suspension bridge, you will go left, walking on a small trail through rice terraces and forests, following the Iwa Khola upstream, south of the river. After about 20 minutes, you will cross another suspension bridge over the Suwa Khola (1,147 m).

After the bridge, you go left, following first the Suwa Khola and then again the Iwa Khola upstream, this time on the northern side of the river. It is about half an hour to Khirlabote (Ankhaop-8 VDC; 1,100 m).

The trail then winds its way through the village. When you arrive at the rice terraces at the other end of the village, take a right at the first junction (GPS Y15; 1,066 m). After five minutes, you will cross a bamboo bridge (1,058 m), after which the trail starts to climb. It is a beautiful trail through the countryside, and you will see people ploughing the land with oxen or planting rice. You will pass Ankhaop (half an hour; 1,241 m) and Sokhupa (half an hour; 1,310 m). The trail flattens and goes through a beautiful forest. You will pass a waterfall (half an hour; 1,414 m); and 15 minutes later, you will get to the Ankhop, ward 2, which has a small shop for snacks and tea (1,510 m).

After about 15 minutes, you will get to a bigger trail, which during this research was being turned into a dirt road. There are a couple of junctions; stay on the main road. After about half an hour, you will see a trail at your right going up steeply (GPS Y16; 1,532 m) this trail leads to Sablakhu Bhanjyang (15 minutes; 1,597 m). In Sablakhu Bhanjyang, there is a small guesthouse, so it makes a good place to stay or take your lunch (Chyangthapu to Khirlabote takes two-and-a-half hours; Khirlabote to Sablakhu Bhanjyang takes three hours).

In the middle of Sablakhu Bhanjyang, take a trail that goes steeply down to your right. After about five minutes, you will arrive at a junction (GPS Y17; 1,558 m); take the right fork. You will go down towards

a stream (1,279 m), which you cross. The trail goes flat now and climbs a little. After about 10 minutes, you will get to a Y-junction (GPS Y18; 1,304 m); take the left fork, which goes flat and then down. After about 15 minutes, you will reach Limbuding (1,250 m). Ask around for a homestay to sleep in.

Day 6: Limbuding (1,250 m)-Orakpa (Warappa) (1,906 m); 8 hours

From Limbuding the trail keeps on descending towards the Phewa Khola and Kabeli Khola. It takes a good half hour to reach the suspension bridge (904 m) over the Phewa Khola. After the bridge, there is a T-junction; go left here. It takes about 15 minutes to the next suspension bridge (903 m), over the Kabeli Khola. From here the trail starts to climb again. A few minutes after crossing the bridge, you get to a small field (GPS Y19; 931 m). The obvious trail goes straight and flat; don't take this trail, but take a right and up just before the field. Within a minute, you will reach a T-junction (at a water pipe); take a right here. There are a few Y-junctions; always choose the bigger trail.

After about 20 minutes, you will arrive in the picturesque small village of Amegudin (Ward 2) (980 m). After about half a kilometre, just before a house with blue window frames, you have to go left and up (GPS Y20; 982 m). After about 15 minutes, you will arrive at a water tap; take the trail behind the house there (don't follow the trail up). After another 15 minutes, you have to go over the courtyard of a house with lots of flowerpots (1,018 m). After 15 minutes, you will arrive in Amegudin (Ward 2; it's a kind of a bazaar with lots of shops; 1,047 m). A few minutes later, there is another Y-junction; take the right fork going flat. You will arrive at a suspension bridge over the Hapu Khola (1,029 m).

It is about half an hour to Simbalbote (1,167 m), which has a few shops. Far below, you can see the Kabeli Khola flowing. After another 20 minutes, you will reach Koyan, also called Tellok Koyan (1,246 m). Five minutes after, you will see a trail going left (GPS Y21; 1,267 m); take that trail. After 15 minutes, you will reach the Tellok police station (1,330 m). From here, it is still a 15-minute walk to the centre of Tellok, near the school (1,400 m). There is a small guesthouse here that can also organise homestay accommodations.

Just after leaving Tellok, there is a Y-junction in the fields (GPS Y22; 1,468 m); take the right flat trail (not the one going up). This trail will eventually also go up. After about 45 minutes, you will enter a forest. The trail keeps on climbing through the forest, and after about one hour 20 minutes, you will reach the small settlement of Sinchepu (2,008 m). Just after Sinchepu, take the right fork at a Y-junction. You will pass a school (2,038 m) and climb in about 15 minutes to Kande Bhanjyang (2,108 m). There are 10 homestays here (of which some are more like very basic guesthouses), so it makes a good place to stay overnight.

To make the following day shorter, you can also choose to continue to Orakpa (on some maps the place is called Warappa). From Kande Bhanjyang, it is easy walking, gradually descending, to Kunjari (half an hour, 2,039m). In Kunjari, you will go right. After about 10 minutes, there is another Y-junction (GPS Y23; 1,948 m); take the right fork, going flat. Shortly after, there is another junction; take the right fork again, going flat; this trail later ascends a bit and passes the courtyard of a house, after which you go down. You will pass another courtyard and continue going down. After another 15 minutes, there is a junction again (GPS Y24; 1,856 m); take the right fork again, this time going up. At the next junction, you again need to take the right fork going up. After about half an hour, you will arrive at a kind of resting house in the forest (2,004 m), from which two trails go down. Take the right trail, which goes down through the forest. After about 15 minutes, you will reach the first house of Orakpa/Warappa (1,906 m), which can offer homestay or camping facilities. However, it is good to bring your own food.

Day 7: Orakpa (1,906 m)-Thulo Phedi (3,155 m); 5 ½ hours

Although you won't be covering much distance today, the steep climb makes it quite a hard walk. Bring plenty of water, as it will take about three-and-a-half hours before you can refill your water bottle, and it is good to drink lots of water during the climb.

You first have to go down for about half an hour over a steep and quite slippery trail through cardamom fields to a suspension bridge over the Phawa Khola (1,786 m). From here, the steep climb starts. At the beginning, the trail is very narrow and sometimes so steep that you need to use your hands as well. After about an hour, you will get to a Y-junction (GPS Y25; 2,077 m); take the left fork going up.

After a little bit over an hour, you will reach a shepherd's house (2,356 m), and soon after you will enter a nice forest. The trail is a lot easier now. After about 20 minutes, you will reach another shepherd's house (2,502 m), after which the trail continues in the forest. After about 15 minutes, there is a little stream, where you can refill your water bottle if needed. You will arrive at a wooden fence (2,542 m), which you have to climb over, after which you will continue going straight. After about 10 minutes, go right and up (GPS Y26; 2,551 m). It is another good hour of steep climbing through the forest to Bolu Danda (2,925 m). Bolu Danda lies on the pilgrim's route to the Pathibhara temple, so you will be back on a well-trodden path. It is possible to stay overnight here as well, although the places are very basic.

It takes about 15 minutes to Guranse Danda (3,007 m) and another 20 minutes to Thulo Phedi (3,155 m). Thulo Phedi is the main overnight place for pilgrims to the Pathibhara temple, and it has 14 basic guest-houses. It is very crowded in October, especially during the Dashain festival.

Day 8: Thulo Phedi (3,155 m)-Pathibhara temple (3,757 m); return (2 ½ hours) and Thulo Phedi (3,155 m)-Taplejung (1,800 m); 5 hours

Most pilgrims leave between 5 am and 6 am for Pathibhara, and that is a good example to follow, not in the least owing to the amazing Himalaya views from the temple. The Pathibhara temple lies on top of a hill and offers spectacular views of the complete Kanchenjunga and Makalu Barun ranges. It takes about one-and-a-half hours to get to the temple and one hour to go back down. It is said that the goddess of Pathibhara (the goddess Durga) fulfils your wishes! After about one hour fifteen minutes, you will reach a big gate (3,728 m), from which stairs bring you to the temple (3,757 m).

To get to Taplejung, you first go down the same way to Bolu Danda (half an hour; 2,925 m). From here it is about 20 minutes to Kaplephati (2,800 m). A dirt road leads to Kaplephati, so many pilgrims only start walking from here. There are a couple of basic guesthouses here as well.

To the left of the dirt road is a walking trail going down to Bhalugaude (10 minutes; 2,718 m), which also has basic places to stay. After Bhalugaude, you have to walk on the dirt road; it doesn't get lots of traffic, however, and it is a nice easy walk through the forest. After about 20

minutes, you will reach Terse Deurali (2,658 m), which has one guest-house. From here it is another 15 minutes to Sewaro (2,728 m), which has three guesthouses. The trail climbs to 2,740 metres, and then goes down to Deurali (40 minutes; 2,606 m), which has five guesthouses. Around 15 minutes after Deurali, you can take a shortcut from the dirt road (2,584 m). After about 10 minutes, you will reach Sano Deurali (2,500 m), from where it is about 15 minutes to Suketar, which you enter via the landing strip of the airport (2,436 m). Suketar has a couple of places to stay and eat as well.

At the western end of Suketar, a trail goes down. This trail is a shorter than if you were to use the tarmac road, which you will cross a couple of times. After about 45 minutes, you will pass the small settlement of Gurung Gumba (2,053 m), which is named after its Buddhist gumpa (monastery). From here, it is half an hour to Taplejung (1,800 m). Taplejung has plenty of places to stay.

Day 9: Drive: Taplejung (1,800 m)-Ilam (1,200 m); 6 hours

There are public buses, public jeeps and private jeeps available if you want to go back to Bhadrapur. It is recommended to stay overnight in Ilam, the capital of the Nepali tea industry. It is a pleasant place to stay, surrounded by tea plantations. There are plenty of guesthouses in Ilam.

Day 10: Drive: Ilam (1,200 m)-Bhadrapur (100 m), flight to Kathmandu

It takes two-and-a-half to three hours of driving to get from Ilam to Bhadrapur, of which the last 45 minutes go through the steamy planes of the Terai. A 45-minute flight brings you back in Kathmandu.

Accommodation Overview

Kanchenjunga Section

Note: to dial phone numbers from outside of Nepal, dial +977 (and minus the 0 for landline numbers)

Day 1: Flight Kathmandu - Bhadrapur; drive to Tharpu; 7 hours

Tharpu (13,00 m):

Tharpu has 12 hotels. All are very basic and almost completely cater to Nepali tourists. All hotels have a little shop as well. Besides, it is possible to camp at the school.

Pathibhara Hotel & Restaurant

Contact person: Ram Mohan

Karki

Tel: 024-410022; 9851005349

Five rooms; 18 beds; one toilet/bathroom.

Sundar Hotel

Contact person: Jagat Dahal

Tel: 024-410032; 9862621832

12 rooms; 25 beds; two toilets/bathrooms.

Nigam Hotel

Contact person: Kamala Kebang Subba

Tel: 9844651822

Five rooms; 10 beds; one toilet.

Kewang Hotel

Contact person: Man Kumar Kewang

Tel: 024-410013

About 10 rooms; one toilet.

Hotel Kanchenjunga

Contact person: Sanu Karki

Tel: 9844651803

Six rooms; 10 beds; one toilet.

Lama Hotel

Contact person: Manta Lama

Tel: 9844667668

Two rooms; five beds; one toilet.

New Subedi Hotel & Lodge

Contact person: Debi Maya Subedi

Tel: 9852679511

Four rooms; eight beds; one toilet/bathroom.

Hotel Annapurna

Contact person: Devi Thapa

Tel: 9844651805

Six rooms; 12 beds; one toilet/bathroom.

Shrestha Hotel & Lodge

Bhawani Shrestha

Contact person: Tel: 9844684366

Six rooms; 12 beds; one toilet.

Jennie Hotel

Contact person: Sangita Limbu

Tel: 9862608251

One room; four beds; one toilet.

Chamina Hotel

Contact person: Sanju Subedi

Tel: 024-410038

Three rooms; nine beds; one toilet.

Dik Bahadur Rai's homestay (at the end of the village)

Tel: 9742652540

Two rooms; six beds; no toilet.

**Day 2: Tharpu (1,300 m)
- Chyangthapu (1,550 m);
30 km**

Oyam (1310 m):

Dil Maya Mabo's small restaurant/homestay

Tel: 9806028473

Two rooms; six beds; one toilet.

Chyangthapu (1,550 m):

Chyangthapu has three hotels, which are all very basic and almost completely cater to Nepali tourists. They all have a little shop.

Kabita Rai's restaurant/homestay

Tel: 9849389535

Three rooms; five beds; one toilet.

Deepak Hotel

Contact person: Deepak Showan

Tel: 9742653133

Two rooms; four beds; one toilet.

Sandakpur Hotel

Contact person: Sarita Bega

Tel; 9844686514

Four rooms; 12 beds; one toilet.

**Day 3: Chyangthapu
(1,550 m) - Phalut/Phalelung/Simhalila Bhanjyang (3,450 m); 7 ½-8 hours**

Phalut / Phalelung / Simhalila Bhanjyang (3,450 m):

Phalut Lodge

Contact person: Pasang Temba Sherpa

Big lodge with five rooms; 20 beds; two toilets; one bathroom.

Forest Department Checkpost

Contact person: Til Bahadur Chhetri

Tel: 091-9933600921

Three rooms; six beds. All rooms have an attached toilet.

Day 4: Phalut/ Phalelung / Simhalila Bhanjyang (3,450 m) - Chyangthapu (1,550 m); 6 ½ hours

See day 2

Day 5: Chyangthapu (1,550 m) - Limbuding (1250 m); 6 1/2 hours

Sablakhu Bhanjyang (1,597 m):

Lama Hotel
Contact person: Laxmi Lama
Tel: 023-695288
Four rooms; 10 beds.

Limbuding (1,250 m):

I.B Limbu's Homestay
Contact person: I.B. Limbu
Tel: 9818001955.

Day 6: Limbuding (1,250 m) – Orakpa (Warappa) (1,906 m); 8 hours

Tellok (1,400 m):

Kamal Bhattarai's guest house
Tel: 023-697355
One room; three beds; one toilet; one bathroom.
They can also arrange homestay accommodation for 10-15 tourists.

Kande Bhanjyang (2,108 m):

Kande Bhanjyang has 10 homestays, of which some are more like very basic guesthouses, for example:

Rudra Gurung's homestay
Tel: 9742654162; 9742654165
Four rooms; 10 beds; one toilet; Campsite

Hotel & Lodge
Subash Basnet; Dhan Maya Basnet
Tel: 9742627586; 9844634240

Five rooms; nine beds; one toilet; one bathroom. Campsite

Day 7: Orakpa (1,906 m) - Thulo Phedi (3,155 m); 5 1/2 hours

All hotels lie along the Pathibhara pilgrim's trail, and they almost completely cater to Nepali and Indian tourists. They are all very basic, most with mud floors. Most have a little shop. Many have clean bed linen available if you request them.

Bolu Danda (2,925 m):

Sikkim Hotel
Contact person: Jit Bahadur Limbu
Tel: 9814944504
One room; six beds; one longdrop toilet.

Daran Hotel & Lodge
Contact person: Samir Subha
Tel: 9816939277
One big room with three beds; one room with one bed.

Guranse Danda (3,007 m):

Numa Hotel & Lodge
Contact person: Buddha Raj Loksam
Tel: 9862602752
One room; six beds.

Karuna Hotel & Lodge
Contact person: Kul Bahadur Karki
Tel: 9842775661
One room; six beds.

**Thulo/Upper Phedi
(3,155 m):**

Thulo Phedi (also called Upper Phedi) is the main overnight place for pilgrims to the Pathibhara temple, and it has 14 basic guesthouses. It is very crowded in October, especially during the Dashain festival. The following hotels have been ordered according to how you arrive from Guranse Danda.

New Thulo Phedi Milan Hotel
Tel: 9842792256
One common room, for up to 50 people; one toilet.

Jhapali Hotel & Lodge
Contact persons: Bhim and Sita Karki
Tel: 9844618933
10 rooms; 35 beds; three toilets; two bathrooms.

Kamal Battarai Hotel & Lodge
Contact person: Nara Bahadur Bhattarai
Tel: 9742627610
10 rooms; 40 beds; three toilets; two bathrooms.

Pathibhara Himali Hotel & Lodge
Contact person: Tula Ram Bhattarai

Tel: 9849056483
Three rooms; 25 beds; one toilet; one bathroom.
Kanchi Devi Hotel & Lodge
Contact person: Tek Raj Gurung
Tel: 9843302520
Five rooms; 18 beds; one toilet; one bathroom.

Kirat Hotel & Lodge
Contact person: Mahesh Gurung
Tel: 9842563154
Seven rooms; 25 beds; one toilet; one bathroom; well-maintained dining.

Purbeli Hotel & Lodge
Contact person: Hasta Rai
Tel: 9849290558
Four rooms; eight beds; toilet under construction (at the time of this research).

Pancha Kanya Kalika Hotel & Lodge
Contact person: Indra Narayan Bhattarai
Tel : 024-40874; 9842642802
14 rooms; 45 beds; four toilets; three bathrooms.

Guras Hotel & Lodge
Contact person: Rajendra Mahat
Tel: 9852681360
Two rooms; four beds; one toilet.

Pathibhara Hotel & Lodge
Contact person: Phipraj Limbu
Tel: 023-690525; 9742629578

13 rooms; 30 beds; one toilet;
one bathroom.

Kanchenjunga Hotel & Lodge
Contact person: Ambika Porsai
Tel: 9842676276

Six rooms; 29 beds; one toilet;
one bathroom.

Sri Pathibhara Kalika Hotel &
Lodge

Contact person: Sukrabit Bhat-
tarai

Tel: 9742654197

12 rooms; 24 beds; one toilet;
one bathroom.

Chandra Ma Hotel

Contact person: Rupesh Bhatta-
rai

Tel : 9862607732

Six rooms; 22 beds ; one toilet.

Maden Hotel & Lodge

Tel: 9844682287

One room; 10 beds; one toilet.

**Day 8: Thulo Phedi (3,155
m) - Pathibhara temple
(3,757 m); return (2 ½
hours) and Thulo Phedi
(3,155 m) - Taplejung
(1,800 m); 5 hours**

Kaplephati (2,800 m):

Hotel Devi Pathibhara

Contact person: Tashi Sherpa &
Om Rai

Tel: 9842775822; 9844672250

Seven rooms; 26 beds; four toi-
lets; one bathroom.

Didi Bahini Fast Food & Lodge
Contact person: Mahendra Bhat-
tarai

Tel: 9842090724

Six rooms; 40 beds; two toilets/
bathrooms.

Paudel Hotel & Lodge

Contact person: Lila Maya Pau-
del

Tel: 9844632354

10 rooms; 20 beds; two toilets.

Pachthar Thapa Hotel & Lodge

Contact person: Khem Thapa

Tel: 9842792096

Six rooms; 40 beds; three toilets;
one bathroom.

Bhalugaude (2,718 m):

Puribeli Yogesh Hotel & Lodge

Contact person: Goma Devi
Bhattarai

Tel: 9844654489

One room; 12 beds.

Bhattarai Hotel & Lodge

Contact person: Tek Man Bhat-
tarai

Tel: 9862604940

Two rooms; 12 beds; one toilet.

Mukumlung Hotel & Lodge

Contact person: Sandralal
Thalang

Tel: 9844652696

Four rooms; 22 beds; one toilet.

Terse Deurali (2,658 m):

Karki Hotel & Lodge

Contact person: Mr Karki

Tel: 9741052812

Nine rooms; 14 beds; two toilets;
one bathroom.

Sewaro (2,728 m):

Morang Hotel & Lodge

Contact person: Punam Sharma

One room; eight beds; one toilet.

Paryataka Hotel & Lodge

Contact person: Ramesh Limbu

Tel: 9804956057

One room; four beds; one toilet.

Utam Samjana

Contact person: Asha Limbu

Tel: 9742629578

Four rooms; 20 beds; one toilet/
bathroom.

Deurali (2,606 m):

Bista Hotel & Lodge

Contact person: Kumar Bista

Tel: 9844648576

Three rooms; nine beds; one
toilet.

Ilameli Hotel & Lodge

Contact person: Tul Bahadur

Karki

Tel: 024-680428; 9844632305

One room; eight beds; one toilet.

Kanchenjunga Hotel & Lodge

Contact person: Chetin Sherpa

Tel: 9742670500

One room; six beds; one toilet.

Kalpana Hotel & Lodge

Contact person: Kalpana Bista

024-680428

Deurali Hotel & Lodge

Contact person: Bhim Bista

Tel: 023-697984; 9844684925

Three rooms; 20 beds; one toilet.

Suketar (2,436 m):

Guesthouses in Suketar are of
a little better quality than other
guesthouses along the Phatibhara
trail.

Peaceful Hotel

Contact person: Dilli & Roji
Bhattarai

Tel: 024-460917; 9844670789

Two rooms; eight beds; one toi-
let; well-maintained dining.

Hotel Everest View & Lodge

Contact person: Dawa Sherpa

Tel: 024-460059; 9842673975

14 rooms; 28 beds; two toilets/
bathrooms and one room with
attached toilet; very beautiful
dining and nice, spacious rooms.

Oktang Hotel & Lodge

Contact person: Pasang Bhote

Tel: 024-460099

Two rooms; 10 beds; one toilet;
one bathroom; dining.

Kanchenjunga Hotel

Contact person: Chhilamu
Sherpa

Tel: 024-460173

5 rooms, 15 beds

Resort
Soni Rai
Tel: 024-460237
10 rooms, 20 beds

Pathibhara Tiwari Hotel &
Lodge
Contact person: Laxmi Tiwari
Tel: 024-460417
Eight rooms; 20 beds; one toilet/
bathroom.

Munal Hotel & Lodge
Contact person: Tek Dan Tiwari
Tel: 024-460947
Five rooms; 13 beds; one toilet/
bathroom.

Taplejung (1,800 m):

Hotel Jara Restaurant & Lodge
Contact persons: Janga Sunuwar;
Rajan Gurung
Tel: 024-460781; 9842659127;
9842769137
20 rooms; 40 beds; 10 rooms
with attached bathroom; hot and
cold shower; tv; free wifi; semi-
nar hall.

Pathibara Hotel
Contact persons: Ambika Han-
gbang; Tika Devi Bista, Sarita
Limbu
Tel: 024-460547; 9742609541
18 rooms; 36 beds; all rooms
with attached bathroom; two
with hot shower (in the future all
rooms will have hot shower); tv;
free wifi.

Taplejung Guesthouse
Contact person: Tika Devi Bista;
Chandra Prakash Bhattarai
Tel: 024-460162; 9742629683
Seven rooms; 12 beds; two
rooms with attached bath-
room; tv; free wifi.

Hotel Mountain
Contact person: Bimal Bhandari
Tel: 024-460931; 9862601412;
9815903670
Nine rooms; 13 beds; some
rooms have attached bathrooms;
hot & cold shower; tv; free wifi.

Hotel Rainbow Restaurant &
Lodge
Tel: 024-460729; 024-460007;
9844670245
Hemgrg78@yahoo.com
Six rooms; 11 beds; three rooms
have attached bathrooms; hot &
cold shower; tv; free wifi.

Pemba Hotel
Contact person: Lajima Sherpa
Tel: 024-460309
Six rooms, 9 beds

Darjeeling Hotel
Contact person: Abhishek Rai
Tel: 024-460325
Six rooms, 12 beds

Dawa Hotel
Contact person: Tenji Sherpa
Tel: 9842660317
Six rooms, 12 beds

Star Guesthouse
Contact person: Tenzin Sherpa
Tel: 024-460718
Four rooms; five beds; two toilets/bathrooms

Laliguras Hotel
Contact person: B.D. Dahal
Five rooms, 10 beds

Nangkholang Hotel
Contact person: Narayan Shrestha
Five rooms, 10 beds

Mechi Guesthouse
Contact person: Nerendra Simkhada
7 rooms, 14 beds

IT Hotel & Lodge
Tel: 024-460508
8 rooms.

Day 9: Drive: Taplejung (1,800 m) - Ilam (1,200 m); 6 hours

Phidim (1,185 m):

Hotel U.K.
Contact person: Hang Narayan Limbu
Tel: 024-520624; 024-520035; 9842661879
15 rooms; 30 beds; all rooms with attached bathroom; hot and cold shower; tv; free wifi.

Lunga Guesthouse & Restaurant
Hotel Tiger Lodge & Restaurant
Prashant Hotel & Lodge
New Phalingma Hotel
Hotel Sema

Ilam (1,200 m):

Ilam is the centre of the Nepali tea industry and has lots of accommodation options available.

Tourist Information Centre
Tel: 027-529692

Green View Guesthouse
Contact person: Prem Sapkota
Tel: 027-520103; 027-520616; 9842627063
13 rooms; 25 beds; seven rooms have attached bathrooms; hot and cold shower; tv; free wifi
Located on a side street of the bazaar; offers a view of tea-gardens. Most foreigners stay in this guesthouse.

Hotel New Pokhrelhi
Contact person: Bijaya Rai
Tel: 027-521181; 9741079029; 9842745831
hotel.newpokhareli@gmail.com; pokhareliilam@yahoo.com
11 rooms; 18 beds; all rooms with attached bathrooms; hot and cold shower; tv; free wifi.

Tamu Hotel & Guesthouse
Contact person: Shanti Gurung
Tel: 027-521229; 9842713538;
9844655683; 9814011106
10 rooms; 30 beds; all rooms
with attached bathroom; hot and
cold shower;tv; free wifi.

Friends Hotel & Lodge
Contact person: K.B. Thebe
Tel: 027-520647; 9842780400.

Hotel Fine & Lodge
Contact person: Niraj Upreti
Tel: 9815990100.

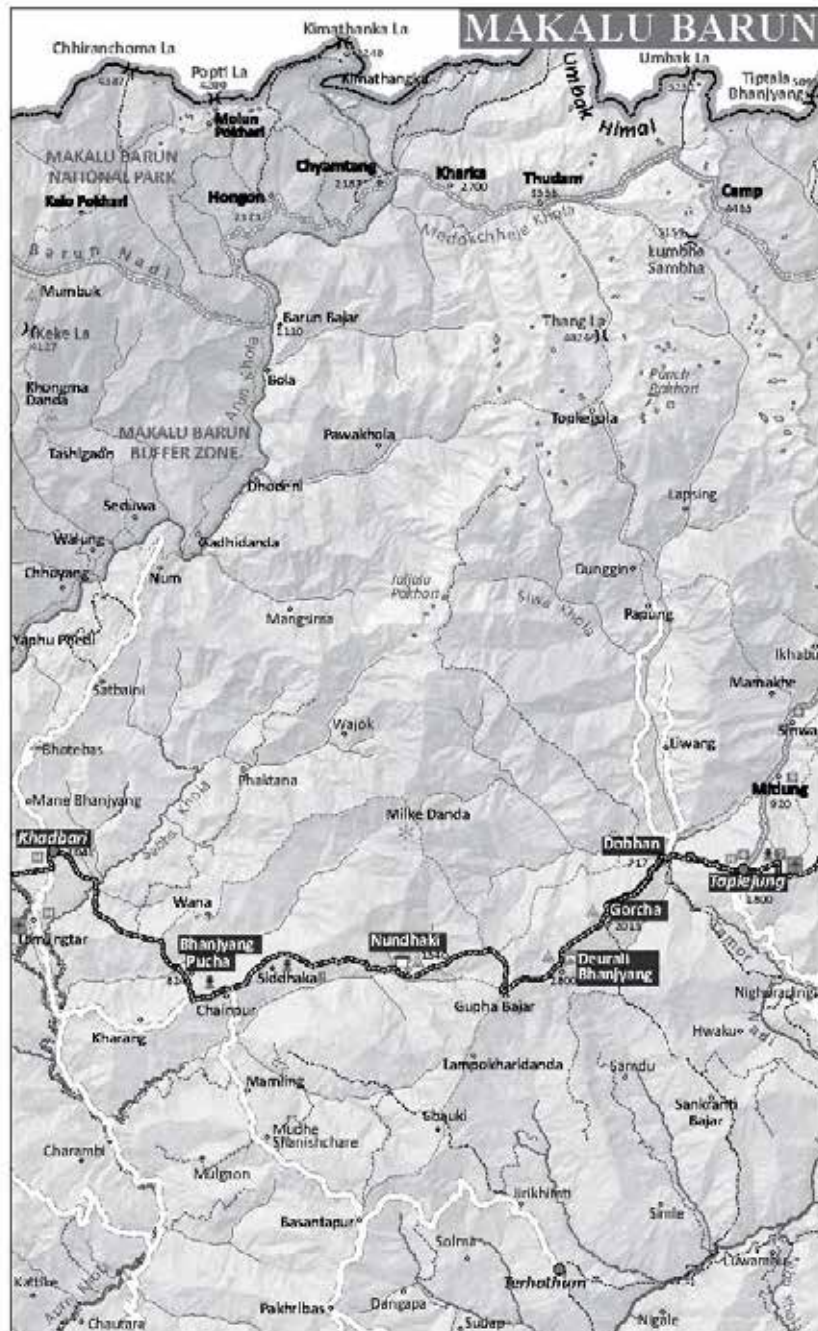
Hotel New Dish
Tel: 027-520626.

Deurali Lodge & Hotel
Tel: 027-520228.

Danfe Guesthouse & Restaurant
Tel: 027-520048; 9804902107;
9802727405
danfeguesthouse@gmail.com
On the western side of Ilam,
amidst the teagardens.

Hari Gurung's homestay
Tel: 9842646121; 9842739315
Two rooms; four beds;homestay
in a rural area
Hari Gurung can also arrange
taxi service to Taplejung/Bhadra-
pur airport.

MAKALU BARUN



Makalu Barun Section

Introduction

This is quite a special section of the GHT, as you will be walking at relatively low altitudes up to around 400 m. Because of the low altitude, the areas in this section of the trail are endowed with subtropical features, with villages that could remind you of those in southeast Asia. There are beautiful views of the Kanchenjunga Range and Makalu Barun. It is as yet completely unexplored by tourists, partly due to its far distance from Kathmandu. This makes this section one where you can have a beautiful encounter with authentic Nepali village life.

Days: 8

Difficulty: Easy

Maximum elevation: 2,922 m

Type: Teahouse/camping (taking a tent is recommended)

Permits needed: TIMS

Itinerary

Day 1: Kathmandu-Taplejung (1800 m) (eventually with an overnight stay in Ilam or Phidim)

Day 2: Taplejung (1,800 m)-Dobhan (717 m) 2 ½ hours

Day 3: Dobhan (717 m)-Gorcha (2,013m); 4 ½ hours

Day 4: Gorcha (2,013 m)-Deurali Bhanjyang (2,800 m); 4 hours

Day 5: Deurali Bhanjyang (2,800 m)-Nundhaki (1,540 m); 6 hours

Day 6: Nundhaki (1,540 m)-Bhanjyang Pucha (824 m); 5 hours

Day 7: Bhanjyang Pucha (824 m)-Khadbari (1,041 m); 6 hours

Day 8: Drive to Tumlingtar, flight to Kathmandu

Day 1: Kathmandu-Taplejung (1,800 m)

The quickest way to get to Taplejung is by flying to Suketar. There is a flight once a week by Nepal Airlines. From Suketar it is about a one-hour drive, or a three-hour walk to Taplejung. Another possibility is to fly to Bhadrapur, in south-east Nepal, followed by an eight-hour jeep ride.

The road passes through beautiful landscapes with tea plantations in Ilam, Nepal's famous tea district. From Bhadrapur, it takes about three hours to Ilam, and from there, another two to Phidim. In both places, there are guesthouses where you can stay overnight. From Phidim, it takes about two-and-a-half hours to Taplejung, of which the last hour or so goes over a dirt road, so a four-wheel-drive jeep is necessary here.

Day 2: Taplejung (1,800 m)-Dobhan (717 m); 2 ½ hours

Taplejung has quite a big bazaar/market area. In the main street, ask for the old trail (*purano bato*) to Dobhan (following the dirt road to Dobhan would take about four times as long and is less interesting). You can also ask for IT Hotel and Lodge, as this one lies along the old trail.

You will pass a police post (10 minutes; 1,671 m); 10 minutes after the police post is a junction (GPS Y28; 1,630 m); take the left fork going down. After 50 metres, you will take a right, and after another 20 metres go left passing some houses. You will arrive at steps going down. Just a few minutes later, you will arrive at a settlement called Tirze (1,592 m), where you will go left past some houses again. After about 10 minutes, you will go down some stairs as the shortcut of a dirt road, after which you will continue straight (GPS Y29; 1,511 m). You can take the steps as a shortcut of the dirt road a couple of times. After about 15 minutes, at the end of the steps, go left on the dirt road (GPS Y30; 1,371 m); you will then find another shortcut after about 20 metres to your right.

After another 15 minutes, you will reach Deulinge (1,127 m). In clear weather, you can see Mount Januu (7,711 m) on the horizon. After about five minutes, there is another junction (GPS Y31; 1,096 m); take a right here. You will then reach Deulinge Bazaar (1,078 m), at the end of which you will go left and down. You will walk on a dirt road, and after about 10 minutes there is a shortcut to your right (982 m). You will arrive at the settlement of Nageshwori (912 m). From here, it is straightforward, and in about half an hour you will reach a suspension bridge (715 m) over the river Tamor Nadi, which brings you into Dobhan.

In Dobhan, there are a couple of basic places to stay, and an open place for a campsite at the end of the village. Besides, there is a campsite

with fixed tents at the left side of the village, but this was closed at the time of research (Nov 2013).

Day 3: Dobhan (658 m)-Gorcha (2,013m); 4 ½ hours

In Dobhan, you will cross the big suspension bridge at the end of the village (end if coming from Taplejung). The trail gets uphill right away and keeps going up until it reaches Deurali Bhanjyang the next day. Till Gorcha, you will mainly walk through the countryside and you will find yourself surrounded by rice paddies and mustard fields. After an hour or two, you will pass the spread-out settlement of Nesam (which has a small shop as well). The landscape changes gradually, and you will encounter small fields of cardamom and some pine forests. Around four-and-a-half hours after leaving Dobhan, you will arrive in the village of Gorcha (2,013 m). Gorcha has an interesting mix of Limbu, Tamang and Sherpa people. At the top of the village is a Limbu shrine. The field in front of the shrine can be used as a campsite.

Day 4: Gorcha (2,013m)-Deurali Bhanjyang (2,800 m); 4 hours

The landscape keeps changing as you climb. After Gorcha, you will walk through rhododendron forests, which are especially beautiful in spring, when the flowers are in full bloom.

Deurali Bhanjyang is a small open plot in the forest with a teashop, where you can camp.

In good weather, you will have a splendid view of the Kanchenjunga Range.

Day 5: Deurali Bhanjyang (2,800 m)-Nundhaki (1,540 m); 6 hours

Leaving Deurali Bhanjyang, you will go downhill for about 10 minutes, before climbing gradually to a small pass (2,922 m), which you will reach in one to one-and-a-half hours. During the ascent, you get even better views of the Kanchenjunga Range, and the Makalu Range too comes into view. After the pass, the trail goes down steeply in the beginning, but flattens out soon, going high on a slope. Below you are grasslands, where yaks tend to graze. The trail goes down to Gupha Bazaar (two hours from Deurali Bhanjyang). To the left is a beautiful lake, which is worth visiting. Close to the lake are some basic guest-

houses. To continue the GHT, take the trail to the right (northwest), and after 20 metres take the small trail to the left (west). After a while, you will find yourself high on the slope again, with views of rice fields, and grasslands for yaks, and once in a while, tiny settlements. The trail gradually keeps on descending. After the village of Singring (two hours 45 minutes from Gupha Bazaar; one small restaurant), the trail goes down steeply for half an hour, till you reach the small village of Nundhaki. In Nundhaki, there are a few basic guesthouses, which so far only cater to Nepali. Some have fields where you can camp as well.

Day 6: Nundhaki (1,540 m)-Bhanjyang Pucha (824 m); 5 hours

It's about 18 km to Bhanjyang Pucha, but as the trail is pretty level most of the time, it's quite easy to cover the distance. A big part of the trail goes over a dirt road, but all you will normally encounter are a few motorbikes.

Leaving Nundhaki, the trail descends to a dirt road, which you will follow descending as well. The road is surrounded by cardamom fields. After a short while, you will see stairs, which are a nice shortcut. The stairs bring you to the small settlement of Buddhabari. You will cross two suspension bridges (over the Bibare River), after which you will follow the road again, which is almost flat-walking. You will see some stairs as well, but this time, don't take them! After about half an hour, you will reach the small village of Chitlang, which has a few shops, and they can be used to have a nice tea break. Around 15 minutes after Chitlang, you will encounter a beautiful waterfall. After about one-and-a-half hours, you will reach a bigger village, Pokhari Bazaar, which is a good place for lunch. Around 20 minutes after Pokhari Bazaar, you can choose between a smaller trail to your left, which goes up, and the road, going down to the right. Take the road here. You will be walking again amidst cardamom fields and after about 30 minutes, you will pass another tiny settlement, Dangigaon. Shortly after this, you have to take the fork to the left, and 30 metres after this, the fork to the right. Again after 30 metres you will arrive at a T-junction, where you will go right. You will then enter a bigger village, Chainpur. Chainpur has a big bazaar. It is a lovely village, with well-maintained walking lanes and beautiful houses. There is a school with a big field, which can be used as a camping space.

After Chainpur, the directions get a bit complicated, so it's best to ask around. But here is the basic description: in the middle of the bazaar,

a road goes to the right, which you have to take. This takes you out of Chainpur. After about 20 metres, there is a small path down to the left. This path brings you back on the road, which you will follow in the same direction (northeast). After 20 metres, take the smaller road to the left (north), which goes down and makes a turn, so you will be walking westwards again. Very soon you will encounter a small resting place. Here you go left, leaving the road, on a small trail steep down. You will arrive back at the road, but there are a few other shortcuts as well. After 30 minutes, you will arrive at the tiny settlement Bhanjyang Kharka. There is a small guesthouse here. At the resting place, take the trail to the right, going down. After about 100 metres, you will arrive at a T-junction. Go left here. You are now on a very narrow trail, walking amidst the rice paddies. The trail goes down and brings you to a small bamboo teashop, where you can camp in the middle of the ricefields, which offer beautiful views of the surrounding hills (but you can only camp here when there is no rice planted, which means in autumn and winter).

Day 7: Bhanjyang Pucha (824 m)-Khadbari (1,041 m): 6 hours

The day starts with a steep descent of about half an hour in the forest until you get to Hewa Khola, a crystal-clear river. After crossing the wooden suspension bridge (600 m), the trail continues through rice terraces, and leads via a small wooden bridge back into the forest, where it climbs to a dirt road (still not used by motorised transport) (another half an hour). After about 10 minutes, there is a fork to the right; don't take it; just go straight here. It's easy, almost flat-walking. You will pass the village of Ghomare (half an hour), which makes for a nice tea stop. The walk goes along rice terraces and forests. More or less an hour from Ghomare, you will arrive at a T-junction, where you have to go left. You will arrive at Lingling, a somewhat bigger village, with a few restaurants, where you can stop for lunch.

At the end of the village, at the right side of the road, a small trail leads you down, and brings you on a large path, which descends gradually. It goes through a countryside and a forest, with terraced hills on the horizon. After about 45 minutes, take a small trail to the left, which is a steep descent of about half an hour through the forest. The trail arrives at Dobantar, a small settlement with bamboo houses. A beautiful trail through rice fields leads to a small river, which you have to cross stone-hopping (363 m). Soon after this, the trail climbs again, leading

to a road; take this road in the upwards direction, following the river Lankhuwa Khola. Very soon, you will see a small trail to your left, which you have to take. After about 15 minutes, you will arrive at an iron suspension bridge. After crossing this bridge, the trail climbs in a few minutes to the small settlement of Barani (400 m). Shortly after Barani, the steep and long climb to Khadbari (1,041 m) begins. The climb goes through a forest, small villages and the countryside. After about two hours, you will arrive at Khadbari, a small town, where you will see jeeps and buses again!

Khadbari is the district headquarters of Sankhuasabha District. It has a big bazaar, where you can even find walking sticks. There is one bank (Nabil Bank), with an ATM that accepts international cards. There are internet cafes here as well. There are a few restaurants and seven basic hotels.

Day 8: Drive to Tumlingtar; flight to Kathmandu

Those who want to end their trek, can go to Tumlingtar, which is about an hour's drive away. Tumlingtar has an airport with direct flights to Kathmandu (Yeti and Buddha Air).

Accommodation Overview

Makalu Barun Section

Day 2: Taplejung (1,800 m)
– **Dobhan (717 m) 2.5 hrs**

Dobhan:

River View Guesthouse
Contact person: Yam Kumar
Limbu
Tel: 993242016
Six rooms, 14 beds

Kanchenjunga Hotel
Som Kumar Giri
Tel: 993242016
Five rooms, 17 beds

Tamor Dobhan Guesthouse
Tel: 993242048
Three rooms; 10 beds in total.

Tribeni Hotel and Lodge
Contact person: Man Bahadur
Chonbang
Tel: 993242016 / 9742658231
Three rooms; seven beds in total.

Numa Guesthouse
Tel: 9742658888
Two rooms; four beds in total.

Guesthouse without a name (at
the end of village)
Tel: 9742647569 / 9742657709
Four rooms; six beds in total.

All guesthouses have communal
toilets.

Two campsite options:
The Hideout Campsite Retreat
Tel: 9742647971 / 9803307522.
They have a cold-water shower
and a toilet building with a West-
ern toilet; they have two big tents
with a bed inside, but you can
also put up your own tents

Note: at the time of research, in
November 2013, this campsite
was closed.

At the end of the village, a small
path leads to an open area next
to the river, which makes a good
place for camping.

Day 3: Dobhan (658 m) -
Gorcha (2,013 m);
4 ½ hours

Gorcha (2,013 m):

The field in front of the Limbu
shrine can be used as a campsite.

Day 4: Gorcha (2,013 m) -
Deurali Bhanjyang (2,800
m); 4 hours

Deurali Bhanjyang **(2,800 m):**

Deurali Bhanjyang is a small
open plot in the forest with a
teashop, where you can camp.

**Day 5: Deurali Bhanjyang
(2,800 m)-Nundhaki (1,540
m); 6 hours**

Gupha Bazaar:

Some basic guesthouses.

Nundhaki:

There are a few basic guesthouses, which so far only cater to Nepalis. There are also some fields where you can camp as well.

**Day 6: Nundhaki (1,540m)
- Bhanjyang Pucha
(824 m); 5 hours**

Chainpur:

There is a school with a big field, which can be used as a camping space.

Bhanjyang Kharka:

One small guesthouse. You can camp in the ricefield near a small bamboo teashop.

**Day 7: Bhanjyang Pucha
(824 m)-Khadbari
(1,041 m): 6 hours**

Khadbari:

There are seven basic hotels here.

Hotel Arati

Tel: 029-560117 / 029-560017 /
985205717

Eight rooms; three with attached

bathrooms; they arrange flight tickets to Kathmandu and porters/guides for trekking.

Hotel Barun

Tel: 029-560182 / 029-560582
11 rooms; four with attached
bathrooms.

Hotel Manakamana

Tel: 029-560686 / 9842099213
12 rooms.

Hotel Chitung

Tel: 029-560243

Hotel Rajib

Tel: 029-560185

Scenic Hotel

Tel: 029-560128

Hotel Yatri

Tel: 029-560137

SOLUKHUMBU



Everest & Rolwaling Section: Solukhumbu

Introduction

This section of the Lower GHT offers beautiful views of the Himalaya, among which is a view of Mt Everest (on day 11). You will cross several passes of around 3,000 m, which offer splendid views of the Himalaya and green valleys. You will pass through authentic Sherpa and Rai villages and beautiful rhododendron forests. An added advantage of this section is that there are very good tourist facilities but few tourists compared to the popular Khumbu/Everest area.

Days: 9/11/14

Difficulty: Moderate

Maximum elevation: 3,532 m

Type: Teahouse/camping (with a small group [max eight people]; this trek can be completely done as a teahouse trek)

Permits needed: TIMS, to be obtained in Kathmandu or the entrance to the Makalu Barun National Park (to be obtained in Bung, day 5) and Gaurishankar Conservation Area Project (GCAP; to be obtained in Shivalaya, day 13).

Itinerary

Day 1: Kathmandu-Khadbari (1,041 m)

Day 2: Khadbari (1,041 m)-Majuwadanda (800 m); 5 hours

Day 3: Majuwadanda (800 m)-Salpa Phedi (1,530 m); 8 hours

Day 4: Salpa Phedi (1,530 m)-Sanam (2834 m) via Salpa Pass (3,340 m); 8 hours

Day 5: Sanam (2,834 m)-Khiraule (2,535 m); 8 hours

Day 6: Khiraule (2,535 m)-Sibuche (2,800 m) via Surke La/Charakot Pass (3,070 m); 7 hours

Day 7: Sibuche (2,800 m)-Paiya (2,767 m) via Narkung La/Chaduk La (3,161 m) and Kari La (3,059 m); 7 hours

Day 8: Paiya (2,767 m)-Lukla (2,840 m); 4 hours (entry/exit point; flights to Kathmandu)

Day 9: Lukla (2,840 m)-Kharikhola (2,007 m); 8 hours

Day 10: Kharikhola (2,007 m)-Ringmu (2,739 m) via Taksindu La (3,062 m); 8 hours (entry/exit point; flights to Kathmandu from Phaplu airport at 4-hours walking distance)

Day 11: Ringmu (2,739 m)-Sete (2,538 m) via Lamjura La (3,532 m); 9 ½ hours
Day 12: Sete (2,538 m)-Deurali (2,700 m); 7 hours
Day 13: Deurali (2,700 m)-Jiri (1,930 m); 6 hours
Day 14: Jiri-Kathmandu; (by bus); 7 hours

Day 1: Kathmandu-Khadbari (1,041 m)

Khadbari is about an hour's drive to Tumlingtar, which has an airport with direct flights to Kathmandu (Yeti and Buddha Air).

Khadbari is the district headquarters of Sankhuasabha District. It has a big bazaar, where you can even find walking sticks. There is one bank (Nabil Bank), with an ATM that accepts international cards. There are internet cafes here as well. There are a few restaurants and seven basic hotels (see previous section).

Day 2: Khadbari (1,041 m)-Majuwadanda (800 m); 5 hours

From the centre of Khadbari, a small path leads down to the west. A couple of times, you will have the choice of walking on flat terrain or going downhill; choose downhill. The trail goes down steeply and at several points offers beautiful views of the Makalu Range. After about one-and-a-half hours, you will reach a small river, which you will cross over an old suspension bridge (320 m). Follow the wider path (don't take the small path going up), which follows the Arun River north-westwards. It is flat, easy-walking. After about 20 minutes, you will pass two teashops, from where it is another half hour to the village of Chewabesi. There are a few restaurants, where you can stop for lunch. From Chewabesi, the trail continues for another 45 minutes, till you cross the Arun River over a big suspension bridge. At the other side, you will arrive at the village of Kattike Pull. The scenery is very idyllic, with spread-out houses, rice fields and the beautiful Arun River to your right.

At the end of the village, you will cross a blue iron bridge, after which you have to climb steeply for about 15 minutes. The trail keeps on following the river, which is now far below you and climbs gradually. After about 45 minutes, you will reach a road, which you will follow

for 100metres, after which you will take a small path to your right. When you reach the Y-junction, take the left fork, going up. It is a nice walk through the countryside again, with beautiful views of the Arun Valley below you. After about half an hour, you will reach the small settlement of Majuwadanda. Majuwadanda has a small guesthouse that also has a place to camp.

Day 3: Majuwadanda (800 m)-Salpa Phedi (1,530 m); 8 hours

Today you will enter the Solukhumbu section of the GHT (as shown on the GHT map of Himalayan Maphouse Solukhumbu Section), although you will only enter Solukhumbu the next day, when you cross the Salpa Pass. It can be quite a long and tiring day (the total distance is 22.4 km) and you can choose to camp earlier.

Leaving Majuwadanda, the trail goes up, sometimes steeply and at other times remaining rather flat, offering views of snowcapped mountains of the Makalu Range on the horizon. After about 30 minutes, there is a Y-junction; take the left trail. Around 15 minutes later, there is another Y-junction (two small trails); take the right trail here. The trail goes down now, mostly gradually, but at some points pretty steeply as well. Now and then you will pass a small settlement, like Chalishe and Tabutar. Besides going through a terraced countryside, the trail also goes through a subtropical jungle.

Along the way, you might meet men carrying huge loads of Himalayan medicinal herbs destined for the Chinese market. About two hours after the start of the walk, you will cross a small river. This brings you to the side of a big river, Liknuwa Khola, which you will be following upstream for the rest of the day. Walk on the left side of the river. After 10 minutes, you will arrive at a small guesthouse with a campsite, Kulung Kirant Hotel. After another 10 minutes, you will have to cross a big iron suspension bridge, close to the village of Tabutar. Continue your walk on the right side of the river (don't take the path going up). The trail is the so-called *Nepali flat*: lots of flat parts with some steep climbs and descents. About 15 minutes later, you will arrive at the small settlement of Gothe Bazaar, which has a weekly market on Tuesdays. There is a teashop, which can be a good lunch stop. Just after the teashop, there is a suspension bridge. Don't take that bridge; keep on following the river in the westwards direction. The trail is *Nepali flat* again, with some steep ascents, passing tiny settlements like Lankuwa. After about

an hour, you will cross another suspension bridge. Keep on following the river, which is at your right now. Sometimes you will see a trail going up, away from the river; don't take these; just keep on following the river. After 45 minutes, you will cross another suspension bridge. Shortly after crossing, there will be a Y-junction; take the left trail, going up. You will be walking again in a subtropical forest, with now and then a small settlement surrounded by terraced agricultural land or a teashop, where you can stop for tea. The trail ascends for the most part.

About two hours and 45 minutes after the last suspension bridge, you will arrive at the village of Tendo, which has a school that you could use as a campsite. Shortly after Tendo, you will have to cross a self-made small bridge over a wild-flowing river. Although you are at an altitude of around 1,400 m only, the landscape here is similar to high-altitude landscapes. It's another good half-hour walk to the Rai village of Salpa Phedi, where there are a few guesthouses and campsites.

Day 4: Salpa Phedi (1,530 m)-Sanam (2,834 m) via Salpa Pass (334 m); 8 hours

This is also a long stretch. The distance is only 14 km, but you will have to climb about 1,800 m, till the Salpa Pass, at 3,340 m, after which you will descend 500 m. The landscape keeps changing as you go higher: you start among rice fields, pass small settlements, climb into forests, which turn into bushes, and higher up, you will walk through dense rhododendron forests.

After about two hours, you will reach the Sherpa settlement of Thulophokte (2,286 m), which has a guesthouse, Kalopatar Hotel and Lodge, which is a good place for lunch. Thulophokte has a small Buddhist monastery, Chochen Gompa, belonging to the Gelugpa sect. If you want to see the insides of the monastery, ask the people in the house next door for the key.

About two hours after Thulophokte, you will reach a small guesthouse with camping facilities, Salpa Pass Hotel and Lodge (2,936 m). If you don't want to go all the way to Sanam, this is the place to stay.

From the guesthouse, it is about one-and-a-half hours to the Salpa Pass (3,340 m). At Salpa Pass, you will come across beautiful mani walls (walls with stones that have Buddhist prayers and drawings carved on them). If the weather is good, you should have a good view of the re-

gion from the pass to Mount Dudh Kunda (6,465 m). The Salpa Pass brings you into Solukhumbu.

From the pass you can go to Salpa Lake (3,414 m), which is about an hour's walk, and Shilicho Viewpoint (4,158 m), which is about a two-hour walk. This viewpoint offers a spectacular view of a large part of the Himalayan Range: Mt Kanchenjunga, Makalu, Mera Peak and Everest, among others.

From Salpa Pass, it is about two hours of descending trail through beautiful pine and rhododendron forests to Sanam, a small Sherpa village. After one-and-a-half hours, you will pass the small settlement of Huaca. Shortly after Huaca, there is a Y-junction; take the right trail going up (for a while) here. The trail descends slowly till Sanam. Sanam has one lodge next to the monastery (Gomba Lodge).

Day 5: Sanam (2,834 m)-Khiraule (2,535 m); 8 hours

Today it's a long descent of about 1,500 m to an altitude of 1,350 m, and a tough climb of 1,200 m, to Khiralule at 2,535 m.

From Sanam, the trail goes down through rhododendron forests, passing some mani walls. When the weather is good, you can see Mt Numbur (6,959 m) on the horizon. After 45 minutes, you will pass a small lodge, where you can camp, as well as the Arun Valley Lodge and Tine Sherpa Hotel.

Shortly after passing a huge mani stone and wall, there is a Y-junction; take the right trail, going flat. You will pass the small settlement of Siare. After the last house, the trail continues to the left, going down.

About two-and-a-half hours after having left Sanam, you will reach the big village of Gudel (2,042 m), which is mainly inhabited by Kulung Rai people. From here you can see Mera Peak (6,476 m) and Mt Chamlang. In Gudel there are two small lodges.

Take the path that runs beside the stream downwards, through the village. After about one-and-a-half hours further down, you will reach the bridge over the Hongu Khola, at 1,350 m. After crossing the bridge, the only way is up for the next couple of hours. After about 15 minutes, you will arrive at the village of Bung, which is spread out over a hill. Very soon, you will arrive at a small guesthouse, Sagarmatha Lodge.

It takes about an hour to climb out of the village. You will pass the National Park office of Makalu Barun National Park. At the top of the village, there is one more lodge, Panch Pokhari Lodge and Restaurant, and a campsite.

The trail keeps on climbing through forests and agricultural plots, passing small settlements once in a while. After about two hours, you will reach Khiraule. You will pass a school and an iron bridge, from where you have to climb further till you reach a lodge with a campsite, which is situated next to a Buddhist monastery Himalayan Lodge.

Day 6: Khiraule (2,535 m)-Sibuche (2,800 m) via Surke La/Charakot Pass (3,070 m); 7 hours

The summary of the programme for today is as follows: climb till the Surke La (also called Charakot Pass) at 3,070 m, then go down more than 1,000 m till the Inkhu River (1,985 m), then go up again 800 m to Sibuche (2,800 m).

From Himalayan Lodge, follow the small trail up the hill behind the lodge. The trail comes out to some stone steps, leading to a trail through rhododendron forests. You will pass a beautiful stupa with a few mani walls and continue through the forest. You will be surrounded by forested hills as far as you can see. The trail passes the small settlement of Charakot. From here you can take a trail northeastwards to Panch Pokhari, a beautiful mountain-lake (six hours).

The GHT continues westwards, leading to the Surke La/Charakot Pass at 3,070 m (about two hours from Himalayan Lodge). From the pass, a steep path leads you down through rhododendron forests again to the village of Najingdingma (one hour; 2,700 m). The village is surrounded by grass fields, where people from villages higher up take their yaks to graze in the summertime. In Najingdingma, there are two guesthouses.

From Najingdingma, continue over a small trail, which goes steeply down through a forest. After about one-and-a-half hours, you will cross the wild-flowing Hinku River over a suspension bridge (1,985 m). After crossing the bridge, the trail goes steeply up again. After about 10 minutes, you will reach a small lodge, Mera Peak Lodge. After about one-and-a-half hours, you will reach the start of Sibuche (2,555 m; there is a small guesthouse here without a name). It's another half-hour climb

till the end of Sibuche (2,800 m). There is another lodge here, Namaste Lodge. From the lodge, you have a splendid view of Mera Peak.

Day 7: Sibuche (2,800 m)-Paiya (2,767 m) via Narkung La/Chaduk La (3,161 m) and Kari La (3,059 m); 7 hours

Between Sibuche and Paiya, there are two passes to cross. Most of the day you will be walking in the forest, with now and then, a small settlement.

From the end of Sibuche, it takes about an hour's walk to get to the first pass, Narkung La (also called Chaduk La), at 3,161 m. From the pass, you have a beautiful view of Mt Numbur (6,959 m).

After the pass, the path goes down steeply. After about 15 minutes, the trail comes to a T-junction with a mani wall behind it. Go left here. After another 15 minutes, you will reach the small settlement of Panggom, which has a small lodge (New Panorama Lodge).

At the end of the village, the trail bends to the left. This trail goes to Kharikhola. If you want to go to Lukla, don't go left here, but go straight: take the steps that lead to the courtyard of a house, pass the courtyard and then continue the trail, going down. You will pass another lodge, Trekkers Lodge.

The trail continues descending through the forest for another one-and-a-half hours till you reach a small wooden bridge at 2,400 m. From here, the climb to the second pass begins. It's a beautiful trail through the forest, high on the slope, with views of Mt Numbur. After an hour, you will reach another lodge, Sherpa Lodge (with camping facilities). Shortly after, there is a basic guesthouse, Makalu Hotel, after which a trail goes down. Don't take this trail; keep on the trail that goes up. After about one-and-a-half hours, you will reach the second pass of today, Kari La, at 3,059 m. In good weather, you can see not only Mt Numbur, but also the Dudh Kosi Valley all the way till Namche Bazaar and even the Cho Oyo (8,188 m).

The trail goes down quite steeply again and after 30 minutes joins the main trade route from Kharikhola and the famous Jiri-Lukla trekking trail. Follow the trail northwards.

After about an hour, you will reach the village of Paiya. In Paiya there are five lodges.

Day 8: Paiya (2,767 m)-Lukla (2,840 m); 4 hours

This is quite a short day. You will walk mostly through the forests, coming upon many lodges along the way. The day starts with a gradual climb of about one-and-a-half hours, after which the trail goes down steeply for about 45 minutes to Surke (2,290 m). Along the way, you will have beautiful views of rugged snowcapped mountains, like Khumbi Yul La (5,761 m), Khongde (6,168 m), Numbur (6,959 m) and Kusum Khangaru (6,367 m). Shortly after Surke, you will cross a bridge, at 2,276 m, which is the lowest-altitude point for today. From here, it is a long but steady climb of about one-and-a-half hours to Lukla (2,840 m). In Lukla, there are plenty of lodges of all categories, shops, bakeries, internet cafes, bars and even discotheques.

Lukla is the starting point for many treks in the Everest region, like the Everest Base Camp Trek, the Gokyo Lake Trek (or a combination of these two) or the trek over the Tashi Labsta into Rolwaling. Besides, it is the starting point for many climbing expeditions, including the most famous one to Mt Everest (8,848 m).

Those who want to end their trek can fly to Kathmandu from Lukla.

Day 9: Lukla (2,840 m)-Kharikhola (2,007 m); 8 hours

To get to Kharikhola, you have to walk back to Paiya, which takes about four hours. The descent to Surke (2,290 m) takes a little over an hour, and from here it is another three hours, mostly climbing, to Paiya (2,767 m). About half an hour after Paiya, you will reach the junction between the way to the Kari La and Kharikhola. Take a right here. The trail climbs slowly to Thamdada (2,871 m), which you will reach after about 45 minutes. At the end of the settlement, there is a Y-junction; take the right trail, going down. After another 15 minutes, you will pass a lodge, Sonam Lodge. From here, the trail descends steeply through the forest. Far below you flows the roaring Dudh Kosi River. After about 45 minutes, you will reach the small settlement of Kare (2,572 m), which has a few basic guesthouses. It takes another 45 minutes to the small village of Bupsa (2,353 m), which has a few lodges with good facilities (like hot shower).

After Bupsa, you will walk amidst terraced fields of wheat and vegetables. It will be another good half hour of descending before you reach a suspension bridge over the Khari Khola (the river, which has the same

name as the village you will get to later) (1,984 m). From here, the trail climbs gradually to the village of Kharikhola (2,007 m). Kharikhola is a rather big, spread-out village and offers plenty of lodging possibilities: Holiday Home, Himalayan Sherpa Guesthouse, Bouddha Lodge, Shangri La Resort, Namaste Hotel, Solukhumbu Guesthouse, International Guesthouse, Sagarmatha Khumbu Lodge, Kharikhola Guesthouse, Hilltop Guesthouse.

Day 10: Kharikhola (2,007 m)-Ringmu (2,739 m) via Taksindu La (3,062 m); 8 hours

This is a typical GHT lower-route day, with lots of climbing and descending. The summary of today's programme: go down about 500 m till 1,492 m, cross the Dudh Kosi, climb 1,560 m to the Taksindu La, at 3,062 m, and go down 300 m to Ringmu.

Leaving the centre of Kharikhola, you will first climb a bit to the end of the village where the monastery is situated. From here, the trail goes down steeply, passing on the way the beautiful spread-out village of Juving. There are a handful of lodges here.

The Jiri-Lukla route is actually a mule highway. On the way, you are likely to pass huge mule caravans carrying rice or other necessities up to Lukla.

It takes about two hours to get from Kharikhola to the suspension bridge over the Dudh Kosi River, at 1,492 m. After this, the long climb to the pass starts, going through the countryside and forests (note: after about half an hour, there is a steep trail up, to the left; don't take that trail; keep on the main trail, which ascends more gradually). The forest opens up once in a while, offering great views of Himalayan peaks, such as Kusum Kangaru (6,367 m), Mt Numbur (6,959 m), Khatang (6,853 m) and Karyalung (6,681 m). After about two hours, you will reach Nunthala (2,192 m), a big village surrounded by terraced farms. Nunthala has many lodges.

The trail goes mainly through the forest now, and above around 2,800 m the rhododendron forest starts. After one-and-a-half to two hours, you will reach the small settlement of Taksindu (2,862 m), which has a few lodges as well. With good weather, you have great views of the Himalaya here. From here, it is another good half hour to Taksindu Pass, at 3,062 m.

From the pass, it is about half an hour of descending path through pine forests to Ringmu, a Sherpa village surrounded by grass fields. Along the way, you will pass a beautiful old stupa surrounded by a big mani wall. Ringmu has a few guesthouses.

At the end of Ringmu, is the junction between the trail to Salleri and Phaplu, to the south, and Jungbesi, to the west. You can fly back to Kathmandu from Phaplu, which is about a four-hour walk from Ringmu.

Day 11: Ringmu (2,739 m)-Sete (2,538 m) via Lamjura La (3,532 m); 9 ½ hours

This is a very long stretch: 24.76 km, with Lamjura La, a pass at 3,532 m on the way. Altogether you will climb 2,038 m. However, both before and after the pass, there are plenty of lodges where you can stay for the night.

After the pass, you enter the Rolwaling Section (as shown in the GHT map; you stay in Solukhumbu district, however).

From Ringmu, the trail gradually descends to a suspension bridge at 2,606 m (15 minutes). Shortly after the suspension bridge, you will have to cross a wooden bridge. You will be walking in the forest now, climbing gradually again, till you are on the high slopes; the Dudhkund Khola will be far below you.

After about an hour, you will arrive at the small village of Salu (2,945 m), which offers an amazing view of the Himalaya. As you walk towards Phurtyang/Phurteng (3,004 m), the view gets better and better. At the far left, you can even see Mt Everest (8,848 m). From here, you can also see Thamserku (6,608 m), Kangtega (6,685 m), Kusum Khangaru (6,367 m) and Mera Peak (6,476 m). In Phurtyang, there are two teashops (both called Everest View), from where you can enjoy the view, sipping a hot or cold drink. Immediately after Phurtyang, there is a Y-junction; take the right trail, going up. You will be walking through grasslands now, passing some pine trees along the way.

The trail goes down again, till you reach the charming town of Junbesi (2,679 m; about four hours from Ringmu). At the entrance of Junbesi is a beautiful stupa. In Junbesi you will find a tourist-information centre and many lodges.

Around 20 metres after the lodge named Apple Garden Guesthouse, take the trail to the right, going up (there is a sign here that says “Jiri” as well). From here, the long climb to the Lamjura La starts. In the beginning, you will be walking mostly through grasslands, from which you will have a view of hills full of pine trees. At about 2,850 m, you will reach the village of Thaktok Bhug, a very spread-out village (with houses up till almost 3,200 m). Spread throughout the village are some lodges as well. After the village, the trail goes through (mainly) rhododendron forests. The Lamjura La is at 3,532 m, a climb of about three-and-a-half hours from Junbesi.

Shortly after the pass are a few teashops. The trail, more or less flat, passes by a couple of lodges. After the settlement of Goyom (3,216 m; one hour after the pass) the trail starts to descend more steeply. After about half an hour, you will pass another settlement, Dakchu (2,960 m) (with seven lodges).

After another 45 minutes, you will reach the small settlement of Sete, which has three lodges.

Day 12: Sete (2,538 m)-Deurali (2,700 m); 7 hours

Again a day with lots of climbing up and down! From Sete, the trail continues descending. After about five minutes, you will reach a Y-junction. Take the left trail going down. It will go down steeply till you reach the charming village of Kinja (1,624 m; two hours). There are plenty of places to stay in Kinja.

Shortly after Kinja, there is a police post, where you will have to register yourself because between Kinja and Shivalaya you will be walking in the Gaurishankar Conservation Area Project (GCAP). In Shivalaya, there is a GCAP checkpost, where you will have to pay Rs 2,000. Just after the checkpost, you will cross a suspension bridge (1,605 m). The river marks the border between Solukhumbu and Ramechhap, so after crossing the bridge, you will be entering Ramechhap and leaving Solukhumbu behind.

After the bridge, there is a trail going left and two trails going right. The upper trail is the old trail to Jiri, the downward trail is a new trail, which is a bit shorter and easier to walk. This itinerary describes the new trail. The trail follows the Linkhu Khola and after 10 minutes arrives at another suspension bridge (1,597 m). After crossing the bridge,

you will walk on a dirt road for about 15 minutes, passing the small village of Korhem (1,580 m, the lowest point for today). Shortly after the village, take a small path on the right side of the road, going up. The path climbs high on the slope, and soon the Linkhu Khola will be far below you. Although you are walking at an altitude below 2,000 m, the landscape is similar to high- altitude landscapes: grasslands, rocks and a few trees. Later, the landscape gets greener again, and you will even pass orange trees. After about two-and-a-half hours, you will reach the small settlement of Balding (2,015 m), which has some teashops. Just before Balding, the path turns into a dirtroad, which you will follow for about 15 minutes. When the road makes a turn to the left, you will see a trail going straight to the right side of the road. Take this trail. You will cross a small wooden bridge over a wild-flowing river. The trail goes for a while through the forest, but soon you will be walking through terraced fields. After about 45 minutes, you will reach the village of Bhandar (2,170 m-2,310 m).

Bhandar is a big, very spread-out village. It lies not only on the Jiri-Lukla route, but also on the Numbur Cheese Circuit, a beautiful non-touristic trekking route that takes you through beautiful Sherpa villages and spectacular landscapes (for more information: www.numburcheeseircuit.org). Bhandar has plenty of places to stay.

After Bhandar, it is a steep climb of about one hour through a forest to Deurali (2,700 m). There are a few guesthouses here as well.

Day 13: Deurali (2,700 m)-Jiri (1,930 m); 6 hours

Since Deurali means pass, it is not surprising that the day starts with a descent. The trail goes down, for the first hour through a rhododendron forest and then through the countryside. About one-and-a-half hours after leaving Deurali, you will arrive at a dirt road, which you will follow downwards. After five minutes, you will pass a small restaurant, Lama Restaurant. Shortly after the restaurant, there is a small path to the left, going down. The path brings you to the small village of Sangba Danda (2,163 m), which makes for a nice tea-break spot. The trail keeps on descending. In front of you, you will see the beautiful Khimti Kholafar below. After about an hour, you will reach the small town of Shivalaya (1,807 m), down at the riverside. Shivalaya has many lodges. As mentioned before, in Shivalaya there is the checkpoint of the Gaurishankar Conservation Area Project, where you have to pay Rs 2,000.

Cross the suspension bridge at the end of the town and go left. The trail follows the Yelung Khola upstream. After about 20 minutes, you will cross another suspension bridge. After about five minutes, you will arrive at a Y-junction. Take the left trail, going up. The trail climbs high above the river and goes far away from it, first going through the forest and later through the countryside again. In good weather, you will have a good view of Gaurishankar (7,135 m). After another 40 minutes, you will arrive at Mali (2,180 m), a tiny village. There are a few basic guesthouses here as well. After another 20 minutes, you will arrive at a dirt road, which you will take, going right/west. You will pass two basic guesthouses. After 10 minutes, there is a shortcut to your left (just before where the electricity cables cross the road). The trail leads into pine forests and climbs to the top of a hill. At the top, take a right, passing a mobile-telephone tower (2,390 m). You will walk for about 10 minutes on the dirt road. Where it makes a U-turn, there is a small path to your right going down, which you have to take. The path goes away from the road, northwestwards. After about 15 minutes, you will reach the small settlement of Chitre (2,328 m). There is one basic lodge here, Solukhumbu Lodge.

From Chitre, you can head north, straight towards Sherakapti (2,411 m) and bypassing Jiri, which saves you two hours on the next day. If you do that, you can stay overnight at the cheese factory. Ask the locals in Chitre and Shivalaya for advice.

After another half an hour, you will reach the road again, but there are a couple of shortcuts you can take. After another half an hour, you will reach the small settlement of Bakhori (2,032 m). After Bakhori you will cross the road and go straight, following a trail into the forest. After 15 minutes, you will be on the dirt road again, which in about 20 minutes brings you into Jiri (1,930 m).

Jiri is a busy market town, with lots of shops and guesthouses.

Day 14: Jiri-Kathmandu; (by bus); 7 hours

If you want to end your trek here, you can take a bus to Kathmandu. The journey takes about seven hours.

Accommodation Overview

Everest & Rolwaling Section: Solukhumbu

Day 1: Kathmandu-Khadbari (1,041 m)

There are a few restaurants and seven basic hotels (see previous section).

Day 2: Khadbari (1,041 m)- Majuwadanda (800 m); 5 hours

Majuwadanda:

Sagarmatha Hotel and Lodge
A small guesthouse with three rooms and a place to camp.

Day 3: Majuwadanda (800 m)-Salpa Phedi (1,530 m); 8 hours

Around 2 hours 10 minutes after Majuwadanda:

Kulung Kirant Hotel
Two simple rooms.

Salpa Phedi:

Hotel Irkhowa and Lodge
Three rooms.

Sherpa Hotel and Guesthouse
Two rooms and a dormitory;- campsites.

Day 4: Salpa Phedi (1,530 m)-Sanam (2,834 m) via Salpa Pass (334 m); 8 hours

Thulophokte:

Kalopatar Hotel and Lodge
Two rooms; campsite available.

Salpa Pass Hotel and Lodge:
Small guesthouse with camping facilities. If you don't want to go all the way to Sanam, this is the place to stay.

Sanam:

Gomba Lodge
Four rooms and two dining rooms.

Next door, there is also a small local guesthouse without a name.

Day 5: Sanam (2,834 m) - Khiraule (2,535 m); 8 hours

About 45 minutes from Sanam:

Arun Valley Lodge
A small lodge where you can camp.

Tine Sherpa Hotel
One room and dining; shop and camping facilities.

Gudel:

Namaste Lodge and Restaurant
Four rooms/11 beds and a campsite.

Kapila Guesthouse
Small guesthouse; no campsite.

Bung:

Sagarmatha Lodge
Tel: 9753007158
Two rooms; one with a double bed, one with single bed; shop.

Panch Pokhari Lodge and Restaurant
Tel: 9842904672
Has a campsite.

Khiraule:

Himalayan Lodge
Three rooms; dining; campsite.

Day 6: Khiraule (2,535m) - Sibuche (2,800 m) via Surke La/Charakot Pass (3,070 m); 7 hours

Najingdingma:

Sherpa Guesthouse
Two rooms.

Namaste Lodge and campsite
Four rooms.

Mera Peak Lodge
Guests have to sleep in the dining area.
Shibuche:
Small guesthouse without a name.

Namaste Lodge
At the end of Shibuche.

Day 7: Sibuche (2,800m) - Paiya (2,767 m) via Narkung La/Chaduk La (3,161 m) and Kari La (3,059 m); 7 hours

Panggom:

New Panorama Lodge.
Trekking Lodge.

Sherpa Lodge
Has camping facilities.

Makalu Hotel.

Paiya:

Sherpa Guide Lodge
Has camping facilities.

Apple Pie Lodge
Has camping facilities.

Beehive Lodge.
Himalaya Sherpa Lodge.
Trekking Lodge.

Because you are in a more touristy area, the facilities are pretty good here: all lodges have a hot shower, a warm dining area, clean rooms that have beds with

soft mattresses, shops, recharge facilities, and an extensive menu.

**Day 8: Paiya (2,767m)
-Lukla (2,840 m); 4 hours**

Lukla:

There are plenty of lodges hereof all categories.

Day 9: Lukla (2,840 m)-Kharikhola (2,007 m); 8 hours

**Thamdada (2,871 m)
(15 minutes after
Thamdada):**

Sonam Lodge
Tel: 9743029326
Four rooms and a dormitory.

Kare:

Tashi Taki Hotel
Evergreen Land
Basic guesthouse.

Bupsa:

The lodges here have good facilities (like hot shower).

Sundup Lodge
The biggest lodge here, with 15 rooms.

Hotel International Trekkers
Kwangde View Lodge
Everest Guesthouse
Rainbow Promise
Jumling Lodge

Kharikhola:

Holiday Home
Himalayan Sherpa Guesthouse
Bouddha Lodge
Shangri La Resort
Namaste Hotel
Solukhumbu Guesthouse
International Guesthouse
Sagarmatha Khumbu Lodge
Kharikhola Guesthouse
Hilltop Guesthouse

**Day 10: Kharikhola
(2,007 m)- Ringmu
(2,739 m) via Taksindu La
(3,062 m); 8 hours**

Juving:

Juving Guesthouse
The Green Bamboo Lodge
Gorkha Lodge
Kongde Lodge

Nunthala:

Rai Guestouse
Danphe Guesthouse
Himalayan Trekkers Lodge
Hotel Everest
Moonlight Guesthouse
Sherpa Guesthouse
Thamserku Guesthouse
Shangri-La Guesthouse
Tiny Guesthouse

Taksindu:

Mountain View Lodge
Panorama Lodge

Ringmu:

Gauri Shankar Lodge
Quiet View Lodge
Applehouse Lodge
Sherpa Guide Lodge
Centre Sherpa Lodge
Numbur and Cheese Factory
Lodge

**Day 11: Ringmu (2,739 m)
-Sete (2,538 m) via Lamju-
ra La (3,532 m); 9 ½ hours**

Junbesi:

Sagarmatha Lodge
Everest Trekkers Lodge
J.B. Lodge
Junbesi Valley Guesthouse
Apple Garden Guesthouse
Sherpa Guide Lodge
Ang Domil Junbesi Guesthouse
House Namaste

Thaktok Bhug:

Suman Lodge
Shanti Chetra Lodge
Tashi Delek Lodge

After the pass:

Buddha Lodge (45 min after the pass).

Goyom (3,216 m):

Sherpa Lodge
Tashi Delek Lodge
Maya Lodge
Hotel Rhododendron

Dakchu:

Numbur Lodge
Maya Tamang's Lodge
Dhugyalzen Sherpa Lodge
Namaste Sonam Guesthouse
New Sherpa Lodge
Maya Guesthouse
Chhepal Sherpa Lodge

Sete:

Sherpa Guide Lodge
Solukhumbu Lodge
Sunrise Lodge

**Day 12: Sete (2,538m)
-Deurali (2,700 m);
7 hours**

Kinja:

Numbur View Lodge
Kinja Lodge
Sherpa Guesthouse
Sonam Guesthouse
New Everest Guesthouse
Buddha Lodge

Bhandar:

Himalayan Lodge
Shobha Lodge
Buddha Lodge
Ang Dawa Lodge
Buddha Sherpa Lodge
Sunny Guesthouse
New Sherpa Lodge
Solukhumbu Lodge

Deurali:

Deurali Pass Guesthouse
Pangang Lodge
Highland Sherpa Guesthouse
Lama Lodge

Jiri:

Jiri is a busy market town with lots of shops and guest-houses.

Day 13: Deurali (2,700 m)-Jiri (1,930 m); 6 hours

Shivalaya:

Panch Pokharari Lodge
Solukhumbu Lodge
Punarmilan Lodge
Tangbu Sherpa Lodge
Shivalaya Hilton Lodge
New Sherpa Guide Lodge
Trekking Guide Lodge
Paradise Lodge
River Guesthouse

Mali:

Cheaurdung Sherpa Hotel
Pasang Sherpa Lodge

After another 20 minutes:

Tourist Lodging
Mt Everest Hotel and Lodge

Chitre:

Solukhumbu Lodge

Sherakapti:

You can stay overnight at the cheese factory.

Everest & Rolwaling Section: Rolwaling

Introduction

On this section of the GHT, you will be completely leaving the tourist trail behind. Here you will hardly find any lodges. You will pass through beautiful lush forests, with lots of birds, which make this section interesting for bird watchers as well. The villages, which have hardly seen any tourists, offer an interesting mix of Buddhist and Hindu cultures. The Himalaya are in view as well, and you have especially great views of Gaurishankar (7,135 m). The easy access from Kathmandu is an extra advantage of this section.

Days: 6

Difficulty: Moderate

Maximum elevation: 3,310 m

Type: Teahouse/homestay/camping (it is recommended that you take a tent)

Permits needed: TIMS

Itinerary

Day 1: Kathmandu-Jiri (1,930 m); 7-hour bus ride

Day 2: Jiri (1,930 m)-Putchar Kharka (2,341 m) via pass at 2,736 m; 7 hours

Day 3: Putchar Kharka (2,341 m)-Laduk (1,790 m); 5 ½ hours

Day 4: Laduk (1,790 m)-Bigu Gompa (2,500 m); 8 hours

Day 5: Bigu Gompa (2,505 m)-Durumthali (1,970 m) via Tinsang La (3,310 m); 9 hours

Day 6: Durumthali (1,970 m)-Barabise (870 m); 3 hours; and bus to Kathmandu; 4 hours

Day 1: Kathmandu-Jiri (1,930 m); 7-hour bus ride

Jiri is a busy market town, with lots of shops and guesthouses. The journey from Kathmandu takes about seven hours (by bus).

Day 2: Jiri (1,930 m)-Putchar Kharka (2,341 m); 7 hours

Today you will leave the tourist trail behind. So there will be no more lodges on the way, only a few restaurants and even fewer guesthouses. In the villages, you can seek information about where you can stay for the night. A tent is recommended.

The day starts with a climb. In Jiri, follow the bazaar road till you see a sign that says "Sherpa Guesthouse". Take a right at the sign. After about half an hour, you will see a school on the left, Shree Cherding Primary School. Go left here and cross a small wooden bridge. You will pass the small village of Nahbo (2,070 m). Shortly after the village, a few steps away to your left from the dirt trail you are walking on, you will see a white water-reservoir, with a small trail next to it. Take this trail and walk up the steep hill. You will pass the dirt road (which is only used by tractors, it seems) several times. On some parts of the trail, you will have to walk on the road as well, but there are lots of shortcuts. At around 2,600 m you will enter rhododendron and pine forests. About two-and-a-half hours after leaving Jiri, you will reach a pass (2,736 m). The road goes straight and has a turn to the right. Take the right turn and then follow the path straight down (i.e. take the path, not the road). After about 15 minutes, you will come to a Y-junction. Take the path on the left, going down, which will bring you to a dirt road again. After about five minutes, a trail goes left of the road, going down. Take that trail, which will take you through a forest with lots of birds. After an hour, you will reach a suspension bridge crossing the Jhyaku Khola. From here you can see the village of Sherakapti (2,411 m) on the other slope. After the bridge, the trail bends to the left and brings you to Sherakapti. The village is inhabited by the Jirel people, who are similar to the Sherpas who live around Jiri. There is one small teashop, where you can stop for lunch (it is recommended that you bring your own lunch pack).

From Sherakapti, take the trail behind the gompa/monastery (Jhyanku Dolakha Gompa) going up the hill. At the resting places (which are everywhere in Nepal along the trails), you will find beautiful and colourful Buddhist paintings. After about half an hour, you will reach the highest point (2,545 m). Go straight down here (northwestwards). You will find yourself again in a beautiful forest with lots of birds. After about five minutes, you will come to a Y-junction. Take the right trail, which is very flat. Shortly after, there is another Y-junction; take a right here as well. It is easy, mostly flat-walking (for a change), before

the trail gradually climbs up again. After about half an hour, you will reach another resting place, with Buddhist paintings (2,640 m). Shortly after this, there are three trails: to the left, going down; straight, staying flat; and to the right, going down. Take the trail to the right (to the north). You will be walking through fields again and crossing a small settlement, Basa (2,530 m). Walk to the end of the village, and go right (south) here, on a trail going down to the river. It's a little bit less than an hour going down through the forest to the river, the Kakchapa Khola (2,154 m), which you will have to cross stone-hopping.

The trail then goes up again. After two minutes, you can choose between two trails. Take the right one, going up. The trail climbs steeply in the north/northwestern direction through the forest. After half an hour, you will reach a field with a house, where you can ask if they can provide accommodation. Although there are no other houses in sight, the place does have a name: Putchar Kharka (2,341 m). It is a beautiful spot, with a splendid view of the hills around and the Himalaya, including the impressive Gaurishankar (7,135 m).

Day 3: Putchar Kharka (2,341 m)-Laduk (1,790 m); 5 ½ hours

Putchar Kharka is the highest point of the trail. From here, the trail descends again for about half an hour through the forest to another river, the Kaichapa Khola (2,020 m) (along the descent there are two Y-junctions; at both instances, take the left trail, going down). After the small wooden bridge, the trail climbs gradually through the forest. After 15 minutes, there is a Y-junction. Take the right trail, going up. After another 15 minutes, you will reach the small, spread-out village of Suri (2,144 m). You will pass a mani wall, after which there is another Y-junction. Take the path on the left, which at first is flat and then goes down gradually. After about half an hour, you will pass a stupa (2,030 m), from where the trail goes down more steeply. After about two minutes, there is another Y-junction. Take the left trail, going down. After about 20 minutes, you will reach a dirt road. Go left here, going down. You will pass a few houses, which still are part of Suri Village.

From Suri, you will have to go all the way down to Bare (1,005 m) at the Tama Kosi Nadi. At the end of the village, there are two options: you can keep on following the dirt road, or you can take a small trail to the left of the road (just before a small pond). This trail is nicer to walk and leads through the countryside, passing the small settlement of

Tileghu/Tingekhu (1,607 m). After about half an hour, you will arrive at the road again, which goes through a pine forest now. After about 20 minutes, you will see a shortcut to your right, which is definitely worth taking, as it leads away completely from the road and saves time. You will see a few Y-junctions again; always choose the trail going down. After about half an hour, the trail reaches the road again; from here it is only 15 minutes to Barle (1,005 m), and there are a few more shortcuts you can take. Barle is a small bazaar town at the shore of the beautiful, emerald-green Tama Kosi Nadi. There are a few restaurants here, where you can eat daal bhaat.

At the end of Barle, you will cross a suspension bridge. After the bridge, the trail turns to the left and brings you to a road going up (at present, the road going down and the road going up are not connected). Follow the road, past the petrol pump and a small stream. After the stream, there is a small path to the right of some (rice/wheat) terraces, going up steeply. Take this path; keep on walking through the terraces; don't follow the trail next to the river. The trail enters the forest and climbs up steeply for about one and-a-half hours, till you reach the spread-out village of Laduk (1,557 m). You will arrive at the road again; take a right here and keep on following the road, which slowly goes up. Laduk is a charming village with beautiful white terracotta houses. This village is inhabited by Chettris, Newars and Tamangs.

As you keep walking, you will see a Buddhist monastery to your right (when the road turns to the left). Shortly after, you will see a few houses, which offer restaurant and lodging possibilities (however, one of the two doesn't want to cook for foreign travelers). About 50 metres after these houses, there is a path to the left through terraced fields. This trail brings you into the village. To your left is a house that offers homestay accommodation: the proprietor is Mr Man Kaji Shrestha. You can ask around in the village about where you can stay for the night.

Day 4: Laduk (1,790 m)-Bigu Gompa (2,500 m); 8 hours

This is quite a tough day: you will cover a stretch of 20.5 km that includes a hard climb from around an altitude of 1,650 m to Bigu Gompa at 2,500 m at the end. However, you can break the day into two parts and stay overnight at Chilanka (1,866 m), where you can find a community lodge developed by Eco Himal (an Austrian development organisation) with a campsite.

Keep on following the same trail, going up, through the village. At the end of the village, the trail bends to the left (north) and you will walk through terraced fields before entering a forest. After about 30 minutes, you will come to a Y-junction; take the left flat trail. You will pass a few houses with fields around them, but soon you will be walking in the forest again. The trail climbs slowly northwards, following the river, which lies very far below. After another 40 minutes, you will arrive at the highest point (1,912 m); there is another Y-junction here, the left trail going down and the right one going up. Take the left trail, which is more or less a *Nepali flat* (flat with ups and downs). You will pass two stupas and after five minutes, you will arrive at the small settlement of Soysan (1,912 m). Just before Soysan, you will see a Y-junction again; take the left trail, which leads you just below the village. After the village, the trail goes further down (going northeast). After 15 minutes, you will arrive at a resting place with lots of stones, after which there is another Y-junction. Take the left trail going down, again in the northeast direction. The trail leads, in about half an hour, to a small river.

After crossing the bridge (1,872 m), the trail goes up again (going west/southwest). After another half hour, you will pass a small school, which belongs to the village of Charsapa (2,023 m). After about 15 minutes, you will come to another Y-junction; take the left trail. The trail is *Nepali flat* again, going through a rough landscape with bushes and rocks, with the river at your left, far below you. On the horizon, you can see the snowcapped Himalaya. After about 40 minutes, you will arrive at a dirt road, which brings you into Chilankha (1,866 m). There is a small restaurant here, run by Shanti Khadka (Tel: 9741199852). From here, you can already see the school from Loting, which you will have to pass, high on the slope of Bigu Gompa.

Keep on following the main road (after five minutes you will come to a Y-junction; take the left, going down). After about 20 minutes, you will cross a suspension bridge (1,685 m), which also makes for a nice shortcut through the pine forest. After about 15 minutes, you will be back on the road. Altogether, it takes about one hour from Chilankha to the school at Loting (1,770 m). Just after the school, take the path that goes left of the road. The path passes an Eco Himal community lodge with a campsite.

You will arrive at a dirt road again and pass the small village of Golopa (1,682 m). From Loting it takes about one hour to get to the Singati Khola. There are a few points where you can cross the river (in Feb-

ruary of 2012, you could cross over a somewhat scary small bridge; 1,650 m). From here starts the long climb to Bigu Gompa (2,500 m). You will pass the beautiful spread-out village of Alampu (1,870 to about 1,950 m), inhabited by Thami people. You will pass the road a couple of times, but you can walk on small trails almost all the way to Bigu Gompa. On the way, you will pass several stupas and mani walls. The climb to Bigu Gompa takes about two-and-a-half hours.

Bigu Gompa is a small village with a beautiful Buddhist monastery, which in fact is a nunnery. Every morning around 6 am they have a *puja* (prayer ceremony) of about one-and a-half-hours, which you can attend.

In Bigu Gompa, there is another Eco Himal community lodge, where you can camp as well.

Day 5: Bigu Gompa (2,505 m)-Durumthali (1,970 m) via Tinsang La (3,310 m); 9 hours

Today is again a long stretch, crossing the Tinsang La (3,310 m) and covering a distance of 20 km. You can choose to stay overnight in Dolangsa (2,598 m), about two hours before Durumthali. There is another Eco Himal community lodge here.

From Bigu Gompa follow the trail left of the lodge, going up, passing through the forest. After about five minutes, the trail starts to descend and brings you in about one hour to a wooden bridge (2,282 m). After crossing the bridge go left (west/southwest) and you will arrive at a dirtroad, which you will follow, going up. You will pass a small lodge, Maile Lodge (2,311 m). The road goes all the way to the pass, but there are many shortcuts, which take you away from the road completely. As you climb, you will see the landscape changing around you, from bamboo forests to a more grassy and rocky landscape, and then changing into rhododendron and pine forests. When you get higher, you will see stunning views of Himalayan peaks, including Gaurishankar (7,135 m), Mt Chekigo (6,257 m), and Mt Bamongo (6,400 m).

From the bridge and lodge, it takes about three hours to a spot with two restaurants just before the Tinsang La (3,260 m; Tel: 9849925392). From here it takes about 15 minutes more to the Tinsang La (3,310 m). The trees here block the view of the Himalaya a bit, but you do have a splendid view of the new valley you are entering. After the pass, there are two trails, one going flat and straight and one

going right and down. Take the one going down. Again, you will cross the road a couple of times, overall walking westwards. After about one-and-a-half hours, you will reach a few small huts with yak pastures, from which it is another half hour to the village of Dolangsa (2,600 m). You can find an Eco Himal community lodge here as well, with camping facilities. In the village is a gumpa that you can visit.

The trail goes further down past the gumpa, going through agricultural fields. After about half an hour, you will pass a stream, which you cross stone-hopping (2,282 m). You will arrive at the road again, which you will follow in the western/southwestern direction. After about half an hour, you will pass the village of Photeng (2,360 m). Where the road makes a turn to the right, you can take a small trail to your left, which makes for a nice shortcut. When you arrive on the road again, cross the road, and keep on following the trail straight down. After about 45 minutes, you will reach the small village of Durumthali (1,969 m). Shortly after passing a school, you will see a small lodge and restaurant to your right.

From this lodge, a bus leaves every morning for Barabise, from where you can go to Kathmandu, so you can choose to stop your trek here.

Day 6: Durumthali (1,970 m)-Barabise (870 m); 3 hours; and bus to Kathmandu; 4 hours

It takes you about three hours of easy-walking to Barabise. The last hour is a quite steep downhill.

From Durumthali, you will follow the dirt road, which leads you in about 45 minutes to the village of Khartali (1,798 m). Near a water tap, to the left side of the road, you will see a small trail going down, which you will take. The trail crosses the road and then leads in five to ten minutes to the Khartali Eco Himal community lodge (1,687 m), which, as with the others, has a few dormitories and a place to camp.

Follow the trail in front of the lodge. You will arrive back at the road, which you will keep on following. After about an hour, you will reach the small village of Okreni/Chematang (1,380 m). From here, stairs lead all the way down to Barabise (870 m), passing the village of Palati (1,280 m), which takes about an hour.

Barabise is a bustling bazaar town, which has some basic hotels and restaurants. From here it is 78 km to Kathmandu, which takes about three to four hours by bus.

Accommodation Overview

Everest & Rolwaling Section: Rolwaling

Day 1: Kathmandu-Jiri (1,930 m)

Jiri is a busy market town, with lots of shops and guesthouses.

Day 2: Jiri (1,930 m)-Putchar Kharka (2,341 m); 7 hours

Off the tourist trail, so there will be no more lodges on the way, only a few restaurants and even fewer guesthouses. In the villages, you can seek information about where you can stay for the night. A tent is recommended.

Day 3: Putchar Kharka (2,341 m)-Laduk (1,790 m); 5 ½ hours

Just after Laduk:

A few houses offer restaurant and lodging possibilities (however, one of them doesn't want to cook for foreign travelers).

Homestay accommodation at Mr Man Kaji Shrestha's house
Tel: 049-620024

You can ask around in the village about where you can stay for the night.

Day 4: Laduk (1,790 m)-Bigu Gompa (2,500 m); 8 hours

Chilanka:

Eco Himal community lodge with a campsite (www.ecohimal.org)

Past the school at Loting:

Eco Himal community lodge with a campsite

Bigu Gompa:

Eco Himal community lodge with three dormitories. You can camp here as well.

Day 5: Bigu Gompa (2,505 m)-Durumthali (1,970 m) via Tinsang La (3,310 m); 9 hours

On the way to Dolangsa:

Maile Lodge
Tel: 9746067365
Has three rooms.

Dolangsa:

Eco Himal community lodge with camping facilities

Durumthali:

A small lodge with one room and a kitchen, where people can sleep; also has space for a few tents; has electricity, so you can recharge your phone and computer. This is the first place after Jiri with this facility. Proprietor: Mr Kaljen Sherpa:
Tel: 9751002957.

**Day 6: Durumthali
(1,970 m)-Barabise
(870 m); 3 hours; and bus
to Kathmandu; 4 hours**

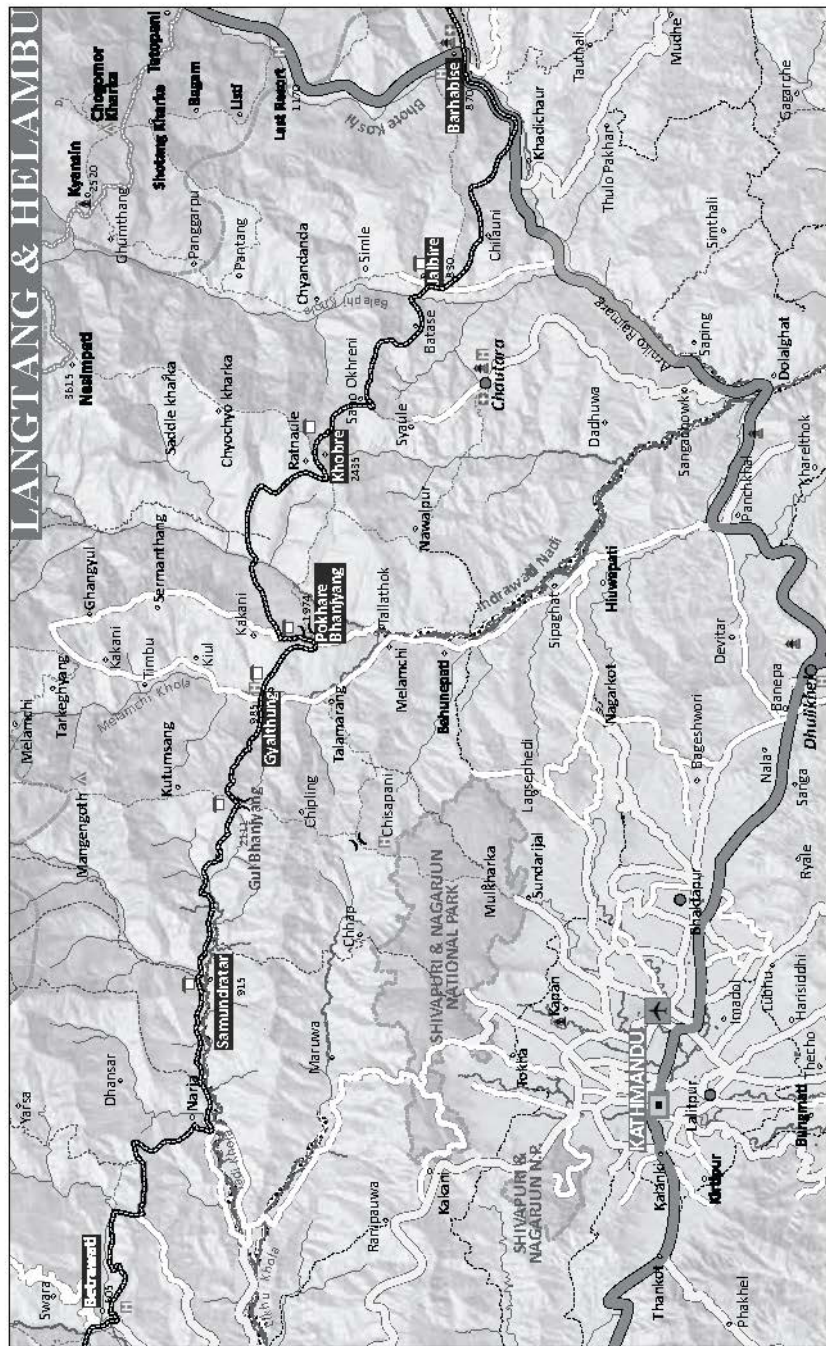
Khartali:

Eco Himal community lodge
Dormitories and place to camp.

Barabise:

This is a bustling bazaar town with some basic hotels and restaurants.

LANGTANG & HELAMBU



Langtang & Helambu Section

Introduction

This is the section closest to Kathmandu. Despite its closeness to the capital, it is surprising to see how traditional life is in the villages here. Both men and women are often dressed in traditional clothes, and you will see many ploughing their fields with oxen. The villages offer an interesting mix of Buddhist and Hindu cultures, with Chettri, Newari, Tamang and Sherpa villages. The trail goes mostly through the countryside, but sometimes also through beautiful forests. You have amazing views of the Langtang Range and Dorje Lakpa.

Days: 5/8

Difficulty: Easy/moderate

Maximum elevation: 2,435 m

Type: Teahouse/homestay/camping (it is recommended that you take a tent)

Permits needed: TIMS

Itinerary

Day 1: Kathmandu-Barabise (870 m); 4-hour bus ride

Day 2: Barabise (870 m)-Jalbire (830 m) 8 hours

Day 3: Jalbire (830 m)-Khobre (2435 m) 8 hours

Day 4: Khobre (2,435 m)-Pokhare Bhanjyang (1,575 m); 9 hours

Day 5: Pokhare Bhanjyang (1,574 m)-Gyalthung (985 m) 2 hours; (entry/exit point); 4-hour bus ride to Kathmandu

Day 6: Gyalthung (985 m)-Samundratar (915 m) via Gul Bhanjyang (2,111 m); 8 hours

Day 7: Samundratar (915 m)-Betrawati (605 m); 9 hours

Day 8: Betrawati-Kathmandu; 5-hour bus ride

Day 1: Kathmandu-Barabise (870 m); 4-hour bus ride

Kathmandu to Barabise is 78 km, which takes about three to four hours by bus. Barabise is a bustling bazaar town, which has a couple of basic hotels and restaurants.

Day 2: Barabise (870 m)-Jalbire (830 m); 8 hours

This is quite a long day, with a total distance of about 21.5 km and a total ascent of 1,523 m. As you will be walking around an altitude of 1,000 m, it is generally quite hot, which can make it a bit tiring. But you will walk through beautiful agricultural landscapes, passing charming villages.

In Barabise, take the road going left just before the bridge (which is at a police post). When you have left the village, take the stairs going up at your left. After about half an hour, you will reach a rough dirt road, which you will cross several times, taking shortcuts. There are a few Y-junctions; always choose the trail going up. You go up steeply. After about 45 minutes, you will reach the small settlement of Kalikha (1,358 m), which has a school (The Shree Kalika Primary School). Take the path that goes behind the school. The path keeps on climbing, but less steeply now. After another short half an hour, you will pass the village of Ramche (1,403 m). There are a few Y-junctions; always choose the trail going westwards. The trail will be more or less flat now, running alongside terraced fields, following the Dudh Kosi downstream, which flows very far below you.

After about 45 minutes you will reach a resting place with faint Buddhist paintings and a water tap. Just after this, take a small path to your right, which goes up. You will reach a large path/(rough) dirt road again. After another half an hour, the path reaches the highest point (1,645 m), which offers a splendid view of the Dudh Kosi Valley and the hills in the distance. The road goes down slowly and after 10 minutes reaches another Y-junction. Take the left fork, going flat. After 20 minutes you will cross a small stream, after which you have to take a small trail up, to your right. It's another 15 minutes to the village of Chimling (1,576 m). Chimling has a few restaurants and is a good spot to take a lunch break.

After Chimling, the trail continues westwards, following the Sunkosi Nadi in the distance far below. It's mostly easy and flat-walking. Although this area is mostly inhabited by Hindus, you do pass some ruins of stupas. After about an hour, you will pass the village of Mankha, after which the trail starts climbing again. You will pass a resting place, after which you have to take the right trail going up. You will be walking on a small trail through the fields now. After around an hour, you will pass the village of Chilauni. Here you go right and take the trail

left of the road, which arrives at a very rough, dirt road, gradually descending. The hill on the other side of the valley is completely terraced, a beautiful sight, and a sign of hard work!

It's another hour to the village of Kalleri. Here, the trail leaves the dirt road, going down and immediately right and flat again. From Kalleri, the trail goes northwards. It's a beautiful small trail going through terraced fields and small forests.

It's another hour to the village of Phulpinkot. Shortly after the village, the trail goes down steeply, for about 45 minutes till you reach Jalbire.

Jalbire is a Newari village and has a charming main street. There are four small, basic guesthouses.

Day 3: Jalbire (830 m)-Khobre (2,435 m); 7 ½ hours

Today the distance to cover is less than the previous day (16.5 km), but there is a lot of climbing involved: the total ascent is about 2,180 m.

Close to a suspension bridge, there is a small shrine with a sleeping Lord Vishnu. The suspension bridge leads to the main street, which in turn leads to a big suspension bridge (on the left side) over the Balephi Khola. After crossing the bridge, the trail goes straight. After 30 metres, take a right, on a small path through the fields. The trail soon starts climbing up the hill through the forest, offering great views of Dorje Lhakpa (6,966 m).

After about 45 minutes you will reach Batase (1,300 m), a spread-out village. After about half an hour, you will reach a resting place; take the trail right of the resting place, going flat. It is another hour to Phulping (1,520 m). In Phulping, you could take a lunch break, but there are no official restaurants. You could, however, ask the locals to prepare daal bhaat for you. (Note: after Phulping there are few water-refill possibilities for the next four hours).

At the end of the village there is a Y-junction; take the trail on the right. The trail climbs to the top of a ridge and offers beautiful views of both sides of the green hills. After about 40 minutes, the trail flattens and enters a pine forest (1,770 m). After another five minutes, there is a Y-junction; take the trail on the right. This becomes a very small trail, going rather flat through a lush forest. After another 45 minutes, the

vegetation changes to bushes in a rocky landscape. About two hours after leaving Pulping, you will reach the village of Bhasre (2,005 m).

The trail continues climbing and after half an hour suddenly arrives at a dirt road (under construction). Go left here. Where the road bends to the right and goes down, there is a trail going left, which you will take. This is a beautiful trail through the forest, offering amazing views of the Himalaya (Dorje Lakpa (6,966 m) and the Langtang Range).

Now and then you will arrive back at the road, but there are several other shortcuts that you can take. However, during the last two hours to Khobre you will be walking on the road, which passes through pine and rhododendron forests and agricultural fields. You will pass the village of Poserel Lamidada (2,250 m), from which it is one and-a-half-hours to Khobre (2,434 m). Khobre is a small Sherpa village, from which you have amazing views of the Himalaya (Langtang Range and Dorje Lakpa). There are two small guesthouses with a campsite.

Day 4: Khobre (2,435 m)-Pokhare Bhanjyang (1,575 m); 9 hours

Shortly after leaving Khobre, there is a shortcut on the right side of the road, going down. After about 20 minutes, you will reach the small Sherpa settlement of Okhreni (2,293 m). The Buddhist culture is easily visible, with the bright white stupas, a monastery and many prayer flags. Keep following the road past Okhreni, and when it bends to the left, take the trail going straight (north). The trail descends through the forest and again you have a beautiful view of the Himalaya.

About an hour after leaving Khobre, you will cross a small bridge (2,066 m) next to a waterfall, and continue *Nepali-flat* walking. It's about 20 minute to a suspension bridge (2,030 m). Shortly after, you will arrive at a dirt road, which you will follow for a few minutes, until you see a shortcut to your right. The trail goes down steeply through the countryside to the big Tamang village of Bote Namla (1,795 m; 40 minutes). Follow the trail down through the village and continue on a dirt road (taking a shortcut now and then) to a suspension bridge (1,680 m; 30 minutes after Bote Namla). Just a few minutes after the bridge there is a Y-junction; take the left trail going flat. The trail goes *Nepali flat*, first through terraces and then through a rocky landscape with bushes.

After about an hour, you will arrive at a small landslide (20 m), which

is a bit difficult to cross. Immediately after the landslide, there is a trail going down on the left side of the path, which you have to take. The trail goes down steeply in the beginning and brings you to a dirt road in about 30 minutes. Take the road going down as well. After about five minutes you will reach the Hindu (Chettri) village of Tar Namlang (1,440 m). Just before a shop, a trail leads down to the left side of the road, which you have to take. Keep on going down, crossing the road now and then. After about one hour and 15 minutes you will reach the road again, close to the Indrawati Nadi. Take a right here, following the river upstream. After a few minutes, there is a Y-junction; take the left road going down. In about five minutes, you will reach a suspension bridge, which leads you to the Tamang village of Chinde (970 m). There are a few restaurants here, which provide daal bhaat.

Just after the village, go right, away from the river, through the fields, then cross a small wooden bridge over a stream (990 m). The trail starts climbing now and enters a forest. After about 40 minutes you will reach a big white stupa surrounded by prayer flags. After another half hour you will pass a few fields, after which there is a resting place. About 50 metres after the resting place there is a Y-junction (1,385 m); take a left here. Shortly after, you will reach another Tamang village, Bhaskarka (1,450 m). You will walk through the fields again, with some small forests. After about an hour, you will arrive at a dirt road, going west. After about half an hour of rather flat walking, you will pass the village of Labgaon (1,660 m), which has a beautiful white stupa, with the ruins of an old stupa in the back. From here it is another 45 minutes to Pokhare Bhanjyang (1,575 m).

Pokhare Bhanjyang is a Tamang village. There are two small guest-houses close to the stupa. You can pitch your tent around the stupa. There is also a small lodge with a campsite at the end of the village, Langtang Guesthouse.

Day 5: Pokhare Bhanjyang (1,574 m)-Gyalthung (985 m); 2 hours

This will be a short and easy day-walk to the little town of Gyalthung, going partly over the road and partly over nice trails through the fields.

Keep on following the road through Pokhare Bhanjyang. At the end of the village, take a right, towards a bright pink house. After about 10 minutes the road makes a U-turn to the left; take a shortcut to the right

here. The trail goes down steeply through the fields. After about 10 minutes you will be back on the road again. This area is quite populated and you will be passing several villages, like Bartitok (1,356 m) and Dubatsor Chap (1,172 m). Around five minutes after Dubatsor Chap there is a shortcut to the right side of the road, which is worth taking, as it brings you on a small trail through beautiful terraces. You will encounter a few Y-junctions; always take the trail going flat. After about half an hour you will be back on the road, but within 100 metres there is another shortcut to your right. The trail brings you to the small village of Garibesi (996 m), at the side of Melamchi Khola. Follow the river upstream. After about 15 minutes, you will reach a suspension bridge, which brings you to the small town of Gyalthung (985 m). There are a few basic guesthouses in Gyalthung.

Gyalthung is accessible by road, and a bus to Kathmandu takes about four hours.

Day 6: Gyalthung (985 m)-Samundratar (915 m) via Gul Bhanjyang (2,111 m); 8 hours

It is almost 25 km from Gyalthung to Samundratar, first climbing to Gul Bhanjyang (2,111 m) and then going down again. But as a big part of this stretch goes over a dirt road, it is not too difficult to do this stretch in one day.

From Gyalthung follow the road northwestwards (this means taking a right after crossing the suspension bridge mentioned on day 26). After about five minutes you will cross a bridge over the Melamchi Khola, after which you will continue on the road going left. The road follows the Melamchi Khola upstream. After a little less than an hour, there is a suspension bridge; don't cross it; instead, keep on following the road. After another 10 minutes you will reach a construction site of the Melamchi water-supply system, which provides water to Kathmandu. Cross the small bridge and take a trail behind the white houses, going up steeply (or follow the road going in front of the houses). After about five minutes, this trail brings you back on the dirt road, which, as of February 2012, was still under construction. After 10 minutes there is a Y-junction; take the trail to the right going flat. Soon this trail begins to climb. After about half an hour you will reach the small settlement of Bolde (1,630 m). After Bolde, the road becomes a small trail, which goes up steeply through the forest. A little less than half an hour later (at around 1,800 m) there is another Y-junction; take the trail on the

left. The trail goes through fields again, a sign of a village approaching. You will pass the small village of Gurungaon (2,008 m), from which it is another 20 minutes to Gul Bhanjyang (2,111 m), a village with Tamang and Sherpa people.

Gul Bhanjyang is on the Helambu trekking route to Lake Gosainkunda, so you will find nice lodges here.

Gul Bhanjyang is connected to a road again, which you will follow northwestwards. After about half an hour, you will see a white stupa, which actually is a gompa, and prayerflags to your left. There is a shortcut to the gompa, connecting with a trail that goes steeply down. There are several other shortcuts, and you will be walking through the fields, passing a few Tamang villages, like Thulo Golbu (1,938 m) and Dadagaon (1,700 m). Since you are so close to Kathmandu—it is about 25 km away as the crow flies—it is surprising to see how traditional the life in these villages is. Both men and women are often dressed in traditional clothes, and you see many ploughing the fields with oxen.

Around two-and-a-half hours after leaving Gul Bhanjyang, you will cross a river (over a suspension bridge or if the river is low, by stone-hopping, at Jhaghare (1,286 m). Keep on following the road, with the Chake Khola below you. You will pass the village of Rautbesi (1,149 m; half an hour), from which it is about one-and-a-half hours of easy-walking through the countryside to the little town of Samundratar (915 m).

Samundratar is a nice town with a mix of Hindu and Tamang people. It has a few shops and small local guesthouses/homestays without a name; ask around.

Day 7: Samundratar (915 m)-Betrawati (605 m); 9 hours

This is a very long day, with a total distance of 30.17 km and a total ascent of 1,547 m. It is also possible to stay overnight earlier on the way, in Narja, Chokhate or Kotunge (camping recommended).

You leave Samundratar going northwestwards, crossing a blue suspension bridge over the Chake Khola. After crossing, go left (west). The dirt road follows the river, which is at your left side. It is easy, mostly flat walking. After passing the village of Sabesi (around 45 minutes after leaving), the road is even asphalted. You will be walking through

a beautiful countryside, passing villages like Koskade (734 m) and the small bazaar town of Kharanitar (800 m; two hours after leaving).

About 10 minutes after Kharanitar, you will cross a bridge (704 m), after which you will take a small path on the right side of the road, going up (north). The path goes up steeply through terraces, crossing a dirt road a few times. After about one-and-a-half hours, you will reach the village of Narja/Narjamandap (1,070 m-1,153 m). In Narja, there are a few restaurants, where you can take lunch (or even stay for the night; camping is recommended).

At the end of the village, take the road going right, and after five minutes take a trail left of the road, passing a school. You will keep on going up, passing the villages of Narja Bhanjyang (1,278 m), Narja Moria (1,330 m) and Martum Bhanjyang (1,367 m; 45 minutes after Narja). In the village of Martum Bhanjyang, go left. You will be walking on a large path now, easy flat-walking, through the fields. After about 30 minutes, you will reach the village of Garigaon (1,326 m), after which the path goes up slightly again. The path becomes a dirt road and about an hour after Garigaon, you will see a white stupa and a brightly painted gumpa, surrounded by prayer flags. This is Gore Bhanjyang (1,390 m). Take the road going right here, and after 100 m, the trail going down, left of the road. It is a beautiful trail, going through fields.

You can also go straight at Gore Bhanjyang, and then you will reach the village of Chokhate (about half an hour), where you can stay overnight (camping recommended). From Chokhate, there is a trail going down to Kuwapani (963 m), from which you continue to Betrawati.

After about half an hour you will reach the village of Kotunge (1,137 m). At the end of the village, a trail goes straight, into the forest. The landscape is completely different now, and you will be mostly walking in a forest, high on a slope, with the Phalakhu Khola to your right, far below you. You will pass a few villages surrounded by fields, like Kuwapani (963 m) and Mohabir (899-859 m). About two to two-and-a-half hours after Kotunge, you get at the same level as the Phalakhu Khola. It is then still about 15 minutes through the fields to the town of Betrawati.

Betrawati is a small bazaar town. There are a few restaurants; some can offer a place to stay upon request.

Day 8: Betrawati-Kathmandu; 5-hour bus ride

From Betrawati you can take a bus to Kathmandu (five hours).

Accommodation Overview

Langtang & Helambu Section

Day 1: Kathmandu- Barabise (870 m); 3-4 hours

Barabise is a bustling bazaar town with some basic hotels and restaurants.

Day 2: Barabise (870m) -Jalbire (830 m); 8 hours

Jalbire:

Four small, basic guesthouses with about three rooms each.

Day 3: Jalbire (830m) -Khobre (2,435 m); 7 ½ hours

Khobre:

Two small guesthouses with a campsite.

Day 4: Khobre (2,435m) -Pokhare Bhanjyang (1,575 m); 9 hours

Pokhare Bhanjyang:

Two small guesthouses, with one room each, close to the stupa. You can pitch your tent around the stupa.
Langtang Guesthouse: a small lodge with a campsite at the end of the village.

Day 5: Pokhare Bhanjyang (1,574 m)-Gyalthung (985 m); 2 hours

Gyalthung:

Yangira Hotel and Lodge
Tel: 01-6214304
Two rooms; seven beds.

Lama Hotel and Lodge
Tel: 9803895760
Three rooms; nine beds;

Annapurna Hotel
Tel: 9808190398
Three rooms; nine beds.

Two Rivers Resort: near the village.

Day 6: Gyalthung (985m) -Samundratar (915 m) via Gul Bhanjyang (2,111 m); 8 hours

Gul Bhanjyang:

New Himalaya Lodge and Restaurant
Tel: 01-6215191
Six room; 18 beds;.

Gosaikunda Lodge and Restaurant
Tel: 01-6220069
Five rooms; 13 beds.

Samundratar:

Has a small local guesthouse/
homestay without a name; ask
around.

Day 7: Samundratar (915m)-Betrawati (605 m); 9 hours

Possible to stay overnight earlier
on the way, in Narja, Chokhate
or Kotunge (camping recom-
mended).

Betrawati is a small bazaar town.
There are a few restaurants;
some can offer a place to stay
upon request.

Manaslu & Ganesh Himal Section

Introduction

This section offers great views of Ganesh Himal and the Manaslu Range. You will visit the Gorkha Palace, the palace of the great unifier of Nepal, Prithvi Narayan Shah. The trail passes through charming, mostly Hindu, villages and beautiful countrysides and forests.

Days: 4/5/9

Difficulty: Easy/moderate

Maximum elevation: 1,591 m

Type: Teahouse/homestay/camping (it is recommended that you take a tent)

Permits needed: TIMS

Itinerary

Day 1: Kathmandu-Betrawati (605 m) (5-hour bus ride)-Bungtang (1,294 m); 4 hours

Day 2: Bungtang (1,294 m)-Chautara (1,591 m); 5 ½ hours

Day 3: Chautara (1,591 m)-Arugath (490 m) 8 ½ hours (entry/exit point; 6-hour bus ride to Kathmandu)

Day 4: Arugath (490 m)-Kalikatang/Gorkha Palace (1,313 m); 7 hours

Day 5: Kalikatang/Gorkha Palace (1,313 m)-Gorkha (1,075 m) 1 hour (entry/exit point); 6-hour bus ride to Kathmandu

Day 6: Gorkha (1,075 m)-Appipal (1,140 m); 7 hours

Day 7: Appipal (1,140 m)-Paudi (520 m); 6 hours

Day 8: Paudi (520 m)-Besisahar (810 m); 7 hours

Day 9: Besisahar-Kathmandu (6-hour bus ride); or Pokhara 4-hour bus ride

Day 1: Kathmandu-Betrawati (605 m) (5-hour bus ride)-Bungtang (1,294 m); 4 hours

It takes about five hours by bus to get to Betrawati. Betrawati is a small bazaar town, with a few restaurants; some can offer a place to stay upon request. You can also start walking to Bungtang (four hours).

In Betrawati, you will cross the bridge over the Phalakhu Khola and follow the road in the northwestern direction. You will be entering the

bufferzone of Langtang National Park now (no fee). Just after the road makes a turn and just after the last house, take a dirt road going down, left of the main road. Where the dirt road turns right, go straight on a small trail, following the Trisuli River. You will reach a suspension bridge (615 m, five minutes), crossing the Trisuli River, which brings you to the small village of Sole. At the end of the village, go left and then take the first right. You will be walking on a small trail through the fields now. After another 10 minutes you will reach another suspension bridge (619 m), crossing a tributary of the Trisuli River. After crossing, you will have to climb a few steps and in five minutes you will reach a dirt road, which you take going left, following the Salaukhu Khola upstream, which is at your left. After five minutes, take the road going right and gradually up. It is easy-walking, *Nepali flat*, going up and down sometimes. You will be walking through the fields, passing the villages of Chilaune (765 m, one hour 45 minutes after leaving) and Kirnebagar (807, another 20 minutes).

A short half hour after Kirnebagar you will reach a Y-junction; take the road to the left, going flat. After a few hundred metres you will reach a river, which you will have to cross stone- hopping (a bit difficult). From here you really start to climb. After about half an hour two roads join; go left here. After another ten minutes, there is a shortcut to the right, a path that has mainly stairs climbing up steeply. You will be walking through a forest now. After another 10 minutes there is a Y-junction; take a left and go past a few houses. You will arrive at the village of Bondang (1,203 m); there's a road here going straight and up, which you will take. After another 15 minutes there is a shortcut to your left, bringing you to the stairs again (after a few minutes there is a Y-junction; take the right path, going up). You will be walking through terraces with views of forested hills. When you arrive at the road, follow it to the left, going up.

Two hours after Kirnebagar you will arrive at the village of Bungtang (1294-1540 m), a big and spread-out village. It has a few small restaurants, which on request can provide a place to stay. It is recommended that you bring a tent.

Day 2: Bungtang (1,294 m)-Chautara (1,591 m); 5 ½ hours

You will follow the road through the village, with a few shortcuts, which are stairs climbing through the fields and the village. The dirt

road continues going up, through forests and fields, and as you get higher, rhododendrons start appearing. You will pass the villages of Phasang (1,970 m; two hours 45 minutes after Bungtang) and Myagang (2,054 m; after another half an hour). In Myagang, there are a few small restaurants, where you can stop for lunch.

After Myagang, there is a Y-junction; take the left one, going up. You will be walking on a rougher dirt road now. The road keeps on climbing, till you reach the highest point of today (2,130 m, half an hour after Myagang). Shortly after reaching the highest point, you will see an old stupa to your left (2,117 m). Next to the stupa is a small trail going down steeply (southwards). After a little over an hour, you will reach the village of Gairagaon (1,692-1,611 m). Walk down through the village till you reach the dirt road below the village. Take a right here and follow the road for about 45 minutes till you reach the village of Chautara (1,591 m).

In Chautara, there are only a few restaurants. Some can offer homestay facilities, but it's best to camp. Ask around.

In the surroundings, at about an hour's walk away, are the ruins of a Tamang palace. Ask around for directions.

Day 3: Chautara (1,591 m)-Arugath (490 m); 8 ½ hours

Again a long day! The total distance to cover is 31.59 km, but there is not a lot of climbing involved; in fact, most of the day you will be going down. Other possibilities to stay overnight are Lapang, Sukaura and Salyantar.

This is a new section: The Manaslu and Ganesh Himal Section (in fact, the last couple of kilometres of the day before are already on the map of this section). Today you will have your first views of Manaslu (8,163 m) and the Ganesh Himal Range (Ganesh Himal I: 7,422 m).

You will leave Chautara following the road through the village. After about 15 minutes there is a Y-junction; take the right (going up slightly). You will pass the village of Tikardung (1,589 m). At the end of the village is another Y-junction; here, too, take the right, going up. It's easy, rather flat-walking through the fields. After about 45 minutes, you will pass the village of Tanzamani (1,671 m). Here you will have (in clear weather) the first view of Manaslu and the Ganesh Himal Range;

stunning! Take a right at the viewpoint, entering a small trail, going down through the bushes.

After about an hour, you will reach Marpak (1,380 m), a charming, spread-out village. When you reach the first houses of Marpak, go right. You will be walking through fields now. After about half an hour, you will reach the road, which you follow going down. To your right is a shortcut, which brings you to the centre of Marpak (1,324 m). Take a right here and follow the road again. After a few minutes there are a few teashops, and just after them is a trail to the left, going down. This will bring you to another beautiful viewpoint (1,320 m) of the Ganesh Himal Range and Manaslu, with the Ankhu Khola flowing below you.

You will arrive at the road again; go left/down. You will be walking through a pine forest now. You will pass the village of Nimarchuk (1,050 m; half an hour). Far below you, you can see the Ankhu Khola. After another half hour, there is a shortcut, right of the road, which is a steep trail going down to the river. After about half an hour, you will reach the river and cross a suspension bridge (578 m), to reach the village of Lapang. There are a few restaurants here, where you can stop for daal bhaat.

Follow the road again, walking westwards, with the Ankhu River to the right of you. After about 10 minutes you can choose to keep on following the road, or take a right on a small trail, which brings you close to the river. This trail is more scenic, but it has a few difficult climbs and descents.

After about an hour, you will reach the little village of Aku Sanku (525 m). Cross the suspension bridge at the end of the village. At the other side, you will arrive at Khare (519 m), a small bazaar town. After about half an hour, you will reach Sukaura (516 m); both villages are more or less connected.

You will be walking through a beautiful countryside now, with spread-out terraces. After 45 minutes, you will pass the village of Ganeshthan (502 m). About 40 minutes after Ganeshthan, you will cross a small bridge (464 m). Immediately after crossing the bridge, take a small trail to your right, which climbs up (northwards). Cross the dirt road, and keep on climbing. When you reach the dirt road again, go left on the road. After five minutes, when the road turns right, take a trail going straight, climbing up the hill. After about 20 minutes you will reach the

village of Salyantar (616 m). At the end of the village, you will reach a T- junction; take the path going right (north). After a few minutes, you will reach a resting place with two big trees. Take the small trail left of the trees, going down steeply again. After about 15 minutes, you will reach a dirt road again; go right (north) here. You will be walking through a forest, bamboo groves, and small fields with banana plants. The road comes close to the Budhi Gandaki River, which flows to your left and which you will follow upstream. After about an hour, you will reach the town of Arugath (490 m).

At the entrance of Arugath, next to the bus station, is a resort: Manaslu View Camping Resort. There is also another camping site nearby; 1stRiverside Camping.

Day 4: Arugath (490 m)-Kalikatang/Gorkha Palace (1,313 m); 7 hours

The distance to cover today is about 26 km, but as most of the day you will be walking more or less flat, it is not too difficult to cover this distance. However, you can choose to stay overnight in one of the many villages earlier on the route; camping is recommended.

Follow the road passing the bus station. After a few hundred metres, you will see a resting place with two pipal trees; take the trail going left from the road here. Cross the suspension bridge, and go left onto the main road of Arugath. You will arrive at a temple (Bhimsen Temple); continue going straight, towards the river and then right. Cross the small wooden bridge, walk to the road, and go left (southwest), (following the river downstream). After 100 metres, take the stairs at your right. There are a couple of Y-junctions; always choose the stairs. After about half an hour, you will reach a dirt road; go left for 50 metres, which brings you to another road, which you will take, going right/up.

It is easy, almost flat-walking now, mostly alongside fields and terraces. You will pass small villages, like Tanrang Bazaar (803 m; 30 minutes), Saune Pani (860 m; 10 minutes) Okhle (922 m; 40 minutes), and Kuwapani (907 m; 30 minutes). A few minutes after Kuwapani, there is a small trail to the left of the road, which leads you through fields and small forests. The trail goes down for the first 10 minutes, after which it climbs up steeply for about half an hour and leads to the village of Khanchowk (939 m). Khanchowk has a few restaurants that serve daal bhaat.

Cross the square in Khanchowk and go left behind the houses. At the end of the village, there is a Y-junction; take the right trail, going flat (left leads to a school). After about 20 minutes, you will pass the small settlement of Sigre (923 m). After another half an hour, the path enters a beautiful subtropical forest. After 45 minutes, you will reach the village of Kuereni (1,012 m), from which the trail goes down.

From Kuereni it is a short 20 minutes to the village of Korkhe Ale/Ale Bhanjyang (965 m). Go left at the main street. Shortly after, you will get to the road again. Take a small trail to your right, which climbs up a hill, and keep on following this trail. After about half an hour, you will reach the village of Gabisa (1,133 m). Take another small trail to the left here, and continue climbing to the village of Pipaltok (1,283 m). Go left here, and pass the pipal tree.

After half an hour, you will pass the village of Hotia (1,372 m), after which there is a Y-junction; take a right here. You will arrive in Padilithok (1,307 m), from which it is another 10 minutes to Kalikatang, at the foot of the Gorkha Palace. You can camp here next to a small restaurant.

The Gorkha Palace is also an important Hindu temple. This used to be the palace of Prithvi Narayan Shah, who unified Nepal in 1769. The beautiful woodcarving in the palace is especially impressive.

Day 5: Kalikatang/Gorkha Palace (1,313 m)-Gorkha (1,075 m); 1 hour

From Kalikatang you will go down to Gorkha via the Gorkha Palace. After the palace, stairs will bring you all the way down to Gorkha Bazaar. It is worth spending a day here, visiting the palace in the morning and the Gorkha Museum in the afternoon. The museum has a beautiful display of paintings of the Shah kings of around the 18th Century, weaponry, utensils, etc. Gorkha has many hotels and guesthouses.

Day 6: Gorkha (1,075 m)-Appipal (1,140 m); 7 hours

From Gorkha the trail goes down to the Daraudi Khola, at about 400 m, and after this it climbs up for most of the day, till you reach Appipal (1140 m).

From Gorkha buspark, follow the road westwards. On leaving the town, the road turns into a dirt road. After about 20 minutes, there is a Y-junction; take the left trail, going flat at first and then slightly up. After another five minutes, you will reach a resting place, which lies next to a gate. Go left here, passing the gate. Far below you, you will see the Daraudi Khola at your right. The dirt road becomes a trail; after two minutes there is another Y-junction; take the right trail going down steeply towards the river. When you see the road again (after about 10 minutes), continue on the road for about 100 m and then take a small trail to your left, which continues descending steeply. After about five minutes, you will reach the small settlement of Nanglepani (746 m). Just after Nanglepani, there is a T-junction; take the trail going left. After about half an hour, you will reach a Y-junction; take a right here in the direction of a small banana plantation and then go left. After another 10 minutes, you will reach the small village of Borabesi (425 m). After passing the village, go right, towards the river. Within a minute, you will reach a crossroad of four small trails; take a right again. This brings you to a dirt road. There are two choices now: go left, towards Borabesi Bazaar and cross the river there (longer way); or go right and walk on a small trail through the fields towards the river (shorter way). You will arrive at another dirt road; take a right here and follow the tracks. You have to wade the river a few times to cross it (400 m). When you are on the other side, climb to the road, cross it and keep on going up. After about 15 minutes, you will reach the first houses of Khoplang (480 m). However, Khoplang is a very spread-out village and the “centre” is at an altitude of about 730 m, 45 minutes ahead.

Shortly after arriving at the first houses of Khoplang, there is a Y-junction; go left. The trail becomes stairs, climbing up steeply through the forest. Where the stairs arrive at a junction with a trail, take the right onto the trail (so don't continue on the stairs). After a few minutes, you will arrive at a dirt road, which you will follow in the same (right) direction. Follow this road to the north/northeast with the Daraudi Khola far below, to your right now. After about two minutes, take a trail left of the road, going up (after oneminute there is a Y-junction; take the left trail, going up; after another minute, there is a T-junction; again go left and up). After about 20 minutes, you will cross a dirt road, after which there are a few junctions; always go straight/northwest. You will be climbing through terraced fields now. You will pass a few settlements, which are also part of Khoplang, and then walk into the main part of Khoplang. Here you will find a few small restaurants, which serve daal bhaat.

Go towards the school and after passing the school and a pipal tree, go left/down. Within 20 metres, you will reach a junction; go straight here. After another 20 metres, there is a Y-junction; go right/north. You will walk on a beautiful trail, going down through terraces. After about 20 minutes, stone steps will take you down to the village of Khoplang Bhanjyang (632 m). Go left into the village and take a right before the temple, then cross a dirt road. After three minutes, you will arrive at the dirt road again; take a right here, going up. After about 10 minutes, take a trail to the left of the road, going up through the forest. After about five minutes, there is a Y-junction; go left here. Shortly after, you will arrive at the road again, after a big tree; take a small trail to your left, climbing steeply up the hill. You will pass the village of Kolkate (807 m) and climb the hill to the left of the village (going northwest). You will be climbing up stairs now. After 10 minutes, take a trail left of a pipal tree (and stop following the stairs). After 10 minutes, you will cross a dirt road and walk into the village of Baise Pani (905 m). About 20 minutes later, there is a Y-junction; take the left, going down, and after just two minutes, there will be another Y-junction; take the right going flat. After 10 minutes you will reach a dirt road, where you will go right. Soon you will arrive at the village of Tsapa Bhanjyang (844 m). Go straight and up. You will arrive again at a dirt road, but after about 50 metres, there is a small trail going up, to your right, which you will take. You will pass the village of Pokhare Besi (913 m), after which there is a Y-junction; take a right here. Shortly after, there is another Y-junction; take a left here. You will walk into a forest now, slowly climbing up. After about an hour, you will reach a dirt road, where you go right. You will first pass the village of Ribgaon (1,192 m; five minutes) and after another five minutes arrive at the village of Appipal (1,140 m).

Appipal has a few small restaurants, where you can eat daal bhaat. For sleeping, camping is recommended, as the restaurants don't provide accommodation.

Day 7: Appipal (1,140 m)-Paudi (520 m); 6 hours

This is an easy day, with not a lot of climbing or descending. The distance is about 16 km, with the trail passing through small villages and fields.

At the square in Appipal with the pipal tree, take a left. The day starts pleasantly with an easy walk through the forest on a dirt road going

down slightly. After about 15 minutes, you will reach a small settlement, Mukudara (1,036 m). In clear weather, you will have an excellent view on the Manaslu Range here: Manaslu (8,163 m) at the left, and next to Manaslu, Himal Chuli (7,893 m) and Baudha Himal (6,672 m). You will see the Chepe Khola far below you. It's an amazing sight!

At the end of the village, where the dirt road starts again, take a small trail to the right, going down, towards Chepe Khola. After about 20 metres, there is a Y-junction; take the left trail. Soon you will be walking on stairs, going down steeply (you will cross a stonewall through an opening, and the trail continues going down). After a few minutes, you will arrive at a dirt road; take it going down, and when you see a pipal tree to your left (after about 200 metres), take the trail to your right, going down. The trail goes through the fields, with the Manaslu Range at your right, and passes the Gurung village of Bayapani (873 m). The trail arrives at a dirt road, which you follow westwards.

After about 10 minutes, just before a pipal tree, take the trail to the right of the dirt road. The trail will enter a forest and go down steeply. After about 15 minutes, you will cross a suspension bridge over the Chepe Khola (542 m). Go left; after 30 metres, there is a Y-junction; go left here as well. You will be walking on a beautiful small trail through the fields, following the Chepe Khola downstream. After about half an hour, you will reach the village of Tiniple (575 m). Go left and follow the road through the village. After about 15 minutes, the road makes a turn to the right; take the trail going straight here. After about two minutes, there is a crossroad; go right here. Cross the small stream, climb to the road and go left. You will cross a small river, stone-hopping, and enter the village of Syauli Bazaar (579 m). In Syauli Bazaar, there are a few small restaurants that serve daal bhaat.

Around 10 minutes after you leave Syauli Bazaar, you will see a pipal tree; the road turns left here, and you will see stairs going up, in front of you. Take these stairs, and after five minutes, continue in the same direction on the dirt road again, which becomes a larger path now. After about five minutes, there is a Y-junction; take the left, which means staying on the path. You will pass the village of Salphedi (633 m). At the end of the village, take the stairs going down. After about 10 minutes, you will reach a dirt road, which you will follow straight/going up. About half an hour after Salphedi, you will pass the village of Goritari (568 m). After 15 minutes, you will pass a pipal tree and a shop; take the trail left of the road here. After about 15 minutes, you will

reach the first houses of Tarkhughat (515 m). After five minutes, the dirt road turns to the right; go straight here, walking into Tarkhughat Bazaar (489 m), with its colourful houses.

At the end of the village, go right (so don't cross the suspension bridge) and then straight, following the dirt road. Pass the Marsyangdi Bridge; go straight on a path, following the Marsyangdi Nadi upstream on the right side of the river through a forest and terraces. The path goes partly over the river's beach and over some big boulders and goes back into the forest again. After about 45 minutes, you will arrive at a small ashram, which is also an elderly home. Around 10 minutes later, you will arrive at a dirt road; go left here. After 200 metres, there is a small shop to your left; take the stairs going down here. The stairs lead to a suspension bridge (500 m) over the Marsyangdi Nadi. At the end of the bridge, go left and climb up to the village of Paudi (520 m).

Paudi is a small bazaar town, with a few restaurants. One restaurant has two rooms, where you can stay as well; ask around. Below the town is a school with a football field, where you can camp. There are buses to Besisahar from Paudi (one hour). From Besisahar you can continue to Kathmandu (about six hours) or Pokhara (about four hours).

Day 8: Paudi (520 m)-Besisahar (810 m); 7 hours

Today, you will follow the Marsyangdi Nadi all day northwards till you reach Besisahar. It is quite a long distance, over 24 km. You can decide to stay overnight earlier in one of the towns on the left side of the Marsyangdi Nadi.

Cross the same suspension bridge you crossed yesterday and continue walking on the right side of the Marsyangdi Nadi. You can climb back to the dirt road, or go left on a small trail, straight after crossing the bridge. The trail will lead you through beautiful terraced fields to the river beach, where you have to cross some big rocks. Twice you will pass the start of a dirt road, which you can take, or you can keep on following the small trail. Five minutes after the second dirt road (an hour after leaving), take a path going up (stone stairs) away from the river. This will bring you to the dirt road, which you will follow, going up for 100 meters, after which you can take a trail on the left side of the road. The trail goes flat at first, but soon starts climbing up (stone stairs). After 10 minutes, you will pass the village of Matigaon (546 m). Don't go into the village but take the trail going left. You will arrive at a dirt

road again (which is not used by motorised transport); go left here.

In clear weather, you can see Lamjung Himal and Annapurna III and IV. The road becomes a trail and goes into a beautiful forest. After about 15 minutes, you will cross a suspension bridge (525 m) over the Tardi Khola, a tributary of the Marsyangdi Nadi. After crossing the bridge, climb up for a few minutes, pass a little house and go right, climbing through terraces. After about five minutes, when you enter the forest, there is a Y-junction; go left here. You will see a small village to your right, Doke Eklekhet (585 m). After passing the first houses, there is another Y-junction; take a right here, into the village. Climb up a few terraces and go left on a flat trail. After 10 minutes you will arrive at a dirt road again, where you will go left. You will walk in the forest again and pass the village of Belgari (539 m). After the village, you will cross another suspension bridge (538 m), after which you will climb up. You will cross the dirt road two times, and finally arrive at it again, following it going up/left. It is easy-walking along the fields, passing the village of Sagra (619 m) and Archalbot (653 m; half an hour). After another 15 minutes, there is a shortcut to your left (passing a greenhouse). You will cross a river, stone-hopping, and shortly after, arrive at the road again. After 10 metres, there is a trail to the left of the road going down. The trail passes the village of Alangche (589 m) and arrives at a suspension bridge (600 m) over the Dordi Khola. After crossing the bridge, you will follow a small trail through the fields. After five minutes (after a yellow house), there is a junction; go left, towards a pink house. The trail leads to the village of Ramchowk (630 m). Take a right at the big pipal tree with a resting place and then left. You will walk on a dirt road again. After about 10 minutes, you will pass a small restaurant, which can be a good place for lunch.

The dirt road (which is more of a tractor track) keeps on following the Marsyangdi Nadi. After about 40 minutes, you will arrive at a big dam. You can take a shortcut here, climbing steeply up the hill. After five minutes, you will reach the road, which you will follow for five minutes, after which you will see another shortcut to your left (next to a big bamboo grove). This is a nice trail going through fields. After 10 minutes, you will arrive at a stairs, which you will take, going up. You will arrive at the village of Budikoa (700 m). There is a small teashop here. Go left, following the dirt road/tractor track, which climbs slowly through the forest till an altitude of 785 m (one hour). After another 15 minutes, you will arrive at the spread-out village of Pasachaur (730 m). After about 30 minutes, you will cross a river (stone-hopping or

over the suspension bridge). Shortly after, where the road turns to the right, take the stairs at the left side of the road. You will arrive back at the road again, and after 10 minutes, you will take the trail right of the road, leading down to a suspension bridge (694 m). After crossing the bridge, it is a short climb to Besisahar (755 m).

Besisahar is the headquarters of Lamjung District and is quite big. It takes about half an hour to cross the whole town. There are a few guesthouses, most of which are located on the other side of the town (800 m).

Besisahar is the gateway to a couple of treks, including the famous Annapurna Circuit. Another trek, less well-known, is the homestay trek to Gurung villages like Ghalegaun, Bhujung Pasgaun and Thumsikot, described partly in the trek of the Annapurna Section.

Day 9: Besisahar-Kathmandu (6-hour bus ride) or Pokhara (4-hour bus ride)

From Besisahar you can take a bus to Kathmandu (about six hours) or Pokhara (about four hours).

Accommodation Overview

Manaslu & Ganesh Himal Section

Day 1: Kathmandu-Betrawati (605 m) (5-hour bus ride) - Bungtang (1,294 m); 4 hours

Betrawati:

Betrawati is a small bazaar town, with a few restaurants; some can offer a place to stay upon request.

Bungtang:

Few small restaurants, which on request can provide a place to stay. It is recommended that you bring a tent.

Day 2: Bungtang (1,294 m) - Chautara (1,591 m); 5 ½ hours

Chautara:

There are only a few restaurants. Some can offer homestay facilities, but it's best to camp. Ask around.

Day 3: Chautara (1,591 m)-Arugath (490 m); 8 ½ hours

You can stay overnight at Lapang, Sukaura and Salyantar.

Arugath:

Manaslu View Camping Resort
Tel: 01-692568,
9741124732/9741193195
15 rooms (35 beds), 12 with attached bathrooms; set in a Disney-like garden; space for 10 tents.

1st Riverside Camping
Tel: 9741193195; space for 30 tents.

Day 4: Arugath (490 m)-Kalikatang/Gorkha Palace (1,313 m); 7 hours

At the foot of the Gorkha Palace you can camp here next to a small restaurant.

Day 5: Kalikatang/Gorkha Palace (1,313 m)-Gorkha (1,075 m); 1 hour

Gorkha has many guesthouses in all qualities. A few are listed below:

New Prince Guesthouse
Tel: 064-420030
Part of the rooms have attached bathroom.

Tower Hotel & Lodge
Tel: 064-420335
Only rooms with shared bathroom.

Chautari Hotel & Lodge
Tel: 064-420791
14 rooms, 7 with attached bathroom; 20 beds.

Hotel Gorkha Bisauni
Contact persons: Mr.Dhiraj Bahadur Maskey and Mr. Shatya Man Shrestha
Tel: 064-420107; 0984-6924692
E-mail: gh_bisauni@hotmail.com
28 rooms, 24 with attached bathroom; 60 beds, tv, wifi.

Gurkha Inn Village Hotel
Tel: 064-20206, Fax: 064-420587
E-mail: info@gurkhainn.com.np, gurkha.in@gmail.com
URL: www.gurkhainn.com.np
18 rooms, all with attached bathroom; 54 beds
Tv, wifi, conference hall

Gorkha Crown Resort
Contact person: Gokul Aryal
Tel: 064-420732
50 beds rooms have attached bathroom; tv, wifi, conference hall.

**Day 6: Gorkha (1,075m)
-Appipal (1,140 m); 7
hours**

Appipal:

Has a few small restaurants near which you can camp.

**Day 7: Appipal (1,140 m)
-Paudi (520 m); 6 hours**

Paudi:

One restaurant has two rooms, where you can stay as well; ask around.

Below the town is a school with a football field, where you can camp.

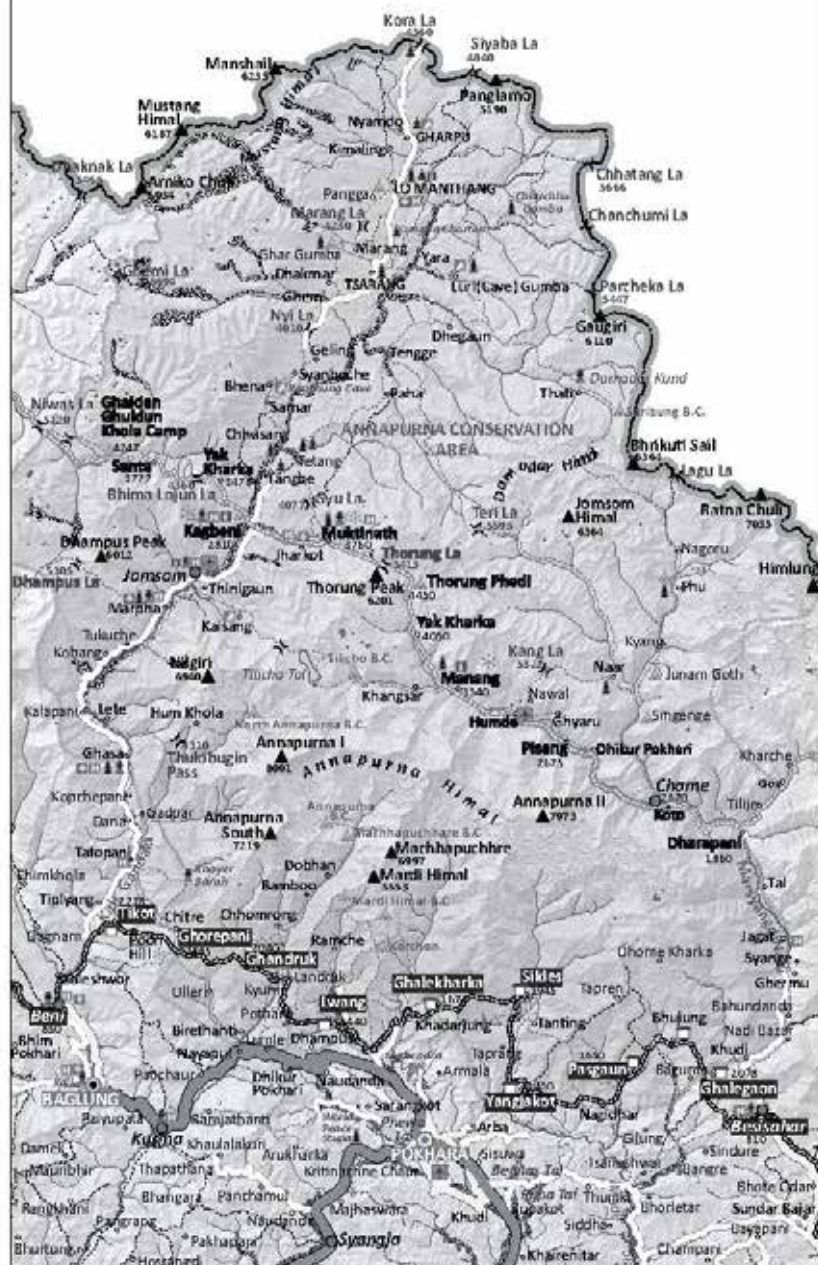
Day 8: Paudi (520 m)-Besisahar (810 m); 7 hours

You can stay overnight earlier in one of the towns on the left side of the Marsyangdi Nadi.

Besisahar:

Hotel Siddhi Binayak: at the entrance of the town.
Everest Guesthouse
Gangapurna Hotel and Lodge
Hotel M.C. and Lodge
Hotel Super View
Throunch Peak Guesthouse
Thorung La Guesthouse
Hotel Mt Kailash
Mongolian Guesthouse

ANNAPURNA



Annapurna Section

Introduction

This section offers spectacular and close views of the Manaslu and Annapurna Range. Besides, the Dhaulagiri Range comes in view as well. You will get spectacular mountain views all along the trail. This stretch is mostly populated by Gurung people, who will give you a warm welcome in their homestays. Although the Annapurna area is the most touristic trekking area of Nepal, most of the Lower GHT doesn't see many tourists, and you will have the beautiful forests all to yourself at many points.

Days: 12 (with a possibility of ending your trek and taking a bus to Pokhara on almost every day)

Difficulty: Moderate

Maximum elevation: 3,193 m

Type: Teahouse/homestay

Permits needed: ACAP, TIMS

Itinerary

Day 1: Kathmandu-Besisahar (6-hour bus ride) or Pokhara-Besisahar (4-hour bus ride)

Day 2: Besisahar (810 m)-Ghalegaun (2,078 m); 6 hours

Day 3: Ghalegaun (2,078 m)-Pasgaun (1650 m); 6 hours

Day 4: Pasgaun (1,650 m)-Bhachok (1,314 m); 5 hours

Day 5: Bhachok (1314 m)-Yangjakot (1,450 m); 4-5 hrs

Day 6: Yangjakot (1,450 m)-Sikles (1,945 m); 7 hours

Day 7: Sikles (1,945 m)-Ghalekharka (1,674 m); 6 hours

Day 8: Ghalekharka (1,674 m)-Lwang (1,440 m); 5 hours

Day 9: Lwang (1,440 m)-Ghandruk (2,040 m); 8 hours

Day 10: Ghandruk (2,040 m)-Ghorepani (2,885 m) 7 hours

Day 11: Ghorepani (2,885 m)-Poonhill (3,193) - Tikot (2,278 m);
1 ½ + 3 hours

Day 12: Tikot (2,278 m)-Beni (850 m); 4 hours; and bus to Pokhara;
4 hours

Day 1: Kathmandu-Besisahar (6-hour bus ride) or Pokhara-Besisahar (4-hour bus ride)

You can get to Besisahar by bus from Kathmandu (about six hours) or Pokhara (about four hours).

Besisahar is the headquarters of Lamjung District and is quite big. It takes about half an hour to cross the whole town. There are a few guest-houses here; most are located on one side of the town (800 m).

Besisahar is the gateway for a couple of treks, including the famous Annapurna Circuit. Another less well-known trek is the homestay trek to Gurung villages like Ghalegaun, Bhujung and Pasgaun, which is also part of the Lower GHT.

Day 2: Besisahar (810 m)-Ghalegaun (2,078 m); 6 hours

The trek starts with a climb to a small pass at 1,600 m. From there onwards, you will have amazing views of the Himalaya, which are suddenly very close.

Towards the end of Besisahar's main street, at Hotel Mt Kailash, go left, passing Mongolian Guesthouse. At the end of the street (where it makes a sharp turn to the left), take the small trail going straight. Take a right when you arrive at the dirt road. After 15-20 minutes you pass a tiny settlement of just a few houses called Bhantok. Just after Bhantok, take the stairs at the left side of the road. Here, the climb to the pass begins. After 15 minutes there is a T-junction; take a right here, and at the Y-junction, 50 metres further ahead, go left and up. You will be climbing through terraces. At your right you can see the snowcapped Himalaya (Manaslu Range). In the distance in front (and above) of you, you can see the pass you will have to cross. After about half an hour, you will reach a dirt road, which you will follow for 20 minutes. When it makes a sharp U-turn to the left, take the trail to the right side of the road, going up. You will be entering the forest now, which has some rhododendrons. It is a steep climb for about an hour to the pass at 1,600 m, called Baglung Pani, like the village just after the pass. Just after the pass, you will have an amazing view of Himalaya peaks, among which are Lamjung Himal, Manaslu and Himal Chuli.

Cross the soccer field and enter the village of Baglung Pani (1,606 m). There are two restaurants here: Hilltower Hotel and Restaurant and Annapurna Hotel & Restaurant.

Follow the trail through the village and take a right at the end. Follow the trail going flat (don't take the trail going down) and continue on the dirt road through the forest. At your right you have great views of the Manaslu Range again, with Mount Manaslu, Manaslu North, Nadi Peak and Larke Peak. At your left is a beautiful green valley. After 15 minutes, you will pass the village of Rapasingh (1,624 m) and after another half an hour, the village of Kapurgaon (1,600 m). Kapurgaon has a small restaurant serving daal bhat as well. Enter the village, and after the village, continue on the stone stairs going up. The trail continues to go up slowly, through the forest and crossing a dirt road once in a while. After about two hours, you will arrive at the village of Ghalegaun (2,078 m).

Ghalegaun is a very beautiful Gurung village. There is no hotel here, but the village has established a homestay programme, in which 32 houses participate. The homestays are very nice, mostly small separate houses, which are nicely decorated, and they have beds with quite good mattresses, soft pillows and clean sheets. It is a model tourist village, as they call it, and probably because of that it is also surprisingly clean. There is no waste lingering around, like you see too many times in other places. Besides all this, Ghalegaun offers a stunning view of the Himalaya. You can see a large portion of the range: in the far west, Machapuchhre, Annapurna II, and further to the east Lamjung Himal, Namuna Pass, Manaslu, Himal Chuli, Nadi Chuli (also called Doctor Harko Himal) and Buddha Himal.

Ghalegaun is part of the homestay trek, which also includes the villages of Ghan Pokhara, Bhujung, Pasgaun and Siurung.

In Ghalegaun you have to show your ACAP entrance ticket (you should have paid Rs 2,000 for the entry fee in Kathmandu or Pokhara; at the entrance, you have to pay double the fee).

Day 3: Ghalegaun (2,078 m)-Pasgaun (1,650 m); 6 hours

This is another beautiful day with great mountain views and nice Gurung villages.

You will leave Ghalegaun crossing the soccer field. Continue on the trail at the other side of the soccer field, going in northwest direction. After about five minutes you arrive at a dirt road. After 15 minutes, you will

pass the village of Nayun (2,047 m), part of Ghan Pokhara VDC. After another five minutes, just after a small Buddhist monastery, you will arrive at a Y-junction of two dirt roads, plus a stairs going up to Ghan Pokhara. Take the left going down. It is easy-walking through the forest. After half an hour, the road turns into a trail, but they are working on it. The trail is *Nepali flat*, sometimes going up and sometimes going down. You will have a beautiful view of a “sea of hills”—green hills stretching out in front of you like waves at sea. After another half an hour, the trail starts descending via stone stairs to the gate of Bhujung (1,800 m; 10 minutes). Just after the gate there is a Y-junction, take the right trail going flat. After another 10 minutes there is another Y-junction; take the path to the right, going down here (following the sign ACAP office).

Bhujung (1,641 m) is another Gurung village and is part of the homestay trek mentioned earlier. Bhujung is a bit bigger than Ghalegaun but has fewer households participating in the homestay programme: 25 households offer homestay facilities.

Follow the trail down through the village and continue going down on the stone stairs, all the way to a suspension bridge, at 1,343 m, over the Midim Khola (half an hour). Next to the suspension bridge is a community-owned micro-hydro plant, which provides energy to 340 households.

Take the trail past the micro-hydro house. The trail climbs up slightly and then goes down for a while, following the Midim Khola (which is at your left) downstream. After 20 minutes, you will cross a suspension bridge (1,314 m). After 20 metres, there is a Y-junction; take the right trail. Soon the climb to the pass starts. In the beginning you will walk through fields. You can see Bhujung high on the slope on the other side of the river. After about an hour you pass the village of Komagaon (1,675 m). Soon after Komagaon you will enter a beautiful mixed alpine forest. It is still one more hour to the pass (2,100 m). With clear weather you have a beautiful view of the Himalaya from the pass, including peaks such as Manaslu, Himal Chuli and Nadi Chuli.

The trail goes down again. After about 40 minutes, you will reach a Y-junction at a resting place; take the right going down here. After about 15 minutes, you will reach the entrance of Pasgaun (1,690 m). The trail continues and leads down through the village. Pasgaun is also participating in the homestay programme. There is a nice Buddhist monastery in Pasgaun, Karma Thugje Chhyoling Buddha Gompa.

Day 4: Pasgaun (1,650 m)-Bhachok (1,314 m); 5 hours

The route described here is different than the GHT trail indicated on Himalaya Maphouse's Annapurna Section map. On that route, there are no villages along the way, so that trek is only possible with a fully organised camping trek. If you want to stay and eat in a homestay and/or guesthouse, the route described here is a good alternative.

In Pasgaun, follow the trail going down in the village. Just out of the village, there is a Y-junction; take the left going flat (indicated by a signboard that shows the way to Bagaincha). You will pass the gate of Pasgaun. About five minutes after the gate there is a resting place; follow the trail right of the resting place. You go down steeply towards the Rudi Khola, which you can already see far below you. Again, you will have a beautiful view of a "sea of green hills", stretching out in front of you one after another. Close to the river, you will arrive at a T-junction; go left here. After one to one-and-a-half hours, you will reach a small bridge (822 m) over a tributary of the Rudi Khola. After crossing the bridge, you can choose between a stairs going up and a trail going flat; take the trail going flat. You will arrive at the small settlement of Bagaincha (815 m) and just after Bagaincha you will cross a suspension bridge (812 m). After crossing the bridge, there is a Y-junction; take the left, which goes down at first and then flat (follow the signboard to Thumsikot).

You will be walking on a flat trail through the fields now. After about 10 minutes the trail starts to climb via stone steps. After about 20 minutes you arrive at a dirt road. After a couple of minutes you will see a shortcut at the left side of the road, which you can take (after about five minutes you are again back on the dirt road). Again after a couple of minutes, the dirt road makes a U-turn to the right. Inside the turn you will see a trail going up at the right side of the road; take that trail. After about 20 minutes of climbing, you see the first houses of Rabaidada (1003 m). Shortly after, there is a Y-junction; take the right trail, going up. Around 10 minutes later, there is another Y-junction; again take the right trail, going up. After another five minutes, you will arrive at the village of Rabaidada (1,100 m).

In the village, go left and up some stone steps. After about 15 minutes you cross a dirt road and arrive at a big tree with a resting place. You follow the flat trail (don't go up the stairs you will soon see after the resting place). Soon you will again arrive at the dirt road, which in

about an hour slowly climbs to the Gurung village of Nagidahr (1,232 m). In the turn of the road is a restaurant at your right hand side, which makes for a good lunch stop.

You continue on the dirt road, which after about five minutes splits: one road makes a U-turn to the left, one goes straight: continue straight. After another 10 minutes the dirt road turns into a trail and enters the village of Nagidahr. At the second watertap you go right and down some steps. After about 15 steps you get at a T-junction; go left here. You pass a big resting place with a signboard "Nagidhar Viewpoint". From here you can see the trail you have to follow on the other slope up to Bhachok.

But first you continue going down steeply, past a small temple. After about 20 minutes the trail levels out. You are walking in the fields now and get to a Y-junction, go right here. After about 10 minutes you cross a small stone bridge (973 m) over the Bardi Khola. After about two minutes you can choose between stairs at your right or a flat trail going straight; take the flat trail. You cross a small river stone-hopping and continue left. After about 10 minutes you arrive at a tiny settlement, Sundar Besi (976 m), meaning beautiful valley.

The trail starts climbing now, at first slowly, but soon quite steeply, via stone steps. After about half an hour, you will enter a forest. Around 10 minutes later, there is a Y-junction; take the right, going up.

After another five minutes, you will reach the gate of Bhachok, another Gurung village (1,314 m). Follow the trail going up through the village. Bhachok has a homestay programme as well. Above the village is a beautiful viewpoint with a small Durga temple, from which you can look 360 degrees into five districts with the Manaslu Range at the horizon.

Day 5: Bhachok (1,314 m)-Yangjakot (1,450 m); 4-5 hours

This is quite an easy day, and you can arrive with lunch at Yangjakot. This gives you the opportunity to enjoy a relaxing afternoon at the viewpoint above Yangjakot, which offers beautiful views of the Annapurna Range.

Climb till the top of the village of Bhachok and above the village, take the right going flat. The trail enters the forest and goes *Nepali flat* at

first and then climbs via stone steps. You can see Warchowk in front of you. After about 45 minutes, at a small stupa, you can choose between steps going right, a flat trail going left and a trail going straight and up: go straight and up. After another 15 minutes you will arrive at a white stupa (1,407 m) and a big *bodhi* tree with a resting place. You can see Warchowk and on the next hill Yangjakot in front of you. Take a right from here. The trail has become a dirt road now. You will be walking *Nepali flat* in the forest and after about half an hour, you will reach the small Gurung village of Warchowk (1,363 m).

After Warchowk you follow the dirt road for five minutes, till you see a trail going up at the right side of the road. The trail makes a turn and goes down. After about 15 minutes you will enter a beautiful forest. After another 20 minutes, you will reach a small suspension bridge (1,029 m) over the Bhujung Khola. After crossing the bridge, the trail climbs up steeply via stone stairs to a small house built by former army major Kumar Singh Thamu to commemorate his 84th birthday (1,327 m; 45 minutes-one hour). After this, the trail goes down first, but then starts climbing again, but more slowly. After five minutes, there is another Y-junction; take the right, going flat at first and then up. After another ten minutes, at the next Y-junction, take the left, going down. A few minutes later, climb the stone steps into the Gurung village of Yangjakot (1,450 m).

Yangjakot is quite spread out. At the beginning, there is one small lodge, Rock on Restaurant and Lodge. Around 10 minutes beyond is another small guesthouse, Nishan Lodge & Restaurant. At the end of Yangjakot there is a beautiful viewpoint which offers great views of Annapurna II, Annapurna IV, Machapucchre, Hiunchuli and Annapurna South.

From Yangjakot there is a bus to Pokhara (twice a day; at time of research at 9 am and 2 pm; 2 hours).

Day 6: Yangjakot (1,450 m)-Sikles (1,945 m); 6 hours

Walk back to the beginning of Yangjakot, and follow the dirt road in north/northwest direction. You can see Mount Machapucchre in front of you. After about 15 minutes the dirt road ends and you arrive at steps going down. After about half an hour you arrive at the small settlement of Sharchok (1200 m). You continue going down through terraced fields and after another small half hour you reach the small village of Kuskodada (1070 m).

The trail goes down steeply via stairs, passing the village of Jyaudu (886 m; 30 minutes). Just after the village, you will cross a wooden suspension bridge (870 m) over the Madi Khola (before the bridge is a small restaurant, river Side Restaurant; tel 9815161140). After the bridge, take a right onto a dirt road. It is easy flat-walking now. After about 15 minutes you will arrive at the small village of Sabi and the ACAP check post (876 m). Here you will have to present your ACAP entrance ticket.

Cross the small suspension bridge (885 m) just next to the office and go left. The dirt road follows the Madi Nadi upstream, which is at your right. You pass a hydro power plant construction. After about 20 minutes, there is a Y-junction, go straight and flat (not left and up). The dirt road ends and you will be walking on the river beach, which is full of stones. In front of you, you can see Lamjung Himal (6,983 m) and Annapurna II (7,937 m) to the left of it. A bit over an hour after leaving the ACAP office, you arrive at steps going up. To the right you will also see a trail going flat; take that trail. You cross a wooden bridge and now walk at the right of the Madi Khola. After about 15 minutes another wooden bridge take you back to the left side of the Madi Khola. It takes another 15 minutes to the village of Sondha. (1,054 m). In Sondha, there are two small restaurants, which serve daal bhaat and noodle soup (tel. 9846343489).

After Sondha the trail continues for a short while on the river beach before going back into the fields. After about 30 minutes, you will pass the settlement of Sikles Phedi (1,108 m) (also called Maila Kuna). After the village, there is a suspension bridge (1,143 m) over a tributary of the Madi Nadi. After crossing the bridge, the trail starts to climb steeply via stone stairs. Soon you will see the Madi Nadi far below you. After about an hour, there is a junction; to the left are stairs going up to Parche and to the right is a trail going to Sikles (also signposted). After about half an hour, you will cross a bridge (1,830 m). From the bridge, it is less than 10 minutes to the entrance of Sikles.

Sikles (1,945 m) is one of the biggest Gurung villages here, with a population of about 2,500. From Sikles, you will have a beautiful view of Lamjung Himal (6,983 m). The village is still off the beaten path: while the whole Annapurna Area gets more than 80,000 international tourists per year, Sikles gets about 700. There are quite a few guesthouses in Sikles. If you like, you can stay two nights in Siklis and on your free day climb to a viewpoint two hours above Sikles which offers amazing mountain views.

Day 7: Sikles (1,945 m)-Ghalekharka (1,674 m); 6 hours

This is a beautiful walk, all the way through forest, which is mostly rhododendron forest. In springtime, when the rhododendrons are blooming, it is even more beautiful. There are no villages or shops along the way, so bring a pack lunch and plenty (at least two litres) of water. If you leave early and are in good shape, you can make the extra hike up to Tara Hill (2900 m), from which you have spectacular views of the Annapurna Range. Count an extra 2 ½ hours for this.

The hike of today is quite well signposted. You start following signposts for Tara Hill, then for Nyauli Karkha and finally for Ghalekharka.

Walk out of the village on the path behind Namasté Guesthouse, passing a health post and a basketball court. Follow the dirt road for a few minutes till you see a small trail going up at the right side of the road (with a signpost Tara Hill). You will enter a beautiful forest. After about 10 minutes, past a resting place, there is a Y-junction; take the right trail, going up (again with a signpost Tara Hill).

You will arrive at some meadows and if you look back, you will have a stunning view of Lamjung Himal and Sikles below you.

After about 20 minutes you will enter the forest again, and you will be surrounded by the sounds of birds. You soon arrive at a Y-junction, next to a signboard for Tara Hill. Take the right trail, as indicated.). After about 20 minutes, there is again a signpost for Tara Hill. Although not very clear, the signpost is pointing to the left trail going flat. You soon pass a small waterfall with a railing. The trail starts climbing soon and for the next couple of hours, the trail mostly climbs gradually. You will be walking through a forest of mostly rhododendron trees. Some of the trees are huge, and they are all covered with moss, which gives the forest a mystical appearance.

About three hours after Sikles there is a signpost with the choice Tara Hill and Nyauli Karkha. Follow the trail to Nyauli Karkha. After about another half hour, you will reach a deserted campsite (called an ecofriendly campsite); this is Nyauli Karkha (2,498 m). Follow the trail behind the main building, climbing up away from the building. The trail keeps on climbing. After about an hour you will start seeing signboards for Ghalekharka, which you follow. About one-and-a-half hours after Nyauli Karkha you reach a resting place at an altitude of about 2,650

m. This is the highest point of today. Behind the resting place you have a beautiful view of Mount Machapucchre, which is suddenly very close.

The trail starts descending again; most of the descent is very steep, over stone stairs. After about one-and-a-half-hours, you will reach a campsite, above Ghalekharka, which you can see far below you. It is still another half an hour of descending trail to the Tamang village of Ghalekharka. In Ghalekharka there is one (cozy) guesthouse.

Day 8: Ghalekharka (1,674 m)-Lwang (1,440 m); 5 hours

Again the itinerary described here diverts a bit from the GHT indicated on the Annapurna Section map of Himalaya Maphouse (as mentioned before, there is not one official GHT (Low) Route, as the GHT is a network of trails): from Lahachok, the route goes northwards, and where the GHT on the map goes to the west, the route described here continues going north, up till Lwang, close to Ghalel. From here (the following day) it goes to Landruk and Ghandruk and then continues to Ghorepani the next day. This is a more interesting route than the route indicated on the map, as both Landruk and Ghandruk are very nice villages.

This day is a relatively easy day, with a lot of flat-walking. At the end, you will enter a forest and climb steeply to Lwang.

You will leave Ghalekharka following the trail towards a white stupa, walking westwards. After the stupa, continue on the same trail (now a dirt road). It is easy quite flat walking, and the trail gradually descends through a forest and fields. After about an hour, you will reach the Gurung village of Khadarjung (1,333 m). Take the stairs on the right side of the road, descending through the village. After about 10 minutes, you will be back on the dirt road, which you will follow to the left, descending. Within a couple of minutes, you will arrive at the village of Burjung Khola (1,223 m). There are a couple of shops here, where you can restock your snacks. At the middle of the village, go right and at the end of that street, left. At the end of the village, there is an ACAP check post, where you have to show your ACAP entrance permit. Inform them you will go to Lwang and so enter the ACAP area again later today, so they will not give you an exit stamp. This way you prevent having to buy another APCAP entrance permit (for double the fee)! From the ACAP office you have to go to a suspension bridge over the

Seti Nadi. There are different ways to get there; the description below is just one of different possibilities. Go right at the ACAP office and keep on following the dirt road, till you see a grass field at your left, with a tractor track (about 10 minutes). Follow this tractor track; after about 20 metres, there is a Y-junction; go left here and after another 15 metres, go right at the next Y-junction. This brings you to another tractor track. After another 30 metres, there is another Y-junction; go right and down here. This brings you to a small trail, following the Seti Nadi downstream. After about 15 minutes, you will cross the Seti Nadi over a suspension bridge (1,120 m).

After crossing the bridge, climb the stairs and go right on the dirt road. You will be walking through fields and if you look back you have beautiful views of Annapurna II, Annapurna IV and Machapucchre. After about 10 minutes, there is a Y-junction; take the left, going flat. After another 15 minutes, you will arrive at Balabhot (1,127 m), a small, spread-out town. At the end of the town (15 minutes), there is a T-junction, where you will go left. After another five minutes, go right, down a stairs. This gets you to a small trail, following a path to the left of the Lasti Khola, a small stream. After about five minutes, you will cross a suspension bridge (1,082 m). After crossing the bridge, go left on the dirt road (don't climb the small trail; this trail is not a shortcut!). It is easy flat-walking again, with the Mardi Khola to your left. After about five minutes, you will pass Lahachok (1,103 m). After 10 minutes, there is a Y-junction; continue on the same road (left fork) going flat. After another five minutes there is another Y-junction; again take the left fork, this time going down. After another five minutes, you will pass a small restaurant next to the Mardi Khola Bridge (1,040 m), which is a good place for lunch.

Cross the Mardi Khola Bridge and go right/up (northwards). You will be following the Mardi Khola upstream (south/left of the river), walking through fields. After about one hour you see the village of Bhindabari at your right. There is a Y-junction here; the right fork is leading to a suspension bridge. Both ways lead you to Khoramukh, but it is a bit nicer walking if you choose to cross the river and continue north of the river. You can also cross the river just below the suspension bridge (stone hopping). You continue at the north side of the Mardi Khola and after about half an hour, you will reach Khoramukh (1,067 m) (also called Lwang Ghalel). Go left here, going up a staircase. Soon you will be walking in a forest again. After about 10 minutes, there is a Y-junction; take the stairs to the right. Keep on following the stairs till you reach the Gurung village of Lwang (1,441 m; 40 minutes).

Lwang is a beautiful Gurung village with a splendid view of the Mardi Khola and with Machhapuchhre (6,997 m) rising up behind it. It has a homestay programme as well, and the homestays can accommodate 40 to 50 people altogether.

Day 9: Lwang (1,440 m)-Ghandruk (2,040 m); 8 hours

This is a day with lots of beautiful views of the Annapurna Range. You will be entering a popular tourist trail, which makes for quite a different experience! Suddenly there are many lodges and shops, well-stocked with all kind of snacks and necessities.

In Lwang, go right from homestay number five. After about 20 meters, take the stairs at your right hand side going up. The steps climb above the village, past a small white and red temple. You pass the tea gardens of Lwang, where they produce organic Himalaya tea. After about half an hour, you will arrive at a grassy area with a resting place (1,655 m). From here, you have an amazing view of the Annapurna Range. You can see up-close Annapurna South (7,219 m), Annapurna I (8,091 m), Hiunchuli (6,441 m), Machhapuchhre (Fishtail; 6,997 m), Annapurna IV (7,525 m), Annapurna II (7,937 m) and Lamjung Himal (6,983 m).

Just after the resting place, there is a stairs going up at the right and a trail going flat at the left; take the trail going flat. The trail enters the forest again and goes up gradually at first. After about ten minutes, you will reach a T-junction; go left here. You will arrive at steps, which climb up steeply for a while. The steps become a small jungle trail, which goes westwards, gradually going up. The trail is not often used, and the jungle can sometimes close in a bit. After a little over an hour, you will reach a small house; the trail bends to the right here. You will arrive at a meadow, which perhaps offers an even better view of the Annapurna's than the previous viewpoint. You can see the same mountains as from the previous one, but from here, Annapurna II particularly stands out.

The trail enters the forest again, at first going down, northwestwards. A bit later it starts to climb again. After about 20 minutes you arrive at a Y-junction, take the right trail going up. After another 30 minutes, you will reach a grassy area; keep to the right side of the field here. Soon you will come to a stairs, which climb for about 10 minutes until you get to Pitam Deurali (2,106 m).

Pitam Deurali is on the tourist trail, and once there, you might almost be in for a culture shock after the walk on the small deserted trails through the jungle. But it is nice to take a break with a Mars or a Snickers bar and a cold soft drink! From now on, there are lodges that serve food and drinks and provide accommodation, about every half an hour (on average), so you can choose where you want to have lunch and where you want to stay.

From Pitam Deurali you have a beautiful view of Annapurna South, with Annapurna I behind it, and Hiunchuli. From here, the trail goes down through the forest to Bichuk Bherikharka (1,814 m; 40 minutes). After Bichuk Bherikharka, the trail turns into a dirt road, which continues till Landruk. It is another 20 minutes to Tolka (1,760 m) and another 45 minutes to Landruk (1,628 m), a big Gurung village. All along the way, you have great views of Annapurna South and Hiunchuli.

At the end of the village, there is a junction; take the left trail (stairs) going down to the Modi Khola. The trail descends steeply and in about 20 to 30 minutes, you will reach the bridge over the Modhi Khola (1,320 m). Just after the bridge, there is the small settlement of Kyumi (1,333 m), which has two lodges. The trail climbs up just as steeply as it went down to Ghandruk. A little bit over an hour, you will reach the gate of Ghandruk (1,874 m). Ghandruk (1,874-2,050 m) is a very big Gurung village, and it has plenty of guesthouses. There is an ACAP information centre, a Buddhist monastery and a Gurung museum, which are all worth a visit. But the even bigger attractions are the Annapurna views from here. Annapurna South and Hiunchuli are up and close. Besides, you can also see Machhapuchhre, Gangapurna, Annapurna III, and a bit of Annapurna II and IV.

Day 10: Ghandruk (2,040 m)-Ghorepani (2,885 m); 7 hours

The trek from Ghandruk to Ghorepani is a bit long, but the trail is not very difficult. It is a beautiful trail indeed; you will be walking through rhododendron forests most of the time, and along the way, you have great views of the Annapurna Range. In March/early April the trail is even more beautiful, as at this time the rhododendrons are in bloom.

You will leave Ghandruk going westwards, climbing up gradually through a rhododendron forest. You will follow a small stream most of the way. It is about one-and-a-half hours to Bhaisikharka (2,497 m), which has two lodges. The trail continues going up through the forest.

After five minutes, there is a Y-junction; take the left, going up (the right trail goes down). From Bhaisikharka, it is about 45 minutes to Tadapani (2,660 m), from where you have a beautiful view of Annapurna South, Hiunchuli and Machhapucchre. Tadapani is quite big and has many lodges.

After Tadapani the trail goes down for about half an hour till you cross a bridge over a stream (at 2,490 m), after which it climbs again. After another half an hour, you will reach Banthanti (2,666 m), where there are a few lodges.

The trail keeps on climbing alongside the stream. The scenery is beautiful, with steep, high rocks, huge pine trees and rhododendrons. After about an hour, you will reach the first lodges of Deurali (3,040 m) and a few more (3,098 m) 15 minutes later.

From Deurali it takes about 50 minutes till Gurung Hill (3,152 m), a viewpoint with breathtaking views of the Annapurna Range and the impressive Dhaulagiri I. Gurung Hill is not as popular as Poon Hill, but it offers the same kinds of views.

Around 20 minutes after Gurung Hill's viewpoint, there is a resting place, from which two stairs go down: one going straight and one to the right. Take the stairs to the right. After about 20 minutes of descending through the forest, you will pass a gate, which is the entrance to Ghorepani (3,006 m). Shortly after, you will arrive at the lodges and shops of Ghorepani (2,885 m).

Day 11: Ghorepani (2,885 m)-Poonhill (3,193) - Tikot (2,278 m); 1 ½ + 3 hours

Watching the sunrise over the Annapurna and Dhaulagiri ranges from Poonhill (3,193 m) is *the* attraction of Ghorepani. Early each morning, around 5 am, trekkers walk up the hill to admire the six-, seven- and eight-thousanders, and to take in the first rays of the sun shining on them.

It takes about 45 minutes to climb to Poonhill. There is a viewing tower here and a small shop that serves hot drinks.

According to the locals, the trail to Beni pointed out on the GHT Annapurna Section map of Himalayan Maphouse doesn't exist or is in bad

shape. There is another trail, but the trail is not always easy to find. The route is described below, but it is recommended that you ask around in Ghorepani for somebody to show you the way up to Tikot (from Tikot the trail to Beni is easy to find). For example, Mr. Poon, the owner of Snow view lodge, knows the way.

From Ghorepani you go down northwards into a rhododendron forest. After five minutes there is a Y-junction; take the left trail going down. After about half an hour, you will arrive at a small bridge (2,711 m), after which the trail goes up for a short while, and then goes down again. Around 10 minutes after the bridge is another Y-junction; take the right trail (which is also the bigger trail). You will be walking all the time westwards or northwestwards. After another 10 minutes you arrive at a T-junction, where you go left. One minute after, there is another Y-junction; take the right trail here. Again after five minutes, you will arrive at a resting place in a grassland; keep to the left here, and you will see the trail going back into the forest. It's a beautiful walk, on a small trail, through the forest. You will see many small bushes with small white or pink flowers; this is the loktha plant, from the branches of which Nepali paper is made.

The trail goes sometimes up for a while, but is mostly descending. Sometimes you will see a signpost for Tikot, which you will obviously follow. About 10 minutes after the grassland (and one minute after the first signpost for Tikot), there is another Y-junction; take the left trail. Pass the small pond, Braha Tal (2,642 m).

About 15 minutes after the lake is another Y-junction; the one on the left is a sand path and the one on the right, a stone path. Take the sand path going left. After about five minutes, you will arrive at a field, from which you have amazing views of the Annapurna and Dhaulagiri ranges (in good weather). The path is not so clear here. There is a Y-junction, one trail going straight (south) and the other going right (west); take the trail going west. The trail climbs a bit to a resting place, where it bends to the right.

After 10 minutes there is another Y-junction; take the left trail going down. The trail goes through grass fields for about 20 minutes, enters the forest again for a while and then goes on top of a ridge. Far below you in the distance, you can see the Aul Kholā. After about 10 minutes, it enters the forest again, going down steeply via stairs. After about 15 minutes you will arrive at some fields, at the border of Tikut. After

another 10 minutes you will arrive at a dirt road, which you take going down, towards the village which you can see in front of you. After about 100 metres, take a small path on the right side of the dirt road, going down into the village.

Tikot (2,278 m) is a very charming village, inhabited by Magar people, who practice Hinduism blended with lots of animistic elements. All special features in nature (such as the spring of a river) are holy to them, and you will often see a small temple built near such natural landmarks. From the village you have amazing views of the Annapurna and Dhaulagiri ranges.

Tikot has a homestay programme as well (nine houses, 20 beds). The homestays are very good, and they have nice rooms with good mattresses, clean bed linen, and clean toilets. You don't eat in the house of the host family, but you can eat together with others in the hostel of the school of the village.

The homestay programme is part of a five-to-eight-day itinerary, where you stay in homestays and community lodges.

Day 12: Tikot (2,278 m)-Beni (850 m); 4 hours; and bus to Pokhara; 4 hours

It's just a half-day walk from Tikot to Beni. Leave Tikot following the dirt road that arrives at the square of the school. After one minute, there is a Y-junction; go right and down here. After about 10 minutes, you will see a shortcut to your right. This one comes back to the dirt road quickly. Follow the road for a couple of minutes and take the stairs going down. The trail leads away from the road now. About an hour after leaving Tikot, you will arrive at the tiny settlement of Tikot Besi (1,634 m). You will be mostly walking through the fields, and after another 45 minutes, you will arrive at a T-junction; go right/down here. It is another 15 minutes till the suspension bridge over the Kali Gandaki (970 m), which brings you to the dirt road between Beni and Jomsom. Go left here, in the direction of Beni. After a few minutes you will pass a few teashops (Baisari 967 m), which make good spots for tea break, to give your knees some rest after the steep descent!

It is more or less two more hours of walking to Beni, following the dirt road alongside the Kali Gandaki. Kali Gandaki is a first-class river for rafting and kayaking, but it is for the courageous, as the rapids are quite difficult to tackle!

After about one hour 45 minutes, you will reach Galeshwar/Galeshor (874 m). Walk into the town, cross the suspension bridge and go left on the steps, passing Hotel Riverside. You will walk through the town and continue on the dirt road. After half an hour, you will reach Beni (850 m).

Beni, a busy bazaar town, is the headquarters of Myagdi District. There are plenty of hotels here along the road and more inside the town. You will also find lots of shops in Beni to restock your supplies for your trek. In case you want to end your trek here, buses to Pokhara take three to four hours.

Accommodation Overview

Annapurna Section

Day 1: Kathmandu-Besisahar (6-hour bus ride) or Pokhara-Besisahar (4-hour bus ride)

Besisahar:

Hotel Siddhi Binayak: at the entrance of the town.

Everest Guesthouse.

Gangapurna Hotel and Lodge.

Hotel M.C. and Lodge.

Hotel Super View.

Throunch Peak Guesthouse.

Thorung La Guesthouse.

Hotel Mt Kailash.

Mongolian Guesthouse

Day 2: Besisahar (810 m)-Ghalegaun (2,078 m); 6 hours

Baglung Pani:

Hilltower Hotel and Restaurant: offers basic accommodation.

Ghaulegaun:

Homestay programme in which 32 houses participate. The homestays are coordinated by one office, and Dirga Ghale is the contact person (Tel: 9846193067). You can also contact the Tourism Management Sub-Committee at Ghalegaun.

Tel 066-520693. Ghalegaun is part of the homestay trek, which also includes the villages of Ghan Pokhara, Bhujung, Pasgaun and Siurung.

Day 3: Ghalegaun (2,078 m)-Pasgaun (1,650 m); 6 hours

Bhujung:

25 households offer homestay facilities. The coordinator of the homestay programme is Tul Bahadur Gurung (Tel: 9846089997, 993661311).

Pasgaun:

Homestay programme. Contact Padam B. Gurung (Tel. 9813265758).

Day 4: Pasgaun (1,650 m)-Bhachok (1314 m) 5 hrs

Nagidhar:

There is one restaurant and six homestays. The owner of the restaurant is also the coordinator of the homestays: Prem Bahadur Gurung (Tel 9846355706).

Bhachok:

Homestay programme in which about 40 houses participate. The former Captain of the Indian Army is the coordinator (Tel. 9804176766)

Day 5: Bhachok (1314 m)-Yangjakot (1,450 m); 4-5 hours**Yangjakot:**

Rock on Restaurant and Lodge.
Nishan Lodge & Restaurant
Narayan Gurung (Tel. 9816115896)
Community-owned campsite: in Thumakodanda, close to Yangjakot.

Day 6: Yangjakot (1,450 m)-Sikles (1,945 m); 6 hours**Sikles:**

Namaste Guesthouse.
Contact person: Dhan Gurung (Maila)
Tel. 9846222487, 9806760512
E-mail: namaste_sikles@yahoo.com
Facebook: namaste_guesthouse@yahoo.com

Laxmi Guesthouse
Contact person: Bala Sing Gurung
Tel: 9817180205; 9846257208

Chanda Home Stay
Tel. 9819129301

New Sikles Hotel and Guesthouse.

Home's Home.

DudhPokhari Guesthouse.

Hotel Chautari.

There are a few more homestays. Besides, there is a campsite below Siklis (same trail as start of trek to Tara Hill).

Day 7: Sikles (1,945 m)-Ghalekharka (1,674 m); 6 hours**Ghalekharka:**

Samjana Cottage
Tel: 9806762723, 061 691044
Four guestrooms (10 beds), a dining hall and a small shop, which also sells small souvenirs.

Day 8: Ghalekharka (1,674 m)- Lwang (1,440 m); 5 hours**Lwang:**

Homestay programme; the homestays can accommodate 40-50 people altogether.
Contact persons: Him Kumari Gurung (Tel: 9846382738); Dev Raj Gurung (Tel: 9846048993); Tham Bahadur Chhanjel

(Tel. 9806655133)
(all homestay owners).

Or contact Santosh Gurung, who is the head of the local NGO Lwang Greenhill Club
Tel. 9856035364; email: santoshgurung2041@hotmail.com.
www.lwangvillage.com.np

**Day 9: Lwang (1,440 m)-
Ghandruk (2,040 m);
8 hours**

From now on, there are lodges that serve food and drinks and provide accommodation, about every half an hour (on average), so you can choose where you want to have lunch and where you want to stay.

Pitam Deurali:

Pitam Deurali has a couple of lodges

Bichuk Bherikarka:

Bichuk Bherikarka has a couple of lodges

Tolka:

Tolka has a couple of lodges

Landruk:

Landruk has many lodges

Kyumi:

Kyumi has two lodges.

Ghandruk:

Ghandruk is a very big Gurung village, and it has plenty of guesthouses.

**Day 10:Ghandruk
(2,040 m)-Ghorepani
(2,885 m); 7 hours**

Bhaisikharka:

Bhaisikharkha has two lodges.

Tadapani:

Tadapani has many lodges.

Banthanti:

Banthanti has a few lodges.

**Day 11:Ghorepani
(2,885 m)-Poonhill
(3,193)-Tikot (2,278 m)
1 ½ + 3 hours**

Tikot:

Homestay programme (nine houses; 20 beds); the homestays are very good, with nice rooms that have good mattresses, clean bed linen, and clean toilets; you don't eat in the house of the host family, but you can eat together with others in the hostel of the school of the village.

The homestay programme is part of a five-to-eight day itinerary; more information at www.

himanchal.org or you can send an e-mail to contact@himanchal.org. You could also contact Pradeep Pun, the coordinator of the programme in Tikot: pun-bradeeb71@yahoo.com (Tel: 9857622790).

**Day 12:Tikot (2,278 m)-
Beni (850 m); 4 hours**

Beni:

Beni, a busy bazaar town, is the headquarters of Myagdi district. There are plenty of hotels here along the road and more inside the town. You will also find lots of shops in Beni to restock your supplies for your trek.

DHORPATAN



Dhorpatan Trek: Beni to Dunai

Introduction

This section brings you into a complete no-man's-land, with spectacular desolate landscapes. The views of the Himalaya are amazing, especially from the Jalja La (3,386 m), from where you can see a whole range of mountains. The Dhaulagiri (8,167 m) and Gurja Himal (7,193 m) are especially very close. In this area lies the Dhorpatan Wildlife reserve; a beautiful, rough region which until now has only been discovered by hunters hunting for blue sheep, which are quite abundant here. For about three days, you don't encounter any settlements, till the Jang La (4,519 m) brings you into Dolpa.

Days: 11

Difficulty: Moderate/hard

Maximum elevation: 4,519 m

Type: Teahouse/homestay/camping (it's imperative that you bring your own tent and cooking gear)

Permits needed: Trekking Permit Lower Dolpa (US\$ 10 per week) and TIMS

Itinerary

Day 1: Kathmandu-Beni (9-hour bus ride) or Pokhara-Beni (4-hour bus ride)

Day 2: Beni (850 m)-Darbang (1,100 m); 6 ½ hours

Day 3: Darbang (1,105 m)-Lamsung (2,160 m); 8 hours

Day 4: Lamsung (2,160 m)-Chhentung (2,950 m) via Jalja La (3,386 m); 8 hours

Day 5: Chhentung (2,950 m)-Thakur (3,309) via 2 passes (3,691 m and 4,160 m); 9 ½ hours

Day 6: Thakur (3,309 m)-Guibang (2,768 m); 7 hours

Day 7: Guibang (2,768 m)-Campsite Sen Khola (3,979 m); 7 hours

Day 8: Campsite Sen Khola (3,996 m)-Campsite Purpang, Saure Khola (4,065 m); 5 hours

Day 9: Campsite Purpang, Saure Khola (4,065 m)-Dunai (2,096 m) via Jang La (4,519 m); 10 hours

Day 10: Dunai (2,096 m)-Juphal; 3 hours

Day 11: Juphal-Nepalgunj-Kathmandu (flight)

Day 1: Kathmandu-Beni (9-hour bus ride) or Pokhara-Beni (4-hour bus ride)

You can get to Beni by bus from Kathmandu (about nine hours) or Pokhara (about four hours).

Beni is a busy bazaar town and the headquarters of Myagdi District. There are plenty of hotels here along the road and more inside the town. Besides, you will find lots of shops in Beni to buy supplies for your trek.

Day 2: Beni (850 m)-Darbang (1,100 m); 6 ½ hours

Strangely enough, there is no GHT map available (yet) of this stretch of the GHT; for now, the map to use for this section is the Dhaulagiri Circuit map.

It is quite a long distance from Beni to Darbang, about 26 km, but as it is almost flat-walking all day long, it is not difficult to cover the distance. You will be following the Myagdi Khola upstream all day long.

Leaving Beni follow the road out of town southwards. Just out of Beni is a bridge over the Myagdi Khola; cross this bridge and go right and up after the bridge. You will be walking on a dirt road now. After about 10 minutes there is a Y-junction, take the right road going flat. You will be walking through beautiful fields. After another 20 minutes, you will pass the village of Bagarpath (832 m). Around 15 minutes after passing the village, there is a Y-junction; go right here, which is flat-walking. After another five minutes, you will pass the village of Dudekhola/Khobre (849 m), and after half an hour, the village of Surkemela (875 m). Take the small path right of the dirt road, going down into the fields. After two minutes, there is a Y-junction; take the right going down to the river. You will be walking on the grassland left of the river. You will pass a big school (869 m) and a big tree with a resting place. Take a right here, on a small path into the forest. After a few minutes, the trail comes out of the forest again and passes now very close to the river. After about 10 minutes, you will cross a small suspension bridge and walk into the village of Singha (882 m). After a few hundred metres, you will arrive at a T-junction, where you will go left. At the water tap, go right, and climb back to the dirt road.

It is about half an hour more to Tatopani (915). Tatopani means hot wa-

ter, so it's not surprising that there are hot springs here. These hot springs are holy, and it is usually quite crowded with pilgrims taking a bath. Tatopani has a few small restaurants. Besides, there is one hotel here.

After Tatopani, you will continue walking on the dirt road following the Myagdi Khola, passing villages like Simanchalk (969 m; half an hour), Tara Khet (976 m; another half an hour) and Babiyaachaur (981 m; another half an hour). In Babiyaachaur, you will arrive at a T-junction; go left here for the scenic route at the other side of the river, or go right for the quicker route over the road.

Walking on the road, you will pass a few more villages: Lampata (1,009 m; 10 minutes), Ranabhan (1,037 m; 20 minutes), Naya Bazaar (1,027 m; five minutes), Sasadara (1,031 m; five minutes), Ratadhunga (1,029 m; 20 minutes), Tolbang (1,088 m, 10 minutes) and Dharakarka (1,075 m; 25 minutes). Along the way, you have a beautiful view of the Myagdi Khola Valley.

Darbang (1,105 m) is quite a big and busy bazaar town. You will find eight small and basic hotels here.

Day 3: Darbang (1,105 m)-Lamsung (2,160 m); 8 hours

This is a full day again, with arrival around 6 pm. You can choose to sleep earlier along the way, like in Phaliyagaon.

Leave Darbang crossing the suspension bridge over the Myagdi Khola at the end of the town (1,081 m). After the bridge, go right. You will be walking on a small trail, following the Myagdi Khola (which is to your right) northwards. After about half an hour, you will pass the small village of Phedi (1,100 m). Phedi has a small restaurant. After Phedi, the trail changes into a dirt road.

Five minutes after Phedi, you will cross the suspension bridge over a tributary of the Myagdi Khola (or cross the river stone-hopping). Follow the dirt road, going up. After about five minutes, take a small trail at the right side of the dirt road, going up. You will be climbing up the hill quite steeply now. After 10 minutes, there is a Y-junction; go left here. After another two minutes, at a resting place, there is another Y-junction; again go left (and up) here. Suddenly Dhaulagiri (8,167 m) comes in sight. After a few minutes, the trail crosses a dirt road. After another minute, there is another Y-junction again; go left and up. You

will continue going up steeply, till you reach the dirt road again, which you will follow going up. In good weather, you will have stunning views of the Dhaulagiri Range and Gurja Himal (7,193 m).

About one-and-a-half hours after crossing the suspension bridge, you will reach the village of Dharapani (1,540 m). Go left here and walk into the village. Dharapani is a beautiful, spread-out mountain village with beautiful views of Gurja Himal. After about 20 minutes, you will reach the end of the village. There is another Y-junction here; go left/up. The trail starts climbing steeply again, and in front of you, you can see the small pass you have to go to. The climb goes through a harsh, rocky area, while as you look back, you can see Dharapani, surrounded by terraces. About 45 minutes past the end of Dharapani, you will reach the small pass (1,739 m). With a bit of luck, the fruit seller will be there, and you can revitalise yourself with some bananas, apples or grapes.

The trail goes down gradually. After about five minutes, there is a Y-junction. To the left is a stairs going up; don't take these. Instead, follow the right trail going flat at first and then down.

After about 15 minutes you will arrive in Tarkam (1,650 m). At the entrance of the village is a small hotel, Namuna Hotel. At the end of Tarkam is another hotel, Dharba Tara. There are also a couple of restaurants here, where you can eat tasty daal bhaat.

The trail goes down and flat now. After about 15 minutes, there is another Y-junction; go straight and flat here (don't take the stairs going down). The trail gradually climbs, running beside fields, with a beautiful view of Tarkam. After about 20 minutes, you will reach a resting place; just before it, a trail goes up; don't take that trail. After about five minutes, you will reach the village of Sibang (1,734 m).

After about 10 minutes through the village, there is a stairs going left. Don't take these stairs, but continue walking through the village.

After about half an hour, you will reach another small village, Macchim (1,938 m). The villages on the way have an interesting mix of Hindu Chhetris, Magars and Dalits. After another five minutes, you will reach the highest point (1,970 m; not a pass). For the first five minutes, the trail goes flat. After five minutes, there is a Y-junction; take the stairs on the right, going down. After half an hour, you will reach

the village of Phaliyagaon (1,855 m), which has one basic guesthouse (Hotel Jaljala). From here, it is another 20 minutes to the village of Muna (1,853 m). Five minutes after Muna, you can choose between three trails; take the middle one, which is also the bigger trail. After another half an hour, you will cross a small suspension bridge over a tributary of the Myagdi Khola (1,876 m). From here, it is another 10 minutes to a wooden suspension bridge (1,871 m) over the Myagdi Khola. After the bridge, the trail keeps on following the river, which is now to your left. The trail goes up steeply at times and goes through a rocky landscape with some groups of trees (among which a few are rhododendrons).

After another half an hour, you will reach the last suspension bridge (1,950 m) of today (it's in bad condition). Next to it is a beautiful waterfall. The trail continues climbing up and after about 45 minutes, you will reach the village of Lamsung (2,160 m). You will find two basic, small hotels here (Hotel Himalaya and Hotel Malika).

Day 4: Lamsung (2,160 m)-Chhentung(2,950 m) via Jalja La (3,386 m); 8 hours

This is a beautiful walk, which almost completely goes through a forest. It is quite a long stretch to do in one day, 22.90 km, especially because it involves a four-hour climb to the Jalja La (3,386 m). You can choose to camp or (if you are part of a small group) stay overnight in Ghurjaghat (3,047), one-and-a-half hours before Chhentung(2,950 m).

There are almost no villages along the way (along the trail right after Lamsung), so you need to bring a packed lunch. Besides, bring plenty of water, as on the climb and through the pass there is no water available. About 40 minutes after the pass though, you will come across a stream, where you can refill your water bottle.

You will walk out of Lamsung following a trail above the fields westwards. The trail follows a small river, the Chirphire river, which flows below the fields, left of the trail. After a few minutes there is a Y-junction; take the right trail going flat (the left trail goes to the river). After about 20 minutes, you will cross a short suspension bridge (2,195 m). The trail keeps on following the river upstream and after five minutes arrives at the settlement of Chirphire (2,204 m). You will cross a short concrete bridge and then take the stairs going up. Here the climb to the Jalja La starts. After about 10 minutes, just before a resting place, go left on the stairs that go up behind the resting place.

After about 15 minutes, you will arrive at the small settlement of Mareni (2,367 m). You will find a small lodge with a campsite here (Raju Hotel and Shop). The owner, Raju Thapa, arranges treks in Dhaulagiri and Dolpa as well (Tel: 9746703557). He works together with Tila Ram (same phone number).

You will be climbing up through beautiful rhododendron forests. After about one hour and 45 minutes, you will pass an open field (2,984 m), which offers great views of the Dhaulagiri and Annapurna ranges. From here, it is a little bit over an hour to the pass, Jalja La (3,386 m). (Just before the Jalja La is a resting place; there is a Y-junction here; take the left trail towards the little house in the distance). The views from the pass are even better than from the previous viewpoint, and arguably even better than from Poon Hill. You can see a whole range of mountains, and Dhaulagiri (8,167 m) and Gurja Himal (7,193 m) are especially very close. The mountains you can see from here are Dhaulagiri I and II, Gurja Himal, Butterfly Peak, three summits of Nilgiri, Annapurna I, Annapurna South and Machapuchhre.

After the pass, it is a flat and easy walk through beautiful pine forests. After about 45 minutes (and five minutes after a wooden bridge), there is a Y-junction; take the left going down. The trail follows a small river now, the Ghurjaghat Khola. It passes a dead forest, which has been damaged quite extensively by fire. You will be walking for almost an hour through this burnt forest.

From the pass, it is about three hours to Ghurjaghat (3,047 m), a small settlement that mainly functions as grazing lands for cattle. After Ghurjaghat, you will pass two wooden bridges after which there is a Y-junction; go left here. After about half an hour, you will get to an open area with many trails; stick to the right here. After another 10 minutes, the trail arrives at a river, which you have to cross either stone-hopping or wading (2,979 m). After crossing the river, it takes about half an hour to get to the tiny settlement of Kaldegothe (2,940 m). From Kaldegothe, it is only 15 minutes to Chhentung (2,950 m). There are two lodges in Chhentung, where you can camp as well.

Day 5: Chhentung(2,950 m)-Thakur (3,309) via 2 passes (3,691 m and 4,160 m); 9 ½ hours

This is a very long day. It is an alternative to the route via Dhorpatan, which takes two days. Both routes go through Dhorpatan National Park. For both the route via Dhorpatan and for this route, it is recom-

mended that you take a local guide from Chhentung or from Raju Hotel (mentioned earlier) who knows the way. The trail is difficult to discern at some places, and you will be walking through a no-man's-land so there are chances that you might get lost without a guide.

Leave Chhentung taking the trail up in the village (from the guesthouse which currently has no name). At the end, you will see a signpost that says "Way to reserve"; this is the route via Dhorpatan. If you take the shortcut route described here, don't take this trail; instead go right.

You will enter a forest, and after about 20 minutes you will cross a wooden bridge, from which the trail climbs for about two hours to the Chhentung pass (3,691 m). From the pass, you have nice views, but not as good as those from the Jalja La.

After the pass, the trail goes flat at first and then gradually down, westwards. You will be walking through a vivid mountain landscape, looking out over rocky mountains, bushes and pine trees. About half an hour after the pass, just after a small shed, there is a Y-junction; take the left (smaller) trail, going high up on the slope. The trail goes flat for a while, passing another shed. After about another hour, it starts climbing again to a second pass. The climb takes about one to one-and-a-half hours. From the pass (4,160 m), the trail goes flat for a while, making a kind of U-turn. Where the trail gets less clear, you have to go left, and down. You will then come to a river, which you have to follow.

Go up at the left side of the river. You will then arrive at a large path, going on the top of a slope. From here it is about one-and-a-half hours of descending through a forest to the tiny settlement of Thakur (3,309). Thakur is only inhabited mid-spring to mid-autumn.

Day 6: Thakur (3,309 m)-Guibang (2,768 m); 7 hours

From today onwards, the trail is the one on the GHT map of Himalayan Map House again (Dolpo and Mugu map), although the trail is slightly different from the green trail indicated on the map.

Today is a day with quite a lot of ups and downs. The trail goes almost entirely through beautiful pine and oak forests with some rhododendrons. Now and then you will pass a small village. The villages are inhabited by Magar people, mostly Magar Pun.

From Thakur, the trail descends through a pine forest, to the Ghusiun

Khola, which you cross over a suspension bridge (2,817 m; one hour). The bridge is the border between Myagdi and Rukum districts. Rukum is one of the poorest districts in Nepal, and you can see that passing the villages. Health care here is almost not-existent.

Shortly after crossing the bridge, you will pass the tiny settlement of Ghusiun (2,853 m). The trail climbs up for a bit over an hour till the highest point (3,262 m), after which the trail is more or less *Nepali flat*, with some steep descents and climbs till Khaimdada (3,136 m; one hour).

In Khaimdada, there is a small restaurant that serves daal bhaat. Just before the restaurant, you will notice a helipad and sometimes a camp-site. This is used for trophy hunting, in fact blue-sheep hunting expeditions. Each year, a limited number of blue sheep are allowed to be hunted, and foreign tourists are prepared to pay huge sums of money for the hunt.

From Khaimdada, the trail goes down through a forest for about an hour to Jarlung (2,707 m), which has a school for the surrounding villages. It descends further to a wooden bridge (2,452 m; 30 minutes). After crossing the bridge, you will have to climb steeply for a few minutes and go down again to Tatopani (2,408 m; 15 minutes). Here you will find small hotsprings right in front of the trail.

In Tatopani, you will cross a small wooden bridge again (2,425 m) and climb up steeply. After about 15 minutes, there is a Y-junction; take a right here. You climb for about half an hour till you reach 2,540 m, after which the trail is *Nepali flat*. After about 20 minutes, you will reach the small village of Him (2,571 m). Just after Him, there are two Y-junctions; at both, take the left trail going up. After a few minutes, you will arrive at terraces; take a right here and pass the terraces. After another five minutes, there is a small resting place; take a right here and continue into the forest. The trail climbs steeply for about 15 minutes till you are high on a slope, with the Pelma Khola far below you. After this it goes flat for a while before descending again to a small wooden bridge (2,633 m) over a stream. After the bridge, the trail climbs for a bit, after which it goes *Nepali flat*, till you climb to the village of Guibang (2,768 m).

In Guibang there are no real guesthouses or restaurants, but if you camp in the village you can use one of the houses to eat.

Day 7: Guibang (2,768 m)-Campsite Sen Khola (3,979 m); 7 hours

Today you will be going into a real no-man's-land, and you will walk most of the day in a completely deserted, spectacular high-altitude landscape.

Climb the hill behind Guibang, going northwestwards. After about half an hour, you will cross a small stream. Just after this is a Y-junction; take the left, going up. After another 50 minutes, at around 3,275 m, you will arrive at a T-junction; go left here. After another 10 minutes, you will arrive in Dule. Dule is also called Dule Bazaar, as almost all its houses (about six) are or used as a guesthouse or as a shop. There are three guesthouses here.

From Dule, it takes two to three days to get to Dunai, in Dolpa. To get into Dolpa you have to cross a high pass, the Jang La (4,535 m). Between Dule and Dunai, in Dolpa, there is nothing, not even a village or settlement. So Dule is your last chance to buy extra food. Besides, only about three hours after leaving Dule, will you cross a stream where you can refill your water, so it is wise to leave Dule with about two litres of water.

The climb continues on the hill behind the village, going through a forest at first, but this soon changes into a high-altitude landscape: grass, bare rocks and at times snow. In about two hours, you reach a small pass (3,931 m). After the pass, the trail follows the Sen Khola upstream. At first, the trail goes down steeply, which can be slippery when there is snow. After about 45 minutes to an hour, when the trail gets closer to the river (at about 3,700 m), it starts to climb again gradually, following the Sen Khola. You will be walking in a beautiful, completely deserted high-altitude landscape. About two to two-and-a-half hours after crossing the pass, you will pass a few walls. The place is actually a campsite, and the walls can be used for a kitchen. There is a large flat area and water at hand, so this is a good place to camp (3,940 m). Around 15 minutes ahead is another flat area, where you can camp (3,979 m).

Day 8: Campsite Sen Khola (3,996 m)-Campsite Purpang, Saure Khola (4,065 m); 5 hours

It's a relatively short day today, but because of the altitude it is recommended that you not cross the pass on this day. From the campsite, the trail goes up steeply westwards for the first one-and-a-half hours. After this, it climbs up more gradually for another hour till an altitude of just over 4,500 m. Due to the altitude, it is quite hard climbing, but the landscape around you is spectacular. You will find yourself surrounded by bare and snowcapped mountains, and there is a chance that you will be walking in the snow as well.

The trail descends gradually, northwestwards. After about two hours, you will cross the Saure Khola (4,019 m). It is a short climb of about 10 minutes to a campsite. There are a few walls that are built as a cooking place. From the campsite, you have a nice view over the mountains and the trail you just came on.

Day 9: Campsite Purpang, Saure Khola (4,065 m)-Dunai (2,096 m) via Jang La (4,519 m); 10 hours

This is a tough and very long day! The total distance is about 24 km, and you will cross two passes above 4,000 m and descend about 2,500 m. Fully organised camping groups can camp halfway during the descent to Dunai, which is recommended.

Before arriving at the “real pass”, you will cross a lower pass at 4,346 m, which is about one to one-and-a-half hours of climbing. You will be walking through a beautiful, completely deserted landscape. There is a good chance that there might be snow, which makes the landscape even more spectacular. After crossing the first pass, the trail goes flat for a while, after which it descends gradually to 4,294 m (45 minutes). From this point, you will have to climb steeply for about 45 minutes to the real pass, the Jang La (4519 m). When you cross the pass, you will be entering Dolpa, as the pass is the border between Rukum and Dolpa districts. You will have a beautiful view of the deserted landscape in front of you and the snowcapped Himalaya on the horizon, including a view of the famous Kanjirowa (6,883 m) in the far-west.

After the pass, the trail descends gradually. There are several small trails; take the trail that goes northwest. After about one to one-and-a-half hours, you will reach a small stream, the first water-refill op-

portunity after leaving camp (from now onwards there are plenty of refill possibilities). You also see the first trees appearing again. You will walk through a thin forest at first, but soon you will find yourself walking through beautiful pine forests. When there is snow, the trail is a bit difficult to find at some parts, but on the whole, it keeps on going northwestwards. About three hours after crossing the pass (at about 3,550 m) you should arrive at a meadow, which you have to climb up (for 15 minutes). From the top of the meadow, you can see the Thuli Beri River, which flows through Dunai, far below in the distance. After about one hour, there is a Y-junction (at 3,230 m), where you have to go left. You will keep on descending through a beautiful, lush forest. After some time, you can see Dunai lying below you, which is an encouraging sight. About one-and-a-half hours after the previous Y-junction, there is another junction, where you can choose between a trail going right and flat and one going left and down. Take the trail that is going down. The trail goes down steeply, which can be a bit difficult at times, because there are many small loose stones here. After about one hour, you will reach a wooden bridge (2,257 m) over the Thuli Beri River. Take a right (north) after the crossing. You will be following the river downstream, walking left of the river (you will pass a small hydropower station). It is easy, quite flat walking now. After one to one-and-a-half hours, you will reach Dunai (2,096 m).

Dunai is the headquarters of Dolpa District. It has a few basic hotels and one campsite.

Besides, there is a small homestay run by Ravindra Shahi.

There are also many shops in Dunai; there is even a trekking store, where both tourists and agents can find almost everything they need for their trek (Cloud Goats Trekking Store).

From Juphal/Dunai, you can go on several beautiful treks, like the Dolpa-Circuit Trek, a 12- day trek, in which you cross two passes over 5,000 m; or the Inner-Dolpo Trek, which takes you to Shey Gumpa, the spiritual heart of Dolpo. You can find detailed information on the Great Himalaya Trail website: <http://www.thegreathimalayatrail.org/trail-sections/dolpa/trek-this-section/>.

Day 10: Dunai (2,096 m)-Juphal; 3 hours

Dunai is quite a large village, of about 2,500 people, more or less half Hindu and half Buddhist. In the morning, you will have plenty of time to look around, as the walk to Juphal is only about three hours.

Up the hill, there is a Buddhist monastery, the Dolpa Kendriya Gompa, which is worth a visit. It is situated on the slope on the other side of the river, overlooking Dunai. The monastery belongs to the Nyingmapa lineage, the oldest Tibetan Buddhist lineage, and it was built in 1998. There is only one monk/lama here. If he is there, he will be happy to open the monastery for you and show you around. Inside the gompa, you will come across a beautiful statue of Sakyamuni Buddha (Gautama Buddha), the Kengyur (the holy scriptures of Buddhism) and big thankas (Buddhist paintings on cotton cloth). There is a small daily puja (prayer ceremony) from 6-7 am and from 6-7 pm.

A bit further away from Dunai, at the same slope, you can find the Dolpo Bon School and Hostel. Bon or Bonpo is related to Buddhism, but it is a lot older than Buddhism and goes back thousands of years. The religion was founded more than 18,000 years ago by Buddha Tonpa Shenrab Miwo. It is believed that Dolpa used to be the centre of the Bon kingdom, called Zhang Zhung, a big and powerful kingdom in present western and northwestern Tibet and surroundings. That is why you can still find a big concentration of Bonpo practitioners in Dolpo. In the 7th Century AD, Zhang Zhung was defeated by the Buddhist kingdom of Tibet, and Bonpo disappeared almost completely. However, many Bon traditions were absorbed into Tibetan culture.

Bonpo has more animistic aspects than Buddhism. For outsiders, it is difficult to see the differences between Bonpo and Buddhism, but one small but important detail is that when you walk past Bon shrines, like mani walls and chortens, you have to walk anti-clockwise, while according to Buddhist custom, you pass them clockwise.

Besides the normal teachings that children receive at the regular schools, the Bon School educates children in the Bonpo religion, Tibetan culture and Tibetan language. The school offers education to poor and orphaned children of Bonpo background in the district. As the children come from different, far-away villages, there is a hostel here as well. Currently there are 26 children in the school, divided into five different classes. Unfortunately, at present the school faces a lack

of funds, due to which the children receive classes in a big tent. They are hoping for new funds to build a decent school building.

At regular schools, Tibetan language, Tibetan culture and Bon religion are not taught. The school therefore helps to maintain a millennium-old culture. The school and hostel make for a very interesting visit, which gives you a chance to learn more about Bonpo. One of the teachers will be happy to show you around and give you explanations about the Bonpo religion and culture. Besides the hostel, there is a beautiful stupa, which holds a century-old footprint of an important lama. A Bonpo gumpa is being built here as well.

It takes about three hours to get to Juphal (2,475 m) following the dirt road, which, so far, is practically only used by “vehicles with one horsepower”. It is easy, rather flat-walking. After about one hour, you will pass a big suspension bridge, which takes you to Suligad and further north to Phoksundo Lake. It is another 15 minutes to the small settlement of Rupgad (2,064 m) and another half an hour after that to Kalagauda (2,035 m). Shortly after Kalagauda, you will leave the dirt road and get on a trail to your left, leading up the mountain. It is more or less an hour of climbing from here to Juphal.

Juphal has an airport with flights to Nepalgunj and Surkhet in south-west Nepal. Nepalgunj has daily flights to Kathmandu (four flights a day). Besides, there are buses to Kathmandu (about a 15-hour drive). Flights from Surkhet to Kathmandu are less regular, but it is only a three-hour drive from Surkhet to Nepalgunj.

Day 11: Flight: Juphal-Nepalgunj-Kathmandu

Early in the morning, you will fly to Nepalgunj. The first part of the flight through the mountain valleys is spectacular. Later in the day, you will fly back to Kathmandu.

Accommodation Overview

Dhorpatan Trek: Beni to Dunai

Day 1: Kathmandu-Beni (9-hour bus ride) or Pokhara-Beni (4-hour bus ride)

Beni, a busy bazaar town, is the headquarters of Myagdi district. There are plenty of hotels here along the road and more inside the town. There are also lots of shops in Beni to buy supplies for your trek.

Day 2: Beni (850 m)-Darbang (1,100 m); 6 ½ hours

Tatopani:

Hotel Sherchan: 16 rooms;
Tel 993692013.

Darbang:

Surakshya Guesthouse
Tel: 065-680163, 9746707725,
9745042183

Biggest guesthouse here, with 11 rooms, two with attached bathrooms.

Dhovan Hotel
Tel: 9741069116
Four rooms; 10 beds.

Tara Hotel.
Shijal Hotel.

Shilpa Hotel.
Himal Hotel.
Thaleali Hotel.
Rainbow Hotel.

Day 3: Darbang (1,105m)-Lamsung (2,160 m); 8 hours

Tarkam:

Namuna Hotel (at the entrance of the village)
Tel: 9847732879; 9741143469
Two rooms.

Dharba Tara shop and lodging: at the end of the village.

Phaliyagaon:
Hotel Jaljala: basic guesthouse.

Lamsung:

Hotel Himalaya: basic guesthouse.
Hotel Malika: basic guesthouse.

Day 4: Lamsung (2,160 m)-Chhentung(2,950 m) via Jalja La (3,386 m); 8 hours

Ghurjaghat:

You can choose to camp or (if you are part of a small group) stay overnight.

Mareni:

Raju Hotel and Shop
Contactperson: Raju Thapa
Tel: 9746703557

Four rooms and a campsite; the owner arranges treks in Dhaulagiri and Dolpa as well. He works together with Tila Ram (same phone number).

Chhentung:

Apple Hotel :two triple-sleeping rooms (no mattress)

A lodge without a name: five double rooms were being built at the time of writing (March 2012). You can camp in this place as well.

Day 5:Chhentung(2,950m)-Thakur (3,309) via 2 passes (3,691 m and 4,160 m); 9 ½ hours

Thakur has one basic guest-house; only open from mid-spring to mid-autumn

Day 6: Thakur (3,309m)-Guibang (2,768 m); 7 hours

Guibang:

There are no real guesthouses or restaurants, but if you camp in the village you can use one of the houses to eat.

Day 7: Guibang (2,768m)-Campsite Sen Khola (3,979 m); 7 hours

Dule:

Almost all the houses here (about six) are or used as a guesthouse or as a shop. There are three guesthouses here: Himalayan View (two double bedrooms); Dule Basecamp (one big room, three beds and lots of space for mattresses); Mountain Guesthouse (also one big room without any beds; they have plans to make several rooms).

Day 8: Campsite Sen Khola (3,996 m)-Campsite Purpang, Saure Khola (4,065 m); 5 hours

Saure Khola:

About 10 minutes from Saure Khola, there is a campsite. There are a few walls that can be used to create a cooking place.

Day 9: Campsite Purpang, Saure Khola (4,065 m)-Dunai (2,096 m) via Jang La (4,519 m); 10 hours

Dunai:

Dunai has a few basic hotels and one campsite.

Blue Sheep Inn
Contact person: Angad Kumar Hamal

Tel: 9848303676

Five rooms and a camping area; one toilet in the hotel and two toilets at the camping space; 24-hour electricity; running water. They don't serve food, but there is a small restaurant next door (Pushpa Restaurant).

Hotel Gorkha Palace and Lodge

Contact person: Yubaraj Bagale

Tel: 974 8001 418

Eight rooms; two toilets; 24-hour electricity; running water. The lodge provides food, snacks and drinks;

Yubaraj Bagale also manages helicopter flights.

Pala Guest House

Contact person: Laliman Budha

Tel: 087 550116, 9851112816 or 974 890 0816.

Five rooms with 15 beds; one toilet; one bathroom; 24-hour electricity; running water; guest house provides food and beverages.

There is a small homestay run by Ravindra Shahi, next to the Blue Sheep Inn. He provides the only hot shower in town (guests of the Blue Sheep Inn can use the shower as well).

Day 10: Dunai (2,096 m)-Juphal; 3 hours

Juphal:

Hotel Mt Putha: guesthouse with a campsite.

Contact person: Tarak Shahi

Tel: 087 690445

Mobile: 984 830 3645, 974 890 1039

Mail: tarakshahi@yahoo.com

Hotel Jharana.

Dolpa Section

Introduction

This is a side trip from the GHT, going northwards to Phoksundo Lake. This lake is so beautiful that it would be a shame to skip it.

Trekking in Dolpa is a unique experience. You walk through beautiful landscapes, pass through pine forests alongside wild rivers, and have views of beautiful snowcapped mountains. Phoksundo Lake is clearly of an incomparable beauty. Its deep-blue and emerald colours are enchanting. In Ringmo, the village close to the lake, you can experience Bonpo culture.

Days: 8

Difficulty: Moderate

Maximum elevation: 3,608m

Type: Teahouse/camping; there are (basic) guesthouses all along the trail, so you don't need to camp

Permits needed: Trekking Permit Lower Dolpa (US\$ 10 per week)

Itinerary

Day 1: Flight: Kathmandu-Nepalgunj

Day 2: Flight: Nepalgunj-Juphal (2,475 m); walk to Chhepka (2,838 m); 6 hours

Day 3: Chhepka (2,838 m)-Chunuwar/Amchi Hospital (3,130 m); 6 hours

Day 4: Chunuwar/Amchi Hospital (3,130 m)-Ringmo/Phoksundo Lake (3,608 m); 3 hours

Day 5: Ringmo/Phoksundo Lake (3,608 m)-Chunuwar (3,130 m); 2 hours

Day 6: Chunuwar (3,130 m)-Sangta (2,470 m) or Kageni (2,228 m) 6-7 hours

Day 7: Kageni (2,228 m)-Liku (2,405 m); 6 hours (continuing GHT) or to Juphal (2,475 m); 4-5 hours

Day 8: Flight: Juphal-Nepalgunj-Kathmandu

Day 1: Flight: Kathmandu-Nepalgunj

To get to Dolpa, you usually have to fly to Nepalgunj first. Nepalgunj is a steaming hot city in south-western Nepal, in the lowlands of the Terai, close to the Indian border, which is just eight km away. Culturally, the area resembles India more than upland Nepal. Take a cycle rikshaw for a ride around town. You will experience the hustle and bustle of the bazaar and see horsecarts full of colourful people going to or coming from the Indian border. The Bageshowri temple is one of Nepal's most important Hindu temples and is worth a visit as well.

Day 2: Flight: Nepalgunj-Juphal (2,475 m); walk to Chhepka (2,838 m); 6 hours

It's just a 35-minute flight to Juphal, over steep mountain ridges with beautiful views of snowcapped mountains. Juphal airport is just a gravel airstrip amidst the mountains, which guarantees a spectacular landing. Stepping out of the plane, you will enter a completely different world. From a hot city in the plains, you will arrive in a small mountain-village, situated in the midst of the Himalaya, bathed in crispy cold air.

From Juphal, you will walk down over a small path among fields with wheat and vegetables to the Thuli Bheri River, which you will follow. A big iron suspension-bridge, the Dhim Bridge (99 m long), forms the entrance to the Shey Phoksundo National Park (SPNP). SPNP is Nepal's largest national park, established in 1984, with an area of 3,555 km². It aims to conserve the trans-Himalayan ecosystem and the Tibetan type of flora and fauna. In 1998, an area of 1,349 km² surrounding the park was declared as a buffer zone, which is jointly managed by the park and local communities. (You have to pay an entrance fee of Rs 3,000, except if you are from SAARC countries, in which case, you will pay Rs 1,000). Next to the entrance to the park is the small village of Suligat, where you could stop for tea.

The trail follows the Suli Khola, which turns into the emerald-green and wild-flowing Phoksundo Khola all the way up to Phoksundo Lake. Around 20 minutes after Suligad, there is another Y-junction; take the left trail going flat (not the right one going up). The trail goes through a barren landscape of bare rocks, and at the other side of the river, rocks high up tower above you. It is another hour to Kageni (2,228 m). There are a few small guesthouses here, where you can stop for lunch (or stay overnight).

At the end of Kageni, you will cross a small wooden bridge (2,271 m) and a few minutes later a bigger one over the Phoksundo River (2,280 m). The trail climbs high above the river, passing the small settlement of Jyala (2,331 m). From now on, most villages are inhabited by Buddhist people, of Tibetan background. Although some are Gurung (the others are Lama), their faces and dress are significantly different than the Gurung people in the Annapurna region.

Although the trail keeps on climbing, it comes level with the river again. After about an hour after leaving Kageni, it enters a forest. You will cross a wooden bridge (2,411 m), and continue on the other side of the Phoksundo Khola, climbing slowly. After about 20 minutes, you will pass the small settlement of Syangta (2,470 m), which has a well-kept campsite and a lodge, Swanta Hotel.

Just after Swanta Hotel, you will cross a wooden bridge again, over the Akhe Khola, a tributary of the Phoksundo Khola. The trail keeps on climbing through a forest. It's a beautiful walk, alongside the wild-flowing river, which at some parts is beautiful emerald green. The path is surrounded by pine trees, like spruce, fir, juniper and cypress and it passes small bamboo groves and walnut trees. On the other side of the river, the high rocky slope goes up steeply and is dotted with pine trees as well. After about an hour, you will reach the small village of Chhepka (2,655 m), which is surrounded by fields of millet and wheat. In Chhepka, you find three guesthouses.

Day 3: Chhepka (2,838 m)-Chunuwar/Amchi Hospital (3,130 m); 6 hours

The path continues through beautiful pine forests, with some bushes, birches and other broadleaf trees mixed in as well.

The trail goes through a narrow gorge created by the Phoksundo River, which you will be following all the time. On both sides, there are steep rocks with pine trees towering high above you. The trail sometimes climbs high above the river, only to go down to it again. The trail goes left at some parts, and at some parts, right of the river, so you will be crossing the Phoksundo River regularly over wooden bridges. On the way, you will encounter local people with their mules or dzopas (a crossbreed between a yak and a cow) loaded with things to sell. It takes about three-and-a-half hours to get to Ryachi (2,935 m), which is on the other side of the river. In Ryachi (also spelled as Rechi) there is one

lodge and during the tourist season, you will find a tent-hotel (it is basically a big army tent that serves as small restaurant and shop), which makes it a good stop for lunch (you can also stay overnight in case you want to have a short day; camping gear is needed).

After Ryachi, you can cross the river again and continue on the same trail, or follow the trail behind Ryachi. The trail goes up gradually and again regularly crosses the Phoksundo River. After about 50 minutes (you will be walking right of the river), the trail becomes a bit wider. You will see a few bridges, but don't cross them; just continue on the wider trail (which after 20 minutes becomes narrow again). You will pass a small guesthouse, which has no name. About two-and-a-half hours after Ryachi, you will pass a tent-hotel and just after this, a big boarding school (3,123 m) for children in villages all around Dolpa. About 10 minutes after you will arrive in Chunuwar (3,130 m). You will first pass the Amchi Hospital. This is a very interesting place and worth a visit. In fact it is more of a clinic, which is well frequented by the local people. An Amchi is a doctor who is educated in traditional Tibetan medicine and is always a lama (monk) as well. Tibetan medicine has a tradition of thousands of years and uses techniques such as pulse analysis and urine analysis for diagnosis. For treatment, medicines made from herbs, minerals and of bones of animals of the Himalaya are used, together with physical therapies, like Tibetan acupuncture. In the Amchi Hospital, you can see a collection of herbs and minerals used to cure people. Most Dolpa people prefer to visit the Amchi instead of a regular doctor when they are ill. A donation is highly welcomed to keep this tradition living.

Next to the Amchi Hospital is Jharana Hotel, a small guesthouse, which also has a campsite.

Day 4: Chunuwar/Amchi Hospital (3,130 m)-Ringmo/Phoksundo Lake (3,608 m); 3 hours

From here on, the trail turns into a narrow sand path and starts climbing steeply through a more desert-like landscape with small bushes. It is a tough climb of about one-and-a-half to two hours to a viewpoint with a small house near the Phoksundo Waterfall/Suligad Waterfall, at 3,683 m. At 167 m, this is the tallest waterfall in Nepal. It is another good five minutes to the small pass at 3,727 m, from which you will have your first view of Phoksundo Lake. The trail goes down gradually through a pine forest till it reaches the Phoksundo River again. It is about 45

minutes to Rigmo (3,629 m), the small village next to Phoksundo Lake (3,608 m). Behind Rigmo arise snowcapped mountains, like Norbung Kang (6,085 m), Byas Risi (5,416 m) and Kang Tokal (6,294 m).

Ringmo is a charming village. People practice the Bonpo religion here. The women here wear dark or checkered dresses with colourful aprons made from yak wool. You will see some men wearing the traditional dress as well, which is a long coat, from which they tend to let one sleeve hang down. Strolling around the village, you might see women weaving. In Ringmo, women make very nice woven products, like belts, bags, shawls and blankets. Most items are made from cotton, but they also sell products made from yak wool. There are a few shops where you can buy these. These shops serve as a general shop as well, and you can fill up your stocks of biscuits for the rest of the trek.

Ringmo lies at the shore of the holy Phoksundo Lake, a lake of a stunning beauty. It has an enchanting deep-blue colour and is emerald green close to the shore. The water is crystal clear, with no aquatic life in it. Steep cliffs and snowcapped mountains surround the lake. The colours change a bit during the day; and you just won't get enough of simply looking at it. At the shore of the lake, there is a wonderful campsite.

If you want, you can walk a part of the famous Demons Trail, from the movie *Himalaya (Caravan)*, by Eric Valli. This is a beautiful movie about the lives of people in Dolpa, who bring their yaks over difficult passes bearing salt from Tibet to trade with grain from the lowlands. In the movie, this trail is used by the salt caravan, and one of the yaks falls in the lake here. It's a spectacular trail, going high above the lake. In some parts, it gets very narrow, due to landslides, so watch your steps.

On the other shore, there is a beautiful Bonpo monastery, which you can visit. In the monastery you will see a statue of Tonpa Shenrab Miwo, the founder of Bonpo religion, who lived thousands of years ago.

Ringmo has a few guesthouses. You can also camp at the shores of Phoksundo Lake.

Day 5: Ringmo/Phoksundo Lake (3,608 m)-Chunuwar (3,130 m); 2 hours

As Phoksundo Lake is such a beautiful place, an extra free-morning here is recommended.

In the afternoon, you will go back to Chunuwar. Leaving Ringmo, the path is rather flat at first, but soon climbs steeply up the hill. Soon, you will see the river far below you. The climb to the pass (3,727 m) takes about half an hour. At the top, you have a beautiful last view of Phoksundo Lake. From here, it is a steep descent of about one hour over a sandy trail to Chunuwar and the Amchi Hospital (3,130 m).

Day 6: Chunuwar (3,130 m)-Sangta (2,470 m) or Kageni (2,228 m); 6-7 hours

After Chunuwar, you will enter the forest again, and the descent is less steep. After about one and-a-half hours, you will reach Ryachi (2,935 m), a good spot for a lunch break.

From Ryachi, it takes about three-and-a-half hours to get to Chhepka (2,655 m). The trail often climbs high above the river and comes down again, which means that you need as much time as you did on the way up for this stretch. You will notice that you are descending not only by the increasing temperature, but also by the difference in vegetation. You will see bamboo again, for example, and big walnut trees.

It is another 45 minutes to Syangta (2,470 m), which has one guesthouse with a campsite: Swagat Hotel. About 15 minutes after Syangta, you will leave the forest behind you, and you will be suddenly walking in a rocky, high-mountain landscape. It then takes another hour to get to Kageni (2,228 m). In Kageni, there is one guesthouse, Hima Chamakuni Hotel and one campsite, at Raju Hotel.

Day 7: Kageni (2,228 m)-Liku (2,405 m); 6 hours (continuing GHT) or to Juphal (2,475 m); 4-5 hours

Today, you'll be back on the GHT route. If you want to continue the GHT, you will be walking to Liku; if you want to end your trek, you will walk to Juphal, and fly out from there.

At first, the trail goes south, following the Phoksundo River, now called Suligad River. In about an hour, you will reach Suligad (2,093 m). You will cross the wooden bridge; shortly after this, you will cross a big suspension bridge, Bhim Bridge (2,079 m), over the Thuli Bheri Nadi. After the bridge, go right (west) and follow the Thuli Bheri Nadi downstream, and you're back on the GHT! You will be walking on a dirt road, that so far, is practically only used by "vehicles with one

horsepower". It is easy, rather flat-walking. After about 15 minutes, you will pass the small settlement of Rupgad (2,064 m) and after another half-an-hour, Kalagauda (2,035 m).

Continue GHT; to Liku

If you continue on the GHT and go to Liku, when you reach Kalagauda, take the small path to your right. You will pass a few basic guesthouses, where you can stop for lunch or stay overnight. Camping is also possible here.

The trail keeps on following the Thuli Bheri Nadi. After about half an hour there is a suspension bridge (2,028 m). You can cross the bridge or stay on the same trail, which becomes a dirt road on this side. At the other side of the river, the trail is more narrow. That route may be a bit more scenic, but when it goes high above the river, it can be a bit scary for some people. The dirt road is thus a bit safer.

You will be walking in a quite desolate, barren landscape. Although you are not at a very high altitude, it very much looks like a high-altitude landscape. Now and then, there are some pastures for the cattle and a few green fields. The wind can be very strong here.

After about one hour, you will pass the small settlement of Nadha, surrounded by fields. From here it is another 45 minutes to Tripurakot (2,027 m). Tripurakot has a few basic guesthouses, where you can lunch or stay overnight. Camping is possible here. Tripurakot is famous for its Hindu temple, dedicated to the Goddess Tripura Sundari Devi, which is an important destination for many pilgrims.

From Tripurakot it is about two hours to Liku. In Tripurakot, you will cross a suspension bridge (2,024 m) and go left, following again the Thuli Bheri Nadi. After about 15 minutes, you will arrive at another big suspension bridge (2,008 m). After the bridge, take a right. The trail descends and reaches a covered wooden bridge (1,985 m) and passes the tiny settlement of Chungar. After Chungar there is a Y-junction; take the right trail. The trail now follows the Chu Gad River and climbs quite steeply, for about in one to one-and-a-half hours until you get to the village of Liku. In Liku, there are small restaurants, some of which offer (very basic) rooms. Camping is possible at one of the two schools in the village.

End your trek; to Juphal

Shortly after Kalagaonda, you will leave the main road and take a path to your left. You will walk over a narrow path now, through fields of barley and wheat, with walnut, peach and apricot trees. It's a pretty steep climb to reach Juphal. Juphal is a large village with a small bazaar, where it is nice to spend some time looking around.

In Juphal, there is a guesthouse with a campsite: Hotel Mt Putha. Besides, there is a small guesthouse, Hotel Jharana.

Day 8: Flight: Juphal-Nepalgunj-Kathmandu

Early in the morning, you will fly to Nepalgunj. The first part of the flight through the mountain valleys is especially spectacular. Later in the day, you will fly back to Kathmandu.

Accommodation Overview

Dolpa Section

Day 1: Flight: Kathman- du-Nepalgunj

Small guesthouse with no name:
has two sleeping rooms for
guests.

Day 2: Flight: Nepal- gunj-Juphal (2,475 m); walk to Chhepka (2,838 m); 6 hours

Tent-hotel: About two-and-a-half
hours after Ryachi.

Kageni:

Chunuwar/Amchi Hospi- tal (3,130 m):

Hima Chamakuni Hotel.
Raju Hotel: has a campsite.

Jharana Hotel
four sleeping rooms and a camp-
site.

Syangta:

Day 4: Chunuwar/Amchi Hospital (3,130 m) - Ring- mo/Phoksundo Lake (3,608 m); 3 hours

Swanta Hotel: has a well-kept
campsite.

Chhepka:

Ringmo:

Hotel Jharana.
Yak Hotel: has a campsite.
Lalee Gurans Hotel.

Sherpa Hotel and Lodge
Trekking Lodge
Himalaya Hotel
Shey Shikhar Hotel
Shey Phoksundo Hotel
You can also camp at the shores
of Phoksundo Lake

Day 3: Chhepka (2,838 m) - Chunuwar/Amchi Hospi- tal (3,130 m); 6 hours

Ryachi (also spelled as Rechi):

Day 5: Ringmo/Phoksun- do Lake (3,608 m) - Chunuwar (3,130 m); 2 hours

There is one lodge and during
the tourist season, you will find
a tent-hotel (you can also stay
overnight in case you want to
have a short day; camping gear is
needed).

See day 3

**Day 6: Chunuwar
(3,130m) - Sangta
(2,470 m) or Kageni
(2,228 m); 6-7 hours**

See day 2

**Day 7: Kageni (2,228m)
-Liku (2,405 m); 6 hours
(continuing GHT) or to
Juphal (2,475 m);
4-5 hours**

Kalagauda:

Kalagauda has a few basic guest-houses, where you can stop for lunch or stay overnight. Camping is also possible here.

Tripurakot:

Tripurakot has a few basic guest-houses, where you can lunch or stay overnight. Camping is possible here.

Liku:

In Liku, there are small restaurants, some of which offer (very basic) rooms. Camping is possible at one of the two schools in the village.

End your trek; to Juphal

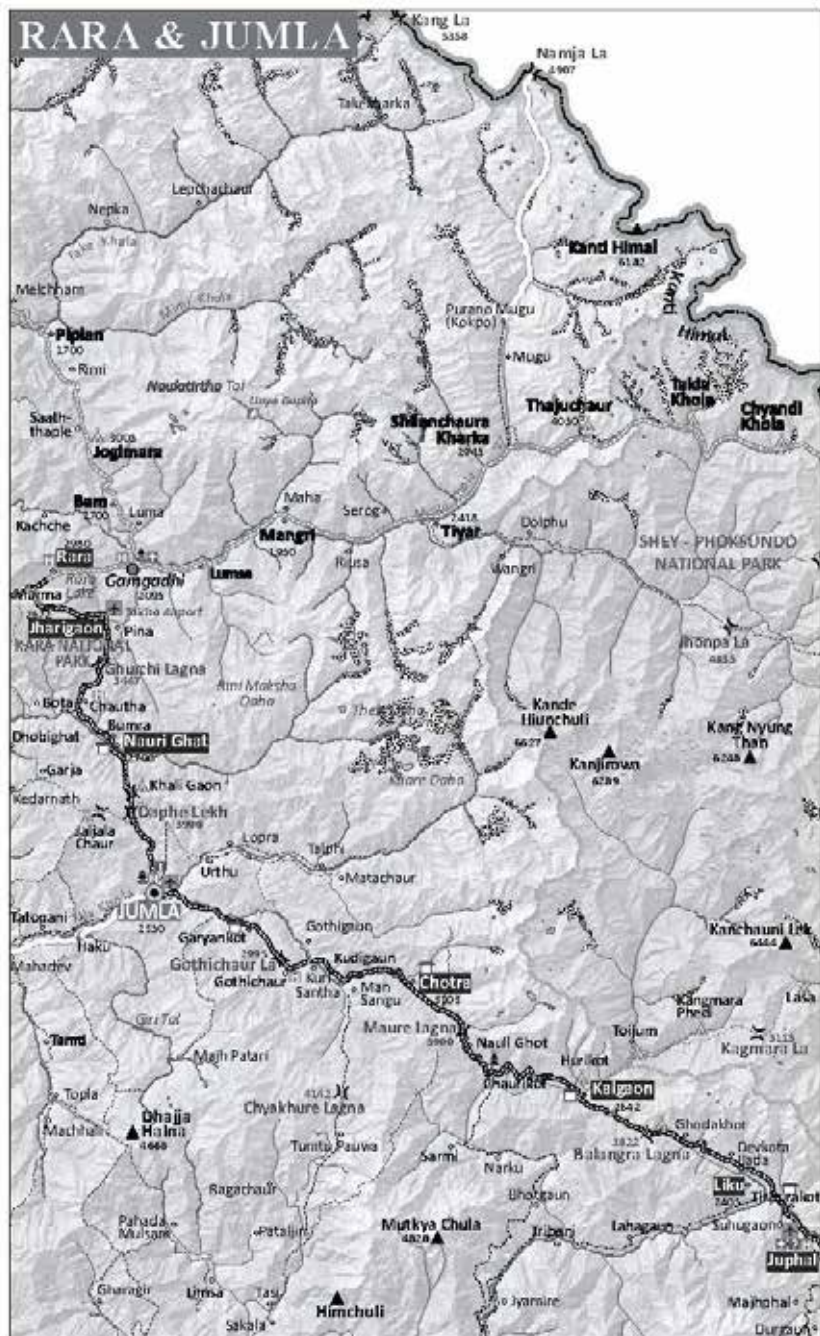
Juphal:

Hotel Mt Putha: guesthouse with a campsite.

Contact person: Tarak Shahi
Tel: 087 690445
Mobile: 984 830 3645, 974 890 1039
Mail: tarakshahi@yahoo.com

Hotel Jharana.

RARA & JUMLA



Rara & Jumla Section

Introduction

This is a very interesting section. You will walk through barren landscapes alternating with beautiful forests. You have to cross many passes and pass remote mountain villages, where time seems to have stood still. Both Hindu Chhetris and Buddhists live in this part of Nepal. You will end this section in Rara Lake. The crystal-clear lake is surrounded by forests and mountains, and especially when there is no wind and the mountains are reflected in the lake, the lake and its surroundings look stunning. Yet, very few tourists find their way to west Nepal and most of the time you have the trail completely to yourself, with some nice encounters with the friendly locals.

Days: 6/9

Difficulty: Moderate

Maximum elevation: 3,900m

Type: Teahouse/camping (it is recommended that you take a tent)

Permits needed: TIMS, Rara National Park Entrance Fee

Itinerary

Day 1: Flight Kathmandu-Nepalgunj

Day 2: Flight Nepalgunj-Juphal (2,475 m), walk to Liku (2,405 m); 5 hours

Day 3: Liku (2,405 m)-Kaigaon (2,642 m) via Balangra Lagna pass (3,822 m); 8 ½ hours

Day 4: Kaigaon (2,642 m)-Chotra (3,103 m) via Maure Lagna pass (3,900 m); 9 hours

Day 5: Chotra (3,103 m)-Jumla (2,350 m); 9 hours (possible to fly out from Jumla)

Day 6: Jumla (2,350 m)-Nauri Ghat (2,700 m) via Daphe Lakh (3,900 m); 7 hours

Day 7: Nauri Ghat (2,700 m)-Jhyarigaon (2,672 m) via Ghurchi Lagna Pass (3,447 m); 8 ½ hours

Day 8: Jhyarigaon (2,672 m)-Rara Lake (2,986 m); 2 ½ hours

Day 9: Rara Lake (2,986 m)- Talcha Airport (2 hours) and flight to Nepalgunj/Surkhet and Kathmandu

Day 1: Flight: Kathmandu-Nepalgunj

The access to this section is Juphal, in Dolpa. You have to fly to Nepalgunj first, a steaming hot city in south-western Nepal, in the lowlands of the Terai, close to the Indian border. Culturally the area resembles India more than it does upland Nepal. Take a cycle rikshaw for a ride in town. You will experience the hustle and bustle of the bazaar and see horse carts full of colourful people going to or coming from the Indian border. The Bageshowri temple is one of Nepal's most important Hindu temples and is worth a visit as well.

Day 2: Flight: Nepalgunj-Juphal (2,475 m), walk to Liku (2,405 m); 5 hours

It's just a 35-minute flight to Juphal over steep mountain ridges with beautiful views of snowcapped mountains. Juphal airport is just a gravel airstrip amidst the mountains, which guarantees a spectacular landing. Stepping out of the plane, you enter a completely different world. From a hot city in the plains, you will arrive in a small mountain village, situated in the midst of the Himalaya, bathed in crispy cold air.

From Juphal, you will walk down over a small path among fields with wheat and vegetables to the Thuli Bheri River (one hour), which you will follow downstream.

You will be walking in a quite desolate, barren landscape now. Although you are not that high, it very much looks like a high-altitude landscape. Now and then there are some pastures for the cattle and a few green fields; a beautiful sight. The wind can be very strong here.

After about one hour, you will pass the small settlement of Nadha, surrounded by fields. From here it is another 45 minutes to Tripurakot (2,027 m). Tripurakot has a few basic guesthouses, where you can lunch or stay overnight. Camping is possible. Tripurakot is famous for its Hindu temple dedicated to the Goddess Tripura Sundari Devi, which is an important destination for many pilgrims.

From Tripurakot it is about two hours to Liku. In Tripurakot, you will cross a suspension bridge (2,024 m) and go left, following again the Thuli Bheri Nadi. After about 15 minutes, you will arrive at another big suspension bridge (2,008 m). After the bridge, take a right. The trail descends to a covered wooden bridge (1,985 m) and passes the tiny set-

tlement of Chungar. After Chungar there is a Y-junction; take the right trail. The trail now follows the Chu Gad River and climbs quite steeply for about one to one-and-a-half hours until you get to the village of Liku. In Liku, there are small restaurants, some offering (very basic) rooms. Camping is possible at one of the two schools in the village.

Day 3: Liku (2,405 m)-Kaigaon (2,642 m) via Balangra Lagna pass (3,822 m); 8 ½ hours

This is quite a long and a slightly difficult day, with a long climb to the Balangra Lagna Pass at 3,822 m, and a tiring descent to Kaigaon (2,642 m). You could opt to stay in Ghodakhori (3,277 m; four hours), which would make it a short day. Between Ghodakhori and Kaigaon, there are no villages, but you could camp in the forest.

Walk through Liku and leave the village walking westwards on a main trail that passes through fields. After about 10 minutes, there is a Y-junction; go right and flat here. After another two minutes, there is another Y-junction, where you go left and up. The trail enters a beautiful forest. After about 45 minutes, it goes down to a wooden bridge (2,574 m), and soon after, passes below the village of Mhu (2,615 m). At the end of the village, there are two Y-junctions; at both you take the right and flat trail. You will be walking in a more barren landscape again, with some fields close to the villages. After about 20 minutes you will pass the village of Huma, which is high above you. After another 15 minutes, the trail descends to a small wooden bridge (2,663 m), after which it climbs up. About 30 metres after the bridge, there is another Y-junction; take the left trail going flat (westwards). The trail enters the forest again and climbs slowly, in some parts steeply, following the Chu Gad River upstream. After about one-and-a-half hours, you will arrive at the small Magar village of Bangtari (3,122 m). Walk through the village, and at the end of the village, go right, which brings you on a trail climbing up the mountain (there is a Y-junction just after leaving the village; take the left trail going up). The trail follows the Chu Gad River again, climbing in about 45 minutes to the Magar village of Ghodakhori (3,277 m). In Ghodakhori, there are two small restaurants, where you can stop for lunch. One has a place to put up some tents as well.

A little bit after Ghodakhori, the trail enters a beautiful forest of pine trees and trees covered with hanging light-green moss, which means that the air is very clean here, as this moss can only survive in clean air.

After about 10 minutes, you will arrive at a big pasture, which you will cross going west. You will now come back on the trail, which climbs through the mysterious forest, and in about an hour you will get to the Balangra Lagna Pass (3,822 m). After the pass, the descent is gradual in the beginning, which makes for nice easy-walking through the forest. After about 40 minutes, you will pass a house, where you may stay for the night if it's getting too late to continue.

After another one hour 15 minutes, you will arrive at the Khome La (3,309 m), which you can recognize from the many prayer flags. From here, the descent gets quite steep. After about half an hour, you will arrive at a big grassland; there is a Y-junction here; take the right trail, going down again into the forest. You will arrive at a grassy hill, from where you can see Kaigoan below in the distance. Continue descending to the village (20 minutes).

Kaigoan is quite a big village, and it has two guesthouses: one with no name, opposite the suspension bridge and Man Kirana Hotel. Ask around for a place to camp or local places to eat.

Day 4: Kaigaon (2,642 m)-Chotra (3,103 m) via Maure Lagna pass (3,900 m); 9 hours

This is quite a long and tough day. You will cross the Maure Lagna pass (3900 m), which brings you into Jumla. The total distance to cover is about 28 km. However, it is possible to camp before the pass, in Nauli.

You will leave Kaigaon by crossing a big suspension bridge. Go left and follow the river downstream. You will enter a forest and gradually climb high above the river. There are a few Y-junctions; always choose the main trail. The trail goes mostly through the forest, but close to the villages you will walk through pastures and fields. After about one hour, you will pass the small village of Mazgaon (2,863 m) and after another 50 minutes, Bolas (2,910 m). The trail climbs steeply for about one hour to a small pass and mani wall (3,093 m). From here it is another half an hour to Chaurikot (3,065 m). Chaurikot is a slightly bigger village. About 10 minutes after the main village, there are a few houses where you can stop for lunch. From Kageni onwards, all villages were inhabited by Hindu Chettris or Magars. From now onwards, however, you will also pass Buddhist villages.

From Chaurikot, the trail continues climbing, at first through pastures

and later again through beautiful forests. You will pass a nice waterfall on the way. It is about three hours to Nauli (3,550 m). Nauli is a tiny settlement consisting of just two houses; in one of them you can stop for lunch. You can camp here as well.

From Nauli the landscape suddenly changes. Before Nauli you were walking in the forest; after Nauli, you will be suddenly walking in a desolate, high-altitude landscape. It is about one hour to the pass (3,900 m). After the pass, the trail descends quite steeply and soon you will be entering the forest again. It is a long descent of two-and-a-half to three hours to the small village of Chotra (3,109 m). About six houses offer guesthouse/homestay facilities. The villagers here are Chettri Rokas and Buddhists.

Day 5: Chotra (3,103 m)-Jumla (2,350 m); 9 hours

The distance to cover today is about 30 km, so it is a long walk. Besides, you will also cross a small pass, Gothichaur La (2,992 m). The first part of the walk goes mostly through beautiful forests, the second part through countryside and villages. You can choose to stay overnight in Garyankot, about three-and-a-half hours before Jumla.

About 10 minutes after leaving your guesthouse, you will cross a wooden bridge over the Bhatta Khola and walk through the main village of Chotra. Chotra is quite a charming village with a beautiful gate stupa. You will then enter the forest, following the Chotra Khola. After about 15 minutes, you will arrive at some fields; take the trail left of the fields, which very soon enters the forest again.

After about one-and-a-half hours, you will arrive at the village of Mani Sagu (2,766 m). Don't cross the suspension bridge; instead, take a right here. You will be walking alongside some fields; contrary to what you normally see in Nepal, these fields are not terraced, but lie just alongside the slopes. The scenery here makes this part look more like the Alps. The trail now follows the Juli Odar Khola. It is easy, quite flat-walking. After about 45 minutes, you will reach the village of Satepani (2,720 m) and after another 15 minutes, you cross a suspension bridge. Around 10 minutes after, there is a Y-junction. Take the left going up (the one on the right goes down to a wooden bridge) and after 10 minutes cross a wooden bridge. You will be in the forest again, following the Gogane Khola upstream. After about half an hour, you will leave the river, and suddenly the landscape gets more desolate.

You will be looking over a beautiful wide valley. Shortly after, you will enter the small settlement of Gothichaur (2,802 m), which consists of three tent-hotels—restaurants built inside a big army tent—and a sheep-breeding research project.

From Gothichaur, it takes about 40 minutes to get to the pass, the Gothichaur La (2,992 m). While descending, the trail offers great views of beautiful valleys with pines and pastures, similar to the ones in the Swiss Alps. You will pass the actual village of Gothichaur (2,885 m; about 30 minutes after the pass) and the village of Garjyankot (2,571-2,508 m; after another 45 minutes). Garyankot is a very spread-out village (it takes about half an hour to get from its beginning to its end), and it has a guesthouse, where you can stay for the night. Besides, there are a few small teashops here.

You will now be walking through the countryside, passing several villages. About 30 minutes after the end of Garjyankot, there is a Y-junction; take the right trail going down. It is another 15 minutes to Jharjwula (2,425 m) and from here another one hour fifteen minutes to Depalgaon (2,403 m). About 30 minutes after Depalgaon, you will cross two suspension bridges (2,354 m and 2,353 m), which will bring you to the outskirts of Khalanga Bazaar, generally called Jumla Bazaar. It is still about a 40-minute walk to the centre.

Khalanga/Jumla Bazaar is the headquarters of Jumla District. It is a relatively big place, with lots of facilities. You will find several hotels and lots of shops here, so you can restock your snacks for the trek. There is no proper trekking store here, however, like in Dunai and Jupal (Dolpa).

Jumla has an airport with regular flights (in case of good weather) to Nepalgunj and Surkhet in southwest Nepal. Besides, there is a road to Surkhet; this is quite a rough road, though.

Besides being a starting or exit point for both the Rara, Jumla and Mugu section or the Dolpa section of the GHT, Jumla is the starting point for the Rara Lake trek, a round trek of five to six days.

Day 6: Jumla (2,350 m)-Nauri Ghat (2,700 m) via Daphe Lekh (3,900 m); 7 hours

The trail heads for Rara Lake, a two-day walk from Jumla Bazaar. You

will have to climb to a pass, the Daphe Lekh (3,900 m). While climbing up, you get a beautiful view over the Jumla Valley, which could remind you of Switzerland. You'll see fields, pastures, pine forests and behind it the snowcapped Himalaya. Stunning!

You will leave Jumla Bazaar going northwards. After about 45 minutes, you will see a wooden bridge with a signboard: "Way to Rara Lake" (2,439 m). Cross the bridge and follow the trail, climbing up sometimes gradually and sometimes steeply. You will pass a technical college. Just after the college, there is a Y-junction; take the left going flat. This trail also continues climbing. You will pass a few small settlements, like Panegaon (2,661 m; one hour) and Sinimula (2,753 m; another 15 minutes). The trail becomes a dirt road again, but there are several shortcuts, which you can take. After another 45 minutes you will reach

Cherechaur (3,026 m), which in fact consists of only one house.

From Cherechaur, the trail starts climbing steeply through the forest. At about 3,300 m the forest gives way to a high-altitude barren landscape. After one and a half to two hours, you might mistakenly think that you have arrived at the first small pass (3,647 m), but you have to walk five to 10 minutes extra on a rather flat trail to get to the real pass: the Danphe Lekh Pass at 3,683 m. It goes down gradually from the pass. And funnily enough on this side, there are pine trees that all the way to the top. After about 30 minutes you will pass the small settlement of Khali Gaon (3,534 m), which looks like a wild-west village. After another 15 minutes you will pass Tharmali (3,366 m), consisting of two houses, of which one is a teashop. From here it is another hour of descending through the forest to Nauri Ghat (2,700 m), where you will arrive immediately after crossing a suspension bridge (2,712 m). Nauri Ghat has a few houses, among which four offer guesthouse facilities. Be prepared for basic rooms, though. Camping is possible as well.

Day 7: Nauri Ghat (2,700 m)-Jhyarigaon (2,672 m) via Ghurchi Lagna Pass (3,447 m); 8 ½ hours

You will have another pass to cross today, which involves a long climb and a long and quite steep descent.

The first two-and-a-half hours are easy-walking through a forest and fields, and you will be passing a few small villages. After about an hour, you will pass the small settlement of Kabra (2,776 m) and after

another half an hour, Bhad (2,949 m). Here, foreigners have to register themselves.

It is another good hour to Chautha (2,781 m). Chautha is a Chettri village, like most villages in this area. There are two (very basic) guest-houses. These are also good for tea or a lunch stop.

After Chautha (2,781 m) the climb to yet another pass begins. After about an hour, you will pass the small settlement of Bulbule (3,167 m), which also has a (basic) hotel, Salyani Dharendra Hotel. It is another one-and-a-half hours to Dabha (3,242 m). There are a few places where you can stop for lunch or tea here as well.

After Dabha, keep to the right side of the valley and follow the trail going right. The landscape is very barren and desolate now. After about half an hour, you will reach the pass, the Ghurchi Lagna (3,447 m). The other side of the pass is covered with a pine forest. At first the descent is gradual, but later it gets quite steep at some places. After about one hour there is a Y-junction; take the left trail going up and later flat. You will get on a small trail that goes through the pine forest, which goes down gradually. After about 40 minutes, you will arrive at a grassy area; keep left here, which will bring you back on the trail, going down steeply now. After another 25 minutes, you will get to a kind of T-junction; go left here. It is another 15 minutes down, till you arrive at a dirt road. Go left here and cross the river (2,441 m). Keep on following the dirt road, which goes up gradually. Alongside the road is a grassy area where you can camp.

After about 45 minutes, you will cross a small wooden bridge over a stream. Take a right after the bridge and follow the stream downstream. The trail soon climbs high above the river and brings you in about 15 minutes to the village of Jhyarigaon. Jhyarigaon doesn't have guest-houses, but you can tell the villagers that you would like to pitch your tents on the roof of their houses and use their kitchens. Be prepared for lots of curiosity and interest, especially from the children!

Day 8: Jhyarigaon (2,672 m)-Rara Lake (2,986 m); 2 ½ hours

It is a short hike to Rara Lake, so you have a full afternoon to relax at the lakeside.

Take the trail past the village, and after one minute take the left trail at the Y-junction. The trail climbs up the hill through pine forest for about 50 minutes and then becomes flat. After about 10 minutes, you will cross a pasture. You will then enter the pine forest again and then it is only another 10 minutes till you arrive at Rara Lake (2,982 m). Rara Lake is also called Mahendra Lake and with 10.8 sq km and a maximum length of five km and a maximum width of three km, it is the biggest lake in Nepal. It is part of the smallest national park, Rara National Park (106 sq km). Foreigners have to pay an entrance fee of Rs 3,000 (SAARC nationals pay Rs 1,000). The lake is surrounded by pine forests, and you can see the snowcapped Himalaya on the horizon. If there is no wind, you will see the mountains reflected on the lake.

After another one to one-and-a-half hours of walk around the lake you will get to the small settlement of Rara. There is a guesthouse here with a campsite; Danphe Hotel.

Day 9: Rara Lake (2,986 m)-Talcha Airport (2 hours) and flight to Nepalgunj/Surkhet and Kathmandu

It is an early two-hour walk to Talcha Airport, from where flights go to Surkhet or Nepalgunj (Goma Air and Nepal Airlines are operating here). When the weather is good, there are daily flights. From Nepalgunj, there are four flights a day to Kathmandu. From Surkhet there are just a few flights per week going to Kathmandu. It is about a three-hour drive from Surkhet to Nepalgunj.

Accommodation Overview

Rara & Jumla Section

Day 2: Flight: Nepal-gunj-Juphal (2,475 m), walk to Liku (2,405 m); 5 hours

Tripurakot:

Tripurakot has a few basic guest-houses, where you can lunch or stay overnight. Camping is possible.

Liku:

There are small restaurants, some offering (very basic) rooms. Camping is possible at one of the two schools in the village.

Day 3: Liku (2,405m) -Kaigaon (2,642 m) via Balangra Lagna pass (3,822 m); 8 ½ hours

Between Ghodakhori and Kaigaon, there are no villages, but you could camp in the forest.

Ghodakhori:

There are two small restaurants where you can stop for lunch. One has a place to put up some tents as well.

Kaigaon:

There are two guesthouses: one with no name, opposite the sus-

pension bridge (four rooms), and Man Kirana Hotel. Ask around for a place to camp or local places to eat.

Day 4: Kaigaon (2,642m) -Chotra (3,103 m) via Maure Lagna pass (3,900 m); 9 hours

Chotra:

About six houses offer guest-house/homestay facilities.

Day 5: Chotra (3,103m) -Jumla (2,350 m); 9 hours

Gothichaur:

Three tent-hotels.

Garyankot:

There is one simple guesthouse

Khalanga/Jumla Bazaar:

Snowland Hotel: has wifi.
Kanjiroba Hotel: has wifi.
Greenland Hotel.
Amar Sandesh Guesthouse.

There are lots of shops here, so you can restock your snacks for the trek.

**Day 6: Jumla (2,350m)
-Nauri Ghat (2,700 m) via
Daphe Lekh (3,900 m);
7 hours**

Nauri Ghat:

Four houses offer guesthouse facilities. Be prepared for basic rooms, though. Camping is possible as well.

**Day 7: Nauri Ghat
(2,700 m)-Jhyarigaon
(2,672 m) via Ghurchi
Lagna Pass (3,447 m);
8 ½ hours**

Chautha:

Bhandari Hotel: basic hotel.
Karnali Hotel: basic hotel.

Bulbule:

Salyani Dhirendra Hotel: basic hotel with six rooms.

Alongside the road is a grassy area where you can camp.

Jhyarigaon:

There are no guesthouses, but you can make a request to the villagers that you would like to pitch your tents on the roof of their houses and use their kitchens.

**Day 8: Jhyarigaon
(2,672 m)-Rara Lake
(2,986 m); 2 ½ hours
Settlement of Rara:**

Danphe Hotel: small hotel with four rooms and a campsite.

FAR WEST



Far West Section

Introduction

This section brings you to the border with India. The trail goes through a landscape of contrasts, of barren and desolate hills and bright green fields of wheat or other crops in the valleys alongside the rivers. The landscape is arid and barren, featuring cactuses, and every once in a while, you'll run into shepherds with their goats or cows. There are also many fertile valleys here, and as you walk through them, you will pass many villages. Most people living here are Hindu Chhetris. Especially in the small villages, tourists, be they foreign or Nepali, are a real attraction!

Days: 15

Difficulty: Moderate

Maximum elevation: 3,232m

Type: Teahouse/camping (it is recommended that you take a tent)

Permits needed: TIMS, Rara National Park Entrance Fee

Itinerary

Day 1: Flight Kathmandu-Nepalgunj

Day 2: Flight Nepalgunj/Surkhet-Talcha Airport and walk to Rara Lake (2,986 m); 2 hours

Day 3: Rara Lake (2,986 m)-Ratapani (1,431 m); 9 hours

Day 4: Ratapani (1,431 m)-Kolti (1,390 m); 7 hours

Day 5: Kolti (1,390 m)-Martadi (1,591 m); 10 hours

Day 6: Martadi (1,591 m)-Koth (1,962 m); 6 hours

Day 7: Koth (1,962 m)-Tuti (2,020 m) via Bateli Bhanjyang Pass (3,232 m); 8 ½ hours

Day 8: Tuti (2,020 m)-Chainpur (1,290 m); 4 hours

Day 9: Chainpur (1,290 m)-Jhota (979 m); 6 ½ hours

Day 10: Jhota (979 m)-Jhapa (1,185 m); 9 hours

Day 11: Jhapa (1,185 m)-Sela (988 m) via Ganayi Khan Pass (2,126 m); 8 ½ hours

Day 12: Sela (988 m)-Gogani (1,357 m) via Sipti Pass (2,094 m); 8 hours

Day 13: Gogani (1,357 m)-Darchula (890) via Dhalek (2,139 m); 5 ½ hours

Day 14: Dharchula-Dhangadi; by bus; 20 hours

Day 15: Flight: Dhangadi-Kathmandu

Day 1: Flight Kathmandu-Nepalgunj

To get to Rara Lake, you have to fly to Nepalgunj first, from where you will fly to Talcha Airport, a two-hour walk from Rara Lake. Nepalgunj is a steaming hot city in south-western Nepal, in the lowlands of the Tarai, close to the Indian border. Culturally the area resembles India more than upland Nepal. Take a cycle rikshaw for a ride in town. You will experience the hustle and bustle of the bazaar and see horsecarts full of colourful people going to or coming from the Indian border. The Bageshowri temple is one of Nepal's most important Hindu temples and is worth a visit as well.

Sometimes flights to Talcha Lake depart from Surkhet, which means you will have to fly to Surkhet from Kathmandu (there are flights only a few times per week) or drive to Surkhet from Nepalgunj, which is about three hours away.

Day 2: Flight: Nepalgunj/Surkhet-Talcha Airport and walk to Rara Lake (2,986 m); 2 hours

It is a short flight to Talcha Airport, from which it is a two-hour walk to Rara Lake. The lake is surrounded by pine forests, and with the snow-capped Himalaya on the horizon, the area looks stunning. If there is no wind, you can see the snowcapped mountains reflected on the lake. At the small settlement of Rara, you will find a small hotel, Danphe Hotel, which also a campsite.

Day 3: Rara Lake (2,986 m)-Ratapani (1,431 m); 9 hours

This is a long day, with about 33 km and nine hours of walking. You can stay overnight in Baupani (three-and-a-half hours) or Karmasi (four hours).

Leaving the hotel/campsite you will walk around the lake again in the same direction you came from. After about half an hour, you will arrive at the wooden bridge you crossed before. This time, don't cross the bridge, but go straight ahead and enter a beautiful pine forest. After about five minutes, you will arrive at a Y-junction; go left here. After another five minutes, you will pass the small village of Murma (2,952 m). Shortly after, there is another Y-junction; go left here. After another 20 minutes, you will pass a single house, after which there is a Y-junction again; take the left fork, which means going straight. You

will descend until you reach two wooden bridges, after which you will pass a small power-house. The trail follows a small river downstream, crossing it now and then over small wooden bridges. The landscape here is similar to ones in the Swiss Alps.

Around one hour fifteen minutes after the last Y-junction (at the single house), there is another Y-junction; again, take the left fork. You will be walking in a gorge, with steep rocks towering high above you. About two-and-a-half hours after Murma, you will pass the small village of Baupani (2,494 m). Baupani has a basic guesthouse.

About 15 minutes after Baupani, you will cross a wooden bridge, and shortly after this you will arrive at another Y-junction, where again you take the left fork. You will now be walking on a trail high on the slope, in a more barren landscape with some fields now and then. About half an hour after Baupani, you will pass the village of Nigali Both (2,364 m). Shortly after the village, there is another Y-junction; go left here. It is only 10 minutes to the next village, Karmasi (2,287 m). Karmasi has a basic guesthouse as well.

The trail continues high on the slope. Right of the trail, the landscape is barren, while left of the trail there are bright green fields and beautiful chestnut trees. You will pass several small villages like Dadajula (2,171 m; 30 minutes) and Jhama bazaar (2,144 m; 15 minutes; five minutes after Jhamabazaar there is another Y-junction; go left here); Siri (2,108 m; five minutes), Sirikot (2,055 m; 15 minutes); Matichaur (1,837 m; one hour 15 minutes); Paikhu (1,773 m; 15 minutes); Paikhupani (1,677 m; fifteen minutes); Birabagar (1,505 m; 45 minutes). In the villages you might see men spinning and weaving, jobs mostly done by women in other parts of the world.

Just after Birabagar, you will cross a bridge near a beautiful waterfall. It is another 20 minutes to Jamir (1,462 m). The landscape keeps getting more barren and desolate, which is a bit surprising given the relatively low altitude of this place. About half an hour after Jamir, you will arrive in Ratapani. Ratapani is a small village, and a few houses offer homestay facilities; ask around.

Day 4: Ratapani (1,431 m)-Kolti (1,390 m); 7 hours

The trail continues into a landscape of contrasts: barren and desolate landscape on one side of the trail, and bright green fields of wheat or other crops in the valley alongside the river.

You will pass many small settlements, like Luhi (1,346 m; 20 minutes); Nuwaket (1,334 m; 10 minutes); Aham (1,325 m; 30 minutes) and Riga (1,155 m; 30 minutes). About 10 minutes after Riga, the trail starts following the mighty Karnali River. You will pass the village of Jugala Pul (1,140 m; 20 minutes), where you will cross a suspension bridge over the Karnali River (1,102 m). After crossing the bridge, go left. You will be walking in a very arid landscape now, with lots of cactuses and guava plants. The trail climbs high above the river, and it is a bit scary at some parts, as it gets quite narrow and with a vertical drop down to the river. After about 40 minutes, it descends again till it gets level with the river. You will pass tiny settlements like Kunekhola (1,091 m; 10 minutes); Purano Jugala (1,092 m; 30 minutes; there are two restaurants here); Artangechaur (1,091 m; 20 minutes; there are two restaurants here) and Badhu (1,110 m; half an hour). About five minutes after Badhu, there is a Y-junction; take the left fork.

The trail goes alongside agricultural terraces again, climbing slowly high above the river. About one hour after Badhu, it turns right, away from the Karnali River, and starts following a smaller river upstream. Around 10 minutes later, you will pass the small village of Badekapsari (1,143 m).

It is quite easy, rather flat-walking. The trail keeps on following the river, passing many small villages: Pathala (1,202 m; 15 minutes); Motela (1,267 m; 15 minutes); Pipadali (1,272 m, 15 minutes); Rajgaon (1,328 m; 30 minutes) and in the end, Kolti (1,390 m; 15 minutes). The nearer you get towards Kolti, the busier it gets, with people going to or from Kolti, as it is quite a big bazaar town. Kolti has three (quite basic) hotels.

Kolti has a small airport, with flights going to Surkhet and Nepalgunj in southwest Nepal. They can be booked through Mr Kasiram Thapa (Tel: 9758002588).

Day 5: Kolti (1,390 m)-Martadi (1,591 m); 10 hours

This is a very long day. The distance to cover is about 30 km, during which you have to climb to a pass of 2,710 m (a total ascent of 2,000 m) and go down again 1,100 m.

In the first part of the walk, you will pass many villages. This is quite a fertile valley, which attracts many people. Most of the houses have

a cactus on the roof of their house, which is there to prevent lightning from striking the house! According to the people living here, lightning has never struck a house with a cactus on the roof. But it is only necessary to put a cactus on your roof if it is made of tiles; if you have a straw roof, this is not needed.

The people living in the Far West are mainly Chhettris and Magars. For an outsider, it is difficult to see the difference. Generally, Magars wear nose rings and Chhettris do not, but this is not always true. With both groups, most women are colourfully dressed in bright skirts and yellow necklaces.

You will leave Kolti going westwards, walking on a dirt road, slowly ascending at first, but after about half an hour, going down again to cross a wooden bridge. Around five minutes after the wooden bridge, you will pass a house. Just after the house, there is a Y-junction; take a right here, going up at first and then walking flat. After about 10 minutes, you will cross a suspension bridge (1,434 m), after which you will climb (five minutes) to the village of Birsen (1,460-1,534 m). The trail keeps on climbing gradually, passing the villages of Chatikoth (1,568 m; half an hour); Chatabagar (1,578 m; five minutes); Serkatia (1,654m; 15 minutes); Sasta (1,764m; 20 minutes); Salmagaon (1,805 m; 10 minutes) and Pjalchero (also written as Pahalsea; 1,832 m; half an hr). After Pjalchero, you will cross a river (stone-hopping or over a suspension bridge; both are possible, at least in the dry season), and keep on climbing to Pandusain (1,884-2,140 m; 10 minutes/three hours from Kolti). Pandusain is a big, spread-out village, and it has a couple of basic hotels. In Pandusain there is a Y-junction; take a right here, going up.

The trail keeps on climbing. On the way, you will pass many mule caravans and some goat caravans. The goat caravans mainly come from or go to Humla, as the trail to Humla is too difficult for mules. You will pass the villages of Angaupani (2,291 m; half an hour) and Kadha (2,531 m; half an hour). In Kadha, there are a few restaurants, where you can stop for lunch.

After Kadha, you will enter a forest. After about half an hour, you will reach the Parakhe Lagna Pass (2,710 m). Around the pass, you will see many ruins. The people who were living here were forced to leave their houses when this forest was turned into a protected area. The trail descends through a beautiful forest of pines, rhododendrons and oaks,

following a small stream. About an hour after crossing the pass, there is a Y-junction (at about 2,250 m); go left here. Soon after this, you will leave the forest and take a dirt road to your left. You will pass the village of Dhamkane (2,256; 15 minutes after leaving the forest). In Dhamkane, take the trail to the left. You will walk alongside beautiful terraces and enter the forest again. After about half an hour, you will cross a wooden bridge (2,108 m), and soon after, a suspension bridge (2,030 m). After crossing the suspension bridge, you will take a right and keep on following the river downstream. It is another half an hour to the settlement of Chinechaur (1,945 m), which is in fact just a small lane with local restaurants. There is a suspension bridge here, which you *should not* cross.

You will be walking through the fields again, with green hills in the background. After another half an hour, you will pass the village of Gopesera (1,881 m) and cross a river stone- hopping. After 15 minutes, you will cross a suspension bridge (1,821 m) and go left and keep on following the river downstream. You will climb to a dirt road and follow the dirt road leftwards. After a few minutes, you will pass the village of Tsuthi (1,805). Tsuthi has one small restaurant. About 45 minutes after Tsuthi, there is a Y-junction; take a right here (the left trail goes down steeply). After a couple of minutes, this path (a dirt road under construction) also goes down steeply to a river. Daredevils can cross the river stone- hopping, but there is also a stone bridge a bit upstream, which is probably a better option.

In about 15 minutes, you will reach Bauldi (1,545 m), from where you will climb to Martadi (1,591 m; half an hour).

Martadi is the headquarters of Bajura District. It is a small bazaar town, with lots of shops, small restaurants and two hotels.

Day 6: Martadi (1,591 m)-Koth (1,962 m); 6 hours

From Martadi this itinerary goes away from the green (GHT) trail pointed out on the map of Himalayan Map House. It goes northwestwards towards the yellow trail, which is a more direct approach to Chainpur.

The day starts with a couple of steep ups and downs. You will leave Martadi northwestwards and go down steeply. After about half an hour, you will arrive at Martadi village (1,450 m), a small agricultural village close to the town of Martadi. Besides the name there are no other similarities!

You will then cross a river (stone-hopping or over a wooden bridge) and after a couple of minutes you will get to Ukhadi (1,452 m). From here, you will climb for about half an hour until you get to Melkat (1,574 m), which consists of a couple of teashops only (three). Straight after Melkat, there is a trail going right, which goes down steeply to a suspension bridge (1,413 m; half an hour) over the Kharigar Khola. Cross the suspension bridge and go left, following the Kharigar Khola downstream. After about 10 minutes, there is a Y-junction; take a right here, on the small trail going up. After about 15 minutes, this trail descends to another suspension bridge (1,307 m; 10 minutes). After crossing the suspension bridge, you will enter the village of Jugara Baunya (1,308 m), which has a small teashop.

Then follow the Budhiganga Khola upstream. About 30 metres after Jugara Baunya, take a right and get on a stone path that goes through the fields. After a couple of minutes, there is another Y-junction, where you go right (on smaller trail). It is easy, flat-walking. After about 20 minutes, you will cross a stream after which the trail goes up again, climbing high above the river for about 30 minutes. Then the trail becomes more *Nepali flat*, flat with some ups and downs. You will walk through the forest for a while, with some snowcapped mountains in the horizon in front of you.

After about half an hour, there is a Y-junction (at about 1,500 m); go left (up). Shortly after, you will pass the village of Dadipato (1,510 m). The landscape is more open now and below you, there are terraced fields. After another half an hour, there is another Y-junction (at about 1,550 m); go left and up here. It is another 10 minutes to Satyado (1,530 m). The trail starts descending, getting close to the river again. After about 20 minutes, you will cross a small wooden bridge (1,484 m), after which there is a Y-junction. Go right here, and a few minutes after, cross another (narrow) wooden bridge. From here, it is just a few minutes to Kirtichaur (1,495 m). Kirtichaur is a small village, but it seems like almost every house here has restaurant facilities, as there are six restaurants here, of which one also offers sleeping facilities. Besides, there is a nice open area to pitch your tents.

After Kirtichaur, you will enter a valley with lots of small medieval-looking villages with small houses topped by straw roofs and surrounded by green fields. The trail climbs gradually, passing the village of Chaur (1,567 m; 20 minutes); Kharikhet (1,631 m; 15 minutes); Ghokalo (1,746 m; half an hour); Bagar (1,771 m; 15 minutes) and Koth (1,962 m; 45 minutes).

Although the villages are medieval looking, they do have electricity (hydropower) and some houses even have Nepal Disc TV. The people living in these villages are not very used to seeing foreigners; thus when they see foreigners passing by they might stop what they're doing and come out of their houses to take a look at you.

Koth is the last villages before the Bateli Bhanjyang Pass (3,232 m), which makes it a good place to stay. Although there are no restaurants/hotels here, people are willing to offer homestay facilities.

Day 7: Koth (1,962 m)-Tuti (2,020 m) via Bateli Bhanjyang Pass (3,232 m); 8 ½ hours

Between Koth and Tuti, there are no villages, so take along a packed lunch. It takes about five hours from Koth to the Bateli Bhanjyang Pass (3,232 m), and three-and-a-half hours to Tuti (2,020 m).

Leaving Koth, the trail climbs high above the river. After about half an hour, you will enter a forest and the trail descends to the river, which you will cross on a wooden bridge (1,964 m; half an hour). The trail climbs high above the river again. After about half an hour, the trail exits the forests, and you will be walking through an open, high-altitude landscape with bushes, grasses and rocks. From about 2,500 m, some rhododendrons start appearing.

After about three hours of climbing, you will arrive at a small shrine (2,865 m). After the shrine, the trail goes down a bit and enters the forest again, and you could easily be mistaken into thinking that you have arrived at a pass. However, very soon the trail starts climbing again. When you get higher, the trees again disappear and only a few rhododendrons remain. It is about one-and-a-half hours from the shrine to the actual pass, the Bateli Bhanjyang Pass (3,232 m).

On the other side of the pass, there is a lush forest with lots of rhododendrons and pine trees. Especially in the spring, when the rhododendrons are blooming, this is a beautiful sight. The descent is quite steep and therefore a bit difficult in some parts.

About two hours after the pass, there is a Y-junction; you can take either trail here. After another 45 minutes, you will finally see some fields again, a sign that you are getting near a village. About 15 minutes later, there is a Y-junction; take the left trail going down; this is a small

trail going left from the main trail, which continues flat. After another five minutes, there is another Y-junction; here too you have to take the left trail going down. From here it is another half an hour to the small village of Tuti, also called Tutigaon.

In Tuti you can stay at the school, or at a homestay run by Mr Birganza Dami.

Day 8: Tuti (2,020 m)-Chainpur (1,290 m); 4 hours

It is a short and easy hike from Tuti to Chainpur. The trail keeps on descending. After 20 minutes, you will arrive at a Y-junction; take the left trail going down. After another five minutes, you will cross a river stone-hopping, and five minutes later, there is another Y-junction; take the right fork going up this time. In another 10 minutes you will arrive at the village of Khikalo (1,919 m).

You will be walking in a beautiful landscape with bright green and yellow terraces and passing through small villages, like Dulil (1,807 m; half an hour) and Melketh (1,758 m; 15 minutes).

After another 20 minutes you will cross a wooden bridge (1,627 m) and climb to Khetkoth (1,689 m; 10 minutes). In Khetkoth, there is a trail going left towards Chainpur (ask around). It is only 15 minutes of easy-walking to Bhajang (1,644 m). From Bhajang, you will descend to a river, which you cross stone-hopping. Just after this, there is another Y-junction; take the right trail going down (not left and up).

You will now be walking on a trail high on a slope through a forest. The trail winds around the hill like a snake, following the river far below. After about 45 minutes, you will arrive at the ruins of a house. Go straight here. You will now be walking along fields again, and you can see Chainpur in the distance. After about 50 minutes, you will cross a suspension bridge (1,297 m) over the Musabhu Khola, and after another 15 minutes, a suspension bridge (1,278 m) over the Seti Nadi. It is then only five minutes to Chainpur (1,290 m).

Chainpur is a bustling bazaar town and the headquarters of Bajhang District. There are a few basic hotels here. Besides the restaurants of the hotels, there are a few other restaurants.

Although there is a huge telephone tower here, during the time of this

research (April 2012), there was no mobile connection in Chainpur; you could get signals only on the way to Chainpur.

There is a small airport a half-hour walk away, with flights to Nepalgunj and Surkhet, in southwest Nepal.

Chainpur is a starting point for treks into Khaptad National Park. It takes about two days to walk from Chainpur to the park. The park represents the western mid-mountain ecosystem and covers an area of 225 sq. km. The park harbours diverse habitats, which include coniferous forests, hardwood trees, scrubs, bamboo and grasslands. A total of 217 species of birds, 18 species of mammals, 567 species of flowering plants, including four endemics, and 15 species of butterflies have been recorded here.

Day 9: Chainpur (1,290 m)-Jhota (979 m); 6 ½ hours

To go to Darchula (which is northwest of Chainpur), this itinerary describes a different route than the GHT trail indicated on the Himalayan Map House map, which goes north from Chainpur. With that trail, you have to cross a pass at around 4,500 m. In the Far West, the snow starts at a much lower altitude than in other parts of Nepal, and during the time of research (mid-April 2012), there was still too much snow and you would only be able to cross the pass with special equipment. It would probably be all right to cross the pass without special equipment later in the year, like in May. Therefore, this itinerary describes a trail that goes straight westwards at the beginning and northwards later.

You will leave Chainpur going southwards. When you arrive at a pipal tree, take a right and down. You will cross a suspension bridge (1,252 m), after which you will go left. Walk to the dirt road and follow this road leftwards. About half an hour after leaving Chainpur, you will pass some houses, where a trail leads to the left. Take this trail and go left of the white temple. After 10 minutes, you will pass through Ritapatha (1,257 m), a charming village surrounded by green fields. At a watertap there is a Y-junction; take a right here. Just before a green temple, take the stairs going down. After about 10 minutes, you will pass an airstrip (1,221 m), which is just a flat piece of grassland, from which flights go to Nepalgunj in southwest Nepal.

The trail here is a beautiful one, going just above or through fields, and when you look behind you, you will see the snowcapped Himala-

ya. After about 40 minutes, you will pass the village of Baluwakheti (1,172 m), and after another 20 minutes, you will arrive at a house with a watertap. There is a Y-junction here; take the right trail going up, pass the house and continue on the (flat) trail. You will pass the village of Sugarda (1,187 m). After five minutes, there is another Y-junction; take the right trail going up.

After about 15 minutes, you will arrive at a small stone bridge, but don't cross it. Instead, go left, passing a big pipal tree and resting place. You will now be leaving the fertile green valley behind you, but very soon you'll enter a new one. There is another Y-junction; go left and down for 10 minutes until you get to the river (a tributary of the Seti Nadi), which you will cross stone-hopping (1,152 m). You will get to another Y-junction, where you go right and up. This leads you to the dirt road again, which you will follow leftwards. Unlike at other times, the trail goes over a dirt road, and this one does have quite some traffic (about three trucks/buses per hour).

After about half an hour, you will arrive at a little bazaar village (1,111 m) along the road, with the curious name of Thamel (like the famous tourist quarter in Kathmandu). The bazaar villages look somewhat strange, with shops and local restaurants constructed from corrugated iron plates. It looks as if they were put up there as temporary buildings, but people continued using them just as they were built.

For the rest of the day, you will follow the dirt road. Although it is nicer to walk on a small trail than on the road, it is quite nice walking alongside the roaring Seti River, which is surrounded by bright green and yellow fields of barley and wheat, and passing many small villages. Most women you meet wear colourful dresses and bright yellow necklaces.

Along the way, you will pass the following villages: Sugala (1,077 m; half an hour); Malumela (1,081 m; 15 minutes); Bagargaon (1,085 m; half an hour); Bhyagutegad Bridge (1,050 m; 15 minutes); Bandarigaon (1,044 m, 10 minutes); Bade Bazaar (1,041 m; half an hour; there are a few restaurants here); Mauri Bagar (1,046 m; 10 minutes); Soldekhola (994 m; one hour fifteen minutes) and Jhota (979 m; 45 minutes).

Jhota is a bazaar village and has a few hotels.

Day 10: Jhota (979 m)-Jhapa (1,185 m); 9 hours

It will be easy-walking today, and this makes it easy to cover a long distance. The total distance to be covered today is 34.7 km.

The first couple of hours, you will follow a dirt road alongside the roaring Seti Nadi. After about half an hour, you will pass the village of Juligad, which has a few shops, and you will cross a suspension bridge (994 m). It is about an hour to Railgabs (923 m) and after another 50 minutes, you will pass Chaura (856 m), where you can find some shops and teashops.

You will keep on following the dirt road, passing by several villages: Deura (839 m; half an hour); Dualiketh (852 m; 20 minutes); Bojuwa Bagar (877 m; half an hour); Bagthala (889 m; 10 minutes) and Bagthala Bazaar (901 m; 15 minutes). Bagthala Bazaar has a couple of restaurants (next to the bridge) and therefore makes a good spot for a lunch break.

After Bagthala Bazaar, the dirtroad goes left, crosses a bridge and continues on the left side of the river. Besides, there is a smaller dirt road that goes straight. Take this smaller dirt road (you will now be walking on the trail marked as the yellow trail on the Far West map of Himalaya Maphouse). This dirt road doesn't seem to be in use by motorised transport, so it feels more like you are walking on a large path. It is easy-walking, mostly flat, with good views of the Kalanga Nadi to the left of you and the green and yellow fields with wheat and barley below.

After about an hour, you will pass the village of Senshu (960 m) and after another 40 minutes, Odal Bagar (1,010 m), which has a few teashops. About 15 minutes after Odal Bagar, the dirt road turns into a rocky trail, of which a small part is quite narrow, and high above the river.

After about 10 minutes, you will pass the village of Pauda Bogari (1,081 m; also called Bogari Pauda), and after another half an hour, Jade Patal (1,099 m). It is another half an hour to Midi (1,115 m), which has a few teashops.

About 20 minutes after Midi, you can take a shortcut (saving about 45 minutes), which is a trail that goes down steeply left of the road

and goes through fields. In about 15 minutes, you will cross a small wooden bridge (1,127 m). But tread with care because this bridge is very narrow. You will keep on following the small river upstream. After about an hour, you will reach the small village of Jhapa (1,185 m). There are only a few restaurants here, but even so, the villagers can arrange a place to sleep for you.

Day 11: Jhapa (1,185 m)-Sela (988 m) via Ganayi Khan Pass (2,126 m); 8 ½ hours

The climb to the pass makes this quite a long day, although the distance is less than that of the previous day (about 24 km).

Today, you will walk the entire day on small trails through a nice green landscape, amidst green terraces and some small forests. Beautiful countryside!

You will leave Jhapa going northwards, following the Karali Gad River upstream. After a couple of minutes, you will arrive at a police post, where you will go right. After another five minutes, there is a Y-junction, where you will go left, and after another minute (just after a house) you will take a right. It is a beautiful trail alongside fields and small bamboo bushes. After about 20 minutes, you will cross a river, stone-hopping (1,244 m) and enter the village of Pipalkoth (1,247 m); as the name indicates, it is indeed a village with a huge pipal tree. The trail climbs slowly and after another 20 minutes, you will pass Khauladhar (1,289 m; part of Pipalkoth VDC). Shortly after Khauladhar, you will go down and cross another river, stone-hopping (1,276 m), after which the trail goes up and down a bit. After about 20 minutes, you will pass the small village of Bagali Bagar (1,310 m), consisting of two houses and a shop. After about half an hour, you will pass a bigger village, Kapalseri (1,323 m). You will cross a suspension bridge (1,337 m) and climb to the village of Sisali (1,387 m; half an hour) and Sankarkhola (1,390 m; 10 minutes). Sankarkhola has a few small restaurants.

About 10 minutes after Sankarkhola, there is a Y-junction; take a right here. After another five minutes, you will cross a wooden bridge (1,430 m). Just after the wooden bridge, you can choose between a zigzag trail going up steeply or a trail going straight. Take the trail going straight. You will pass the village of Susali (1,519 m; 20 minutes). Five minutes after Susali, there is another Y-junction; go left and flat (not right

and up). After another five minutes, you will cross a river (1,503 m; stone-hopping or over a wooden bridge). Around 10 minutes after this, there is another Y-junction, where you go left and up. After another 10 minutes, you will pass the village of Jaseli (1,591 m). After about 20 minutes, you will cross a wooden bridge over a small waterfall (1,660 m) and after 10 minutes, you will pass the small settlement of Aidigaon (1,692 m). The people here have built a kind of “longhouse”, a style of building that you don’t encounter too often.

Around 10 minutes after the longhouse, there are some more houses. There is a Y-junction here; go left and up. At the next Y-junction (after about five minutes), go right and up (not left and down, which is a bigger trail). This is a steep trail up the slope, which gets to a school. Take the trail that goes left of the school. The trail continues to climb. After about half an hour, about two minutes after a water tap, there is another Y-junction; go right and up here. You will now be walking in a more high-altitude landscape of bushes and grass. It is another 15 minutes to the pass (2,126 m; about one hour from Aidigaon).

Just after the pass, there is a small settlement, Ganayi Khan (2,105 m), which has a teashop. Cross the gate here and go down. After 15 minutes, there is a Y-junction; go left here. You will be walking again amidst beautiful fields and terraces, and there are beautiful hills, with different shades of green, that stretch out till the horizon. You will pass several small agricultural villages like Nanara (1,849 m; half an hour from Ganayi Khan; there is a Y-junction at a water tap where you go left); Dorepani (1,786 m; 10 minutes) and Nanara (1,559 m; half an hour).

About half an hour after Nanara, there is another Y-junction (at 1,350 m); go left (and down) here. After another five minutes, you will cross a concrete bridge next to a beautiful small waterfall. The houses just after this bridge still are still part of Nanara (1,287 m). After about 10 minutes, you will pass the village of Boram (also called Basantapur; 1,253 m). There is another Y-junction here; take the right trail, which goes up for about 10 metres and then flat. After another 10 minutes, you will cross a dry riverbed; after a few minutes, you will arrive at a water tap, where you go left (and up). There is a teashop here. After this, the trail descends gradually following the river downstream. After about 15 minutes, you will pass the village of Sertala (1,154 m). You will now enter a narrow valley. After about half an hour, you will cross a concrete bridge (1,044 m), from where it is another 10 minutes to Sela (988 m).

Sela has a few basic restaurants, but no places to stay. You can camp at the clinic.

Day 12: Sela (988 m)-Gogani (1,357 m) via Sipti Pass (2,094 m); 8 hours

This is quite a tough day. Although the pass at Sipti (Siptikhan Danda) is quite low (2,094 m), it is a long and tiring climb, in the hot, open landscape. The total distance is 21.4 km.

The first part is easy and nice walking, on a beautiful trail through the countryside. You will pass a few agricultural villages, like Jothihuri (936 m; 10 minutes) and Amkhet (914 m; 10 minutes), following the river downstream (the river is to your left).

About half an hour after Amkhet, you will arrive at a dirt road, which you follow rightwards (don't cross the bridge at your left). You will pass the little village of Gana (869 m). You will now follow another river, the Chamaliya Nadi, upstream (the river is to your left). After about 40 minutes, you will enter the construction site of a huge dam (865 m) being built by a Chinese company.

Just after the construction site is the small settlement of Bitali (890 m). Bitali has a couple of small restaurants and shops. Here you will enter the Api Himal Conservation Area. And indeed you can see Api Himal (7,132 m) on the horizon.

Around one minute after Bitali, you will cross a suspension bridge (860 m). After crossing the bridge, go left. You will now be on a small trail, climbing through dry forest. After about 10 minutes, you will pass a small banana plantation. After another 25 minutes, you will reach the small village of Pariban (starting at 1,146 m and spreading out till 1,553 m). This is one of the last spots with running water, so it's a good place to fill up your water bottles at the water tap. At this water tap, there are two options: the trail left of the water tap is the quickest way to the Siptikhan Danda. The disadvantage is that this trail is rather difficult to find at some points. The trail going right is the longer way, and you will cross Siptikan Danda at another point. Both lead to Sipti in the end.

The following section describes the left (shorter) trail. The trail climbs high above the river (Chamaliya Nadi), which you can see far below

you in the distance. The trees give way to bushes and rocks, and you will be walking in an open landscape, generally in the heat. On the horizon to the north, you will see Api Himal. After about one-and-a-half hours, you will pass a water reservoir (1,669 m), and after another 20 minutes, the village of Parbon (1,754 m). From here it is another one to one-and-a-half hours of climb to the pass (Siptikhan Danda) at 2,094 m. The pass looks over a desolate, arid valley.

The trail descends slowly at first. After about five minutes, there is a Y-junction; take the right trail. After about 15 minutes, you will turn the corner and find yourself suddenly looking over a bright-green, fertile valley with beautiful terraces. The descent gets quite steep in some parts, and with the loose small stones, the walk can be somewhat difficult. After another 20 minutes, there is another Y-junction; take the left trail down (not right and up). You will now enter the fertile valley you saw in front of you before and walked through the terraces. It is another 20 minutes till the small agricultural village of Sipti (1,815 m).

The trail continues descending gradually. About 10 minutes after Sipti is another Y-junction, where you will take a right. Two minutes after this is another Y-junction; go right here as well. After about 20 minutes, will you cross two streams (1,629 m), after which the trail climbs slowly northwestwards. After about 15 minutes, you will pass a small teashop (1,651 m). After the teashop, the trail goes high on a slope through an arid landscape, mostly descending, but after about half an hour, some pine trees start to appear. The trail is quite narrow in some parts here.

About one hour after the teashop, you will cross a small concrete bridge (1,289 m) and enter the small village of Hobari Gath (1,291 m). You have arrived now at the green GHT cultural trail as marked on the Himalayan Maphouse far-west map. After passing the village, you will cross a steel bridge (1,286 m) over the river you have been following. Continue following the river upstream (the river is to your right now). After about 20 minutes, you will reach the small village of Gogani (1,357 m). Gogani has two small hotels/guesthouses.

Day 13: Gogani (1,357 m)-Darchula (890) via Dhalek (2,139 m); 5 ½ hours

This is the final day of the Nepali part of the GHT! It is quite an easy day. You also have to cross a small pass, but the difference in altitude is

not that much and the climb is less steep. Also, because you will climb earlier on the day, it won't be as hot. The total distance to cover is about 18 km. It is a beautiful walk through a green valley full of green terraces and scattered villages. But during the last two hours, you will walk through a more desolate landscape.

You follow the same trail, following the river upstream. After five minutes, there is a Y-junction; take the right trail going down. After another five minutes, you will reach Jamir (1,367 m). Cross the suspension bridge and go left. You will keep on following the river upstream, and the river is to your left. There are a couple of Y-junctions; just keep on following the main trail. After half an hour, there is a Y-junction, where the main trail is less obvious. Take the right trail going up here (not the left going down). After another 20 minutes, you will pass the small village of Khar (1,652 m). Just after Khar, there is another Y-junction; take the right trail going up. Around 10 minutes after, take the right trail again, going up at the next Y-junction. A good half an hour after Khar, you will pass through the tiny settlement of Saur (1,893 m). Again there is a Y-junction, and again you have to take the right trail going up. You will be walking in a beautiful countryside surrounded by terraced fields. The trail goes high on the slope, with the river far below you to your left hand. Around 10 minutes after Saur, you will pass the outskirts of Dhalek (1,935 m). There is another Y-junction here, where you again take the right trail going up. After about 20 minutes, you will pass a resting place. Just after the resting place, take the stone trail going to the right. After another 15 minutes, you will arrive at Dhalek village (2,139 m), which is also the pass. From here, you will have your first views of India! At Dhalek, there are a few small restaurants and shops, which make it a nice place for a tea break.

In Dhalek, take a right after the shops, going down. After two minutes you will arrive at a T-junction; go left and down here. After another three minutes, you will arrive at a Y-junction; go right and down here. You will arrive at a dirt road (in April 2012, this road was still under construction); there is a shortcut from the road next to a small house. You will be following the Shela River downstream.

After about one hour, you will cross a small river (1,565 m). From here, it is another 15 minutes to Shela (1,450 m). In Shela there are a couple of restaurants, which make it a good lunch stop.

You will now be walking on the dirt road, going down gradually. The

landscape changes and it is quite dry now, with some dry forests. After about one hour, you will pass Dungari (1,038 m). From here, it is another 45 minutes to Darchula (890 m).

Darchula is a bustling frontier town and attracts lots of Nepali, who come here for shopping. There are lots of shops here and three hotels.

Day 14: Darchula-Dhangadi; by bus; 20 hours

From Darchula it is a long drive of about 20 hours to get to Dhangadi. From Dhangadi, there are daily flights to Kathmandu. Besides, you can also take a long-distance bus to Kathmandu, which also takes about 20 hours. In Dhangadi, there are plenty of hotels and restaurants.

Day 15: Flight: Dhangadi-Kathmandu

A flight of about one hour 15 minutes (the longest flight within Nepal) takes you back to Kathmandu.

Accommodation Overview

Far West Section

Day 2: Flight: Nepalgunj/ Surkhet-Talcha Airport and walk to Rara Lake (2,986 m); 2 hours

Settlement of Rara:

Danphe Hotel: small hotel with four rooms and a campsite.

Day 3: Rara Lake (2,986m)-Ratapani (1,431 m); 9 hours

Baupani:

Maya Prithai Hotel and Lodge: a basic guesthouse.

Karmasi:

Dinesh Guesthouse and Lodge: a basic guesthouse.

Ratapani:

A few houses offer homestay facilities; ask around.

Day 4: Ratapani (1,431 m)-Kolti (1,390 m); 7 hours

Kolti:

Lumbini Hotel
Tel: 9747070203

Eight rooms, all with shared bathrooms.

Satkar Hotel

Seven rooms, four with attached bathrooms.

Saina Hotel

Tel: 9749033391/9749019618

Nine rooms, all with shared bathrooms.

Day 5: Kolti (1,390m)-Martadi (1,591 m); 10 hours

Pandusain:

Sapana Hotel and Lodge

Tel: 9749033261

Five rooms.

Star Hotel and Lodge

Tel: 097680267

Six rooms.

Martadi:

Royal Hotel.

Baniya Hotel

Tel: 097-541089 / 9848437358.

21 rooms, two toilets.

**Day 6: Martadi (1,591 m)-
Koth (1,962 m); 6 hours**

Kirtichaur:

Kirtichaur is a small village, but it seems like almost every house here has restaurant facilities, as there are six restaurants here, of which one also offers sleeping facilities. Besides, there is a nice open area to pitch your tents.

Koth:

Although there are no restaurants/hotels here, people are willing to offer homestay facilities.

**Day 7: Koth (1,962 m)-
Tuti (2,020 m) via Bateli
Bhanjyang Pass
(3,232 m); 8 ½ hours**

Tuti, also called Tutigaon:

Birganza Dami's homestay:
Tel: 9619201782 and
9849547448.

You can stay at the school here too.

**Day 8: Tuti (2,020
m)-Chainpur (1,290 m);
4 hours**

Chainpur:

Chainpur is a bustling bazaar town and the headquarters of Bajhang District. There are a few basic hotels here.

Hotel Santosh Plaza
Tel: 092-421185/092-421328
12 rooms; common toilet; no shower; hot-bucket shower available.

Kali Pachhain Hotel
Tel: 092-421114/9848436314
16 rooms; common toilet; no shower; hot-bucket shower available.

Hotel Anandlok
Tel: 092-421096/9749022632

Hotel Annapurna

**Day 9: Chainpur (1,290m)-
Jhota (979 m); 6 ½ hours**

Jhota:

Maya Hotel.
Giri Family Hotel.
Bimalay Hotel.
One hotel without a name.

All are quite basic, with shared facilities and have just two or three rooms.

**Day 10: Jhota (979m)-
Jhapa (1,185 m); 9 hours**

Jhapa:

There are only a few restaurants here, but even so, the villagers can arrange a place to sleep for you.

Day 11: Jhapa (1,185 m)-Sela (988 m) via Ganayi Khan Pass (2,126 m); 8 ½ hours

Sela:

Sela has a few basic restaurants, but no places to stay. You can camp at the clinic.

Day 12: Sela (988 m)-Gogani (1,357 m) via Sipti Pass (2,094 m); 8 hours

Gogani:

Agaman Hotel
Tel: 9745060513
Three rooms, a shop and a shared toilet.

Anand Hotel
Tel: 9759500948
Three rooms; shared toilet.

Day 13: Gogani (1,357m)-Darchula (890) via Dhalek (2,139 m); 5 ½ hours

Darchula:

Chamat Kar Hotel
Eight rooms, five with attached bathrooms.

Ma Mansa Guesthouse
Tel: 093-420139
12 rooms, all with attached bathrooms.

Pasrool Hotel

Day 14: Darchula - Dhangadi by bus; 20 hours

In Dhangadi, there are plenty of hotels and restaurants.

Hotel Devotee
Tel: 977 91 521618 / 523918
Three-star hotel rooms with AC; wifi
Hasanpur, Dhangadhi-5
info@hoteldevoteenepal.com.

The Rubus Hotel
Tel: 977 91 521260 / 524890 / 526390
30 rooms with attached bathrooms; AC; wifi
Shivamarga, Baiyabehadi, Dhangadi-2
www.rubushotel.com.np
info@rubushotel.com.np
[reservation@rubushotel.com.np](mailto:info@rubushotel.com.np)

Hotel Jalsa
Tel: 977 91 523959 / 523977
31 rooms with attached bathrooms; AC; wifi; swimming pool under construction
Ratopul-04, Dhangadi
info@hoteljalsanepal.com

You can find more info on Dhangadi at <http://www.kccifarwest.org/> and <http://www.destination-farwest.com/>

Blog GHT Low Route 26 January to 24 April 2012

Makalu Barun Section

January 26: Kathmandu-Dobhan

Today is the day! I start my big Great Himalaya Trail adventure, joining the team of Apa Sherpa and Dawa Steven Sherpa on their GHT Climate Smart Celebrity Trek. Apa Sherpa is a Nepali hero who has climbed Mt Everest 21 times, more than anybody in the world. Dawa Steven Sherpa has climbed Mt Everest twice. Besides, a professional photographer, Sameer Jung Thapa, and Saurav Dhakal, videographer of Kantipur Television and British Council Climate Champion, are in the team. And of course a big crew of strong Sherpa's. The team is walking the GHT—mostly the Low, or Cultural Route, but at some parts the High Route—to raise awareness about the consequences of climate change in the Himalaya and to bring attention to the GHT itself as a climate-friendly new tourism product in Nepal. The GHT Climate Smart Celebrity Trek is part of the Great Himalaya Trail Development Programme (GHTDP), for which I work. GHTDP aims to stimulate tourism in remote mountain areas in order to create income and job opportunities for the people living in these areas. During my trek, I will gather as much data as possible about the trail itself—the difficulty, distances, altitudes, attractions, and so on—and about the goods and services available in the different villages the trail passes through. This guidebook will, I hope, make it easier for other trekkers to walk the trail and for tour operators to offer it as one of their products.

Apa and Dawa Steven Sherpa and their team have already left before us, to walk a part of the Kanchenjunga Base Camp trek. From Dobhan in Taplejung, they started to trek westwards and I am joining them there. At the moment, the quickest way to Dobhan is a flight to Bhadrapur in southeast Nepal, followed by a nine-hour jeep ride (within a year the Suketar airport should be ready, which is the starting point of the Kanchenjunga Base Camp trek and about an hour's drive or a three-hour walk from Dobhan). Unfortunately, our flight was delayed by two-and-a-half hours. We arrived in Bhadrapur at 3 pm, which is a bit late if you still have to drive for nine hours. After a very welcome lunch in a nearby town (Birtamod), we set for Dobhan, passing by beautiful tea plantations in Ilam, Nepal's famous tea district. We finally

arrived at 1 am! I felt quite sorry for the driver, who still had to drive to Taplejung to pick up other passengers at 4 am. No time to rest....

It was not easy to find a place to sleep so late at night, but fortunately we managed to wake up a friendly lady who had a room for my porter guides and let me sleep in her room, which we were sharing with some chickens, whom I found out to be quite noisy eaters!

January 27: Dobhan

The lady of the house woke up at 5:30 am. That was far too early for me after the long drive of the day before, so I pushed my earplugs a bit deeper into my ears and went back to sleep. At about 7:30 am, I woke up. I was facing the wall and was trying to work out a few things on the new GPS I had bought for the trip. After five minutes or so, I turned to the other side. Where the lady had been sleeping, some men were sitting, sipping their tea and keenly studying what I was doing. Oops! I had been sleeping in a teashop full of customers! Definitely time to wake up!

Around lunchtime, Apa and Dawa Steven Sherpa and their crew entered the village, Apa Sherpa proudly carrying the Nepali flag earlier given to him by the Nepali president. It's nice to meet them here! I can't wait to start the trek!

I spent the afternoon visiting the four small guesthouses and two campsites of the village and gathering information about them. The Hide-out Campsite Retreat was surprisingly beautiful, a big peaceful getaway with a cozy lounge-restaurant and a few big standing tents with quite comfortable beds inside. The guesthouses mainly cater to Nepali guests, but if you bring your sleeping bag along, they are fine places to stay.

Around dinner time, we had an official function, with speeches, lots of blessings and *khatas* (white scarves that are used in Nepal to bless a person) mostly to honour the endeavor of our team, but mainly to honour Apa Sherpa, who really is a very big hero in Nepal. The team has been received with these functions almost twice a day since they started, so probably many will follow!

Tomorrow, we'll be going up to Deurali Bhanjyang, at 2,800 m. Dobhan is 658 m, so that will be quite a climb.... a tough start!

January 28: Dobhan (658 m)-Deurali Bhanjyang (2,800 m)

We started walking at eight, and the trail started climbing right away, and we climbed until we reached Deurali Bhanjyang. I walked together with the Sherpa porters, and as their loads are quite heavy they quite regularly took a break. And in the end this was quite good; it made the whole walk of today not as difficult as I thought it might be!

Around lunchtime, we arrived in the small village of Gorcha (2,013 m), where they had organised an official programme as well. A traditional dance/music group received us, and we received *khatas* and had to drink tongba, hot millet beer (I just took a few sips, with the climb ahead of me in my mind). Some local authorities came to talk to Apa. After an hour, we had lunch, after which we left, accompanied by the dance/music group. I thought that that was it! But this was all just an introduction to the official programme, which consisted of speeches, followed by lots of blessings with *khatas* and vermilion powder, and performances by all the cultural groups living in the village: Limbu, Tamang and Sherpa dances. It is great to see how the people love Apa Sherpa and how our, and especially Apa's presence, helps to raise awareness for the Great Himalaya Trail as a new tourism product and the possibilities it can bring for the local people. But meanwhile, it was 3:30 in the evening already, and we still had a climb of about 800 metres/four hours ahead of us. So I was happy when they finally allowed us to leave ☺. And I was even happier that the climb went quicker than expected and we arrived just before dark in Deurali Bhanjyang.

And as the night set in, so did the cold.

January 29: Deurali Bhanjyang (2,800 m)-Nundhaki (1,540 m)

After a freezing night (even the water in my water bottle was frozen), we woke up to a beautiful view of the Kanchenjunga Range. What a nice surprise!

The walk started with an easy climb to a small pass, at 2,922 m, during which we had even better views of the Kanchenjunga Range, and the Makalu also came into view. After the pass, the trail went down, sometimes steeply and sometimes rather flat. We walked high on the slope, with views of rice fields and grasslands where yaks graze, with once in a while, a tiny settlement.

Around 4 pm, we arrived in the small village of Nundhaki, where we set tent. A great, relaxed day of walking in the mid-hills of Nepal!

January 30: Nundhaki (1,540 m)-Bhanjyang Pucha (824 m)

Today we had to cover a long distance, about 18 km. But as we didn't have to climb a lot, it was still quite an easy day. A big part of the day, we went over a dirt road, which wasn't really a problem, as all we encountered were a few motorbikes.

The walk went through cardamom fields, rice paddies (it must be bright green here in summer!) and small villages. Among the places we passed, Chainpur was the biggest one, with a big bazaar (market). It is a lovely village, with well-kept walking lanes and beautiful houses. After Chainpur, we took a small trail again, walking amidst rice terraces. On the way, I met a small group of people, among which was a girl in a bright pink sari, who looked very beautiful. I asked if I could take a picture, which she agreed to, but to my surprise, immediately the young man who accompanied her also took out a bright pink camera and said, "But then we also want to take a picture of you!" So there we were taking pictures of each other. It turned out that they were just married! Nice encounter on the way!

We pitched our tents next to a small bamboo teashop in the middle of the rice terraces, with beautiful views of the surrounding hills. A beautiful place to camp!

January 31: Bhanjyang Pucha (824 m)-Khadbari (1,041 m); 6 hours

The day started with a steep descent of half an hour through a forest to a crystal-clear river. I was walking by myself and was surrounded by the sounds of singing birds, a great start to the walk. At the riverside I saw a beautiful bright red-and-blue bird; good thing I brought my binoculars! After crossing a wooden suspension bridge (600 m), the trail continued through rice terraces and led via a small wooden bridge back into the forest, where it climbed to a dirt road (still not used by motorised vehicles). It was easy, almost flat-walking along rice terraces and forests, and we passed a few small villages, like Ghomare, which made a nice tea stop, and Lingling, a somewhat bigger village with a few restaurants, where we stopped for lunch.

We continued through the countryside and forests with terraced hills on the horizon. A steep descent through the forest brought us to a small settlement with bamboo houses, Dobantar. We continued on a beautiful trail through rice fields leading to a river (363 m), which we had to cross stone-hopping. This might well be the lowest point of our whole trek! We followed the river for a while and arrived at an iron suspension bridge. Shortly after, the steep and long climb to Khadbari (1,041 m) began. The climb went through forests, small villages and countryside. After about two hours, we arrived at Khadbari, which is a small town, where we saw buses again! Khadbari even has some banks with ATMs (but I can't say with absolute certainty that they work all the time) and internet cafes. We are staying at quite a big guesthouse here, and we may even enjoy a hot shower!

February 1: Khadbari (1,041 m)

Today was a so-called rest day, but apart from the fact that we were not walking, there was not too much time to rest! We had several meetings, including with the chamber of commerce and with the CDO, Chief Development Officer (head of district), during which we received lots of *khatas* and blessings. A press conference had also been organised.

Today the German Ambassador joined us; she will walk with us till Lukla. So I won't be the only female foreigner any more ☺.

Everest & Rolwaling Section: Solukhumbu

February 2: Khadbari (1,041 m)- Majuwadanda (800 m); 5 hours

After an official goodbye, we took a small path down to the west from the centre of Khadbari. We were immediately in the countryside again, and had surprising good views of the Makalu Range. The trail went down steeply for about one-and-a-half hours till we reached a small river with an old wooden suspension bridge (320 m). Will this then be the lowest point of our trek? We reached the beautiful big and slow Arun River, which we followed for almost all of the rest of the day. After crossing a big suspension bridge over the Arun River, we arrived at the village of Kattike Pull. The scenery was very idyllic here, with spread-out houses, rice fields and the beautiful Arun River to our right.

At the end of the village, we started climbing again, while the trail kept on following the river, which was now far below. It was a nice walk through the countryside again, with beautiful views of the Arun Valley below us. We pitched our tents in the small settlement of Majuadanda, next to a small guesthouse, Sagarmatha Hotel and Lodge. I thought that was a very appropriate name, given that our team has so many Everest climbers and crew members (Sagarmatha is the Nepali name for Mount Everest). How good to be in the countryside again enjoying the sounds of the birds!

February 3: Majuwadanda (800 m)-Salpa Phedi (1,530 m); 8 hours

Today was quite a long and tiring day and I am happy to have arrived at our guesthouse. We walked 22.4 km! And in the mountains that is quite a lot. But it was a beautiful walk through the countryside and sometimes, subtropical forests, with pretty settlements along the way. We regularly met men carrying huge loads, about two times the size of the person carrying it. They were carrying Himalayan medicinal herbs destined for the Chinese market. It was good to walk with Verena Gräfin von Roedern, the German Ambassador, nice to have another foreign female to talk to ☺. Both of us have to catch up with all these strong Everest climbers, but fortunately we are managing ok, although we are both pretty tired now at the end of this day!

February 4: Salpa Phedi (1,530 m)-Sanam (2,834 m); 8 hours

Today we walked only 14 km, but the hike took us as long as yesterday. We had to climb to the Salpa Pass (3,340 m), so a climb of 1,800 m, after which we descended 500 m. But fortunately, I felt in a lot better shape than yesterday, and the climb was not too difficult. The only thing is starting up is always a bit difficult. And as much as the porters were stopping on the first day, so little did they stop now! But at a certain moment you get the rhythm. It is beautiful to see the landscape changing as you get higher: we started among rice fields, climbed into forests, which turned into bushes, and higher up we walked through dense rhododendron forests. Close to the pass, we passed beautiful mani walls (walls with stones that have Buddhist prayers and drawings carved on them). The pass is also the border between the districts of Bhojpur and Solukhumbu. When we were going up, we saw a few patches of snow, but going down, we walked into a white snow-world!

What a difference from yesterday, when we were walking among banana trees and subtropical forests! We arrived at our guesthouse at a quarter past six; it was just getting dark. Tired, but satisfied about a beautiful day and about our achievement ☺.

February 5: Sanam (2,834 m)-Khiraule (2,535 m); 8 hours

Today's programme: a long descent of about 1,500 m till 1,350 m, followed by a tough climb of 1,200 m to Khiralule at 2,535 m.

At the start I felt my knees ache a bit, but fortunately my ayurvedic creme did miracles. From Sanam the trail went down through rhododendron forests, passing some mani walls and we could see the snow-capped Mt. Numbur (6,959 m) on the horizon.

About two-and-a-half hours after leaving Sanam, we reached the village of Gudel (2,042 m), which is mainly inhabited by the Kulung Rai people. From there the trail really went steep down, and it seemed to never end. I was quite happy to finally reach the small suspension bridge over the Hongu Khola (1,350 m). After crossing the bridge, the only way was up! After about 15 minutes, we arrived at the village of Bung, which is spread out over the hill. It takes you an hour to climb through the whole village.

The trail kept on climbing through forests and agricultural plots, passing small settlements once in a while. After about two hours, we reached Khiraule. But we had to climb even more, as our lodge was above the village, situated next to a Buddhist monastery (2,535 m). That is trekking in the mid-hills of the Himalaya: steep ups and downs!

February 6: Khiraule (2,535 m)-Sibuche (2,800 m); 7 hours

Dawa Steven, our expedition leader, informed us that today would be an easy day. Here is a summary of the programme for today: climb till the Surke La - also called Charakot Pass - (3,070 m), then go down more than 1,000 m till the Inkhu River (1,985 m), then go up again 800 m to Sibuche (2,800 m). I guess easy is a relative concept, and there is definitely a difference between an Everest climber and a regular hiker ☺!

From our lodge, we followed a small trail up the hill, which led to a trail through rhododendron forests. We were surrounded by forested

hills as far as we could see. In about two hours, we reached the Surke La/Charakot Pass (3,070 m). From the pass we had to go down steeply over an icy, slippery path. Fortunately we had our security officers with us (because of the German Ambassador's joining us), who were very helpful in lending me a hand on the slippery trail ☺. We had lunch in the Sherpa village of Najingdingma (2,700 m). The village is surrounded by grass fields, where people from villages higher up take their yaks to graze in the summer.

From Najingdingma we continued over a small trail steeply going down through the forest all the way down to the wild-flowing Inkhu River (1,985 m). After crossing the river over a high suspension bridge, the trail went steeply up again. At the end of the afternoon, we reached the Sherpa village of Sibuche (2,800 m). From the lodge we have a splendid view of Mera Peak (6,476 m), and Samir was able to take some spectacular pictures of the sunset and of the rising moon behind the mountain ridge.

February 7: Sibuche (2,800 m)-Paiya (2,767 m); 7 hours

Today we had two passes to cross, the Narkung La (also called Chaduk La) (3,161 m) and the Kari La (3,059 m). In between, we went down till 2,400 m, so you could say it was a typical mid-hill GHT day: lots of ups and downs!

The trail was stunning again, almost completely through mostly rhododendron forests, offering good views of Mt Numbur (6,959 m) and once in a while passing a small Sherpa settlement.

We got on to the famous Jiri-to-Lukla trail and we could notice that we were entering a more touristic region by the quality of the lodges! In Solukhumbu, and especially in this part, they know very well what a trekker wants: a nice, clean room, a bed with a soft mattress and a soft pillow, a hot shower, clean toilet, a shop with nice bites and cold drinks for the hungry and thirsty trekker, good food and a warm and cozy dining. The good thing is, that Lower Solukhumbu does have these facilities, but receives just a fraction of the tourists that Khumbu (the Everest region) gets. Up till now, I haven't met any tourists (but this could also be because we are trekking in the low-tourist season; however, January and February are excellent months for trekking the mid-hills, as you don't get too high and the views are great). Almost all the settlements in Lower Solukhumbu have one or more guesthouses, so in this section there is no need to camp!

February 8: Paiya (2,767 m)-Lukla (2,840 m); 4 hours

Today I was woken up by the sound of thunder. And it rained. I was hoping it would have stopped by the time we had to leave, but unfortunately it hadn't. In fact, it had gotten worse, and we had hail, rain and stormy wind all the way to Lukla. Fortunately, Lukla was not too far! The day started with a gradual climb of one-and-a-half hours, after which the trail went down steeply to Surke (2,290 m), where we warmed up with a cup of tea at the fireplace in the kitchen of Everest Trail Lodge. Shortly after Surke, we crossed a bridge (2,276 m), which was the lowest point of today. From here, it was a long climb to Lukla (2,840 m). I felt quite exposed to the elements sometimes, with the hail blowing in my face! Finally we arrived in Lukla, where we are staying in Paradise Hotel. How good to arrive in a warm and cozy lodge, where they kept the dining hall nice and warm all day long! Meanwhile, the rain still hasn't stopped.

Today a whole lot of international journalists should have arrived, but obviously with this weather all flights were cancelled.

February 9: Lukla (2,840 m)

I had a wonderful sleep in my bed with a real mattress, soft pillow and lots of blankets. And how good to have your own toilet you can sit on ☺. What a luxury here in Lukla! Of course I also took my long-awaited hot shower.

The journalists couldn't fly again; first, fog in Kathmandu, and when that was cleared too much wind here in Lukla. So the press conference is cancelled, as the team can't wait too long for the journalists. Our next point where we are easy to reach by motorised transport is Borderlands, about a four-hour drive from Kathmandu. So there will be another chance there.

Tomorrow our paths will separate for a while. Apa Sherpa and his team will follow the higher GHT route over the Tashi Labsta pass (5,755 m), while I will continue on the lower trail, as I want to document the whole trail. To be honest, I am not regretting that I can't join them. As they are on a tight schedule, they will ascend pretty quickly, and I am normally a bit slow in adapting to high altitude. I wouldn't want to keep the whole team stuck with my having altitude problems!

So today became an unplanned rest day, but there's still quite a lot of things to do, such as writing my blog and day-by-day itinerary, uploading pictures to flickr, emailing, re-packing, etc.

February 10: Lukla (2,840 m)-Kharikhola (2,007 m); 8 hours

At breakfast I got the news that I was not the only one in the team following the lower GHT up to Rolwaling. Saurav is joining me as well. Great!

Kharikhola was our destination of today, which brings us back to the lower GHT. You could say that the trip to Lukla was a side trip, which is good to document as well, as this will be an entry or exit point for people who walk the trail in different sections.

We woke up to fabulous weather. Unfortunately, it was foggy again back in Kathmandu, so we were still not sure if the German Ambassador could fly back. Fortunately, the weather cleared in Kathmandu as well, and soon half a dozen planes were arriving one after the other. And with that, we were on our way. To go to Kharikhola, you have to walk back to Paiya. No problem at all! It was good to be walking again, especially with the good weather. It was only now that I could see that the trail offered a great view of many rugged snowcapped peaks, including Khumbi Yul La (5,761 m), Khongde (6,168 m), Numbur (6,959 m) and Kusum Khangaru (6,367 m).

We reached Paiya in about four hours and took lunch there. About half an hour after Paiya, we reached the junction between the way to the Kari La, where we came from, and Kharikhola.

We took a right here. On the map it says "slippery trail", and this was particularly true today, as big parts of the trail were covered with ice! On the sides of the trail there were beautiful icicles, and it all looked a bit like a winter fairytale-landscape. The trail climbed slowly to Tham-dada (2,871 m), from where it went down again through the forest. Far below, we could see the roaring Dudh Kosi River.

We reached the village of Bupsa, which had a couple of tourist lodges. After Bupsa the landscape changed and we walked amidst terraces with wheat and vegetables. We descended all the way below 2,000 m again (1,984 m), to a suspension bridge over the Khari Khola (1,984 m). From here, the trail climbed a bit to the village of Kharikhola (2,007

m), a rather big, spread-out village, which offers plenty of possibilities for staying over.

February 11: Kharikhola (2,007 m)- Ringmu (2,739 m); 8 hours

Summary of today's programme: go down about 500 m, cross the Dudh Kosi, climb 1,560 m to the Taksindu La (3,062 m) and go down 300 m to Ringmu. In other words, a regular GHT lower-route day ☺.

So it was a bit tough but nice walking day. On the way down to the Dudh Kosi, we passed the beautiful spread-out village of Juving. The Jiri-Lukla route is actually a mule highway. On the way, we passed many huge mule caravans, all carrying rice up to Lukla. It takes them five days to get from Jiri to Lukla, and they get Rs40 per kg for the work. One mule carries about 60 kg, so per mule they make Rs 2,400 (24 euro).

It took us about two hours to get to the suspension bridge over the Dudh Kosi River (1,492 m). After this, the long climb to the pass started, going through the countryside and forests. The forest opened up once in a while, offering great views to snowcapped Himalayan peaks like Kusum Kangaru (6,367 m), Mt Numbur (6,959 m), Khatang (6,853 m) and Karyalung (6,681 m). As with the previous passes, at altitudes of about 2,800 m and above, we were walking in the snow again. It took altogether about four-and-a-half hours to reach the pass (excluding lunch break). Unfortunately, we were walking in the clouds, so no Himalaya views!

It was about half an hour of descent to Ringmu, a Sherpa village surrounded by grass fields. A couple of days ago I was very happy with the lodges in Solukhumbu offering a warm dining area, etc. Unfortunately the lady of the house here doesn't want to heat the dining area yet, so I am writing this sitting in my room, under my sleeping bag, in my down jacket and still cold! So that can also happen.

At dinner time, we could finally heat the stove. Apparently Kanchha, my guide, bribed the lady with sweets for the children!

February 12: Ringmu (2,739 m)-Sete (2,538 m); 9 ½ hours

Today, we walked 24.76 km. We crossed a pass at an altitude of 3,532 m and altogether we climbed 2,038 m. So I hope I am allowed to feel a bit tired!

We knew we had a long day ahead of us, so we left early, at 7:15 am. We walked in a frozen white landscape, gradually descending to a suspension bridge (2,606 m). We entered a forest and climbed slowly again, till we were high on the slope, following the Dudhkund Khola far below us.

We arrived at the small village of Salu (2,945 m), from where you have an amazing view of the Himalaya. While walking to Phurtyang/Phurteng (3,004 m), the view got better and better. At the far left we could even see Mt Everest (8,848 m). We could also see Thamserku (6,608 m), Kangtega (6,685 m), Kusum Khangaru (6,367 m) and Mera Peak (6,476 m). Awesome!

I found it hard to move on, as I knew that after this point I wouldn't see this part of the Himalaya like this anymore! But I consoled myself with the knowledge that there were many other parts of the Himalaya waiting for me.

We went down again and drank tea in the charming town of Junbesi (2,679 m). From here the long climb to the Lamjura La started. I had a bit of a hard time before lunch, but after filling up with daal bhaat. (lentils with rice and vegetables; real Nepali power food) I had regained my energy. At altitudes above around 3,000 m we were walking in a white world. Lots of snow!

At about 3:30 pm, we arrived at Lamjura La (3,532 m), completely blanketed in the clouds/fog. It was still a long way to our sleeping place in Sete (2,538 m), where we finally arrived at 6:30 pm, in the dark.

February 13: Sete (2,538 m)-Deurali (2,700 m); 7 hours

Again a day with lots of climbing up and down! We went down to the charming village of Kinja (1,624 m), and further to the small village of Korhem (1,580 m). And from here it went up again. On the way, we passed an orange orchard and stopped to eat oranges right from the trees. What a difference from yesterday, when we were walking in a white snowy world!

We passed the village of Bhandar, which is not only on the Jiri-Lukla route, but also on the Numbur Cheese Circuit, a beautiful non-touristic trek that takes you through beautiful Sherpa villages and spectacular landscapes (www.numburcheesecircuit.org). From Bhandar we kept on climbing till we reached Deurali (2,700 m), our overnight place for today.

We are staying in Lama Lodge, a wonderful lodge, with a warm, cozy dining area and great food. Saurav and I have turned a corner of the dining into a small office, where we are working, charging our devices and we are even connected to the internet ☺. I called my mother over skype with the webcam on. She could say Namaste to the whole crew; really nice! The connection was very bad, but hey, I am in a small settlement in the middle of the Himalaya; amazing that this is possible!

February 14: Deurali (2,700 m)-Jiri (1,930 m); 6 hours

As Deurali means pass, it wasn't surprising that the day started with a descent. We went down to the small town of Shivalaya (1,807 m), down at the riverside of the beautiful Khimti Khola. And as usual, after crossing the suspension bridge at the end of the town, we went up again (till about 2,400 m). And then we went down to Jiri (1,930 m).

Altogether, it was a lovely walk, mainly going through the countryside. How strange to arrive at the busy market town of Jiri, to be walking on a black-topped road and to be surrounded by stinky trucks and buses!

Tomorrow, the real adventure starts, as nobody in the crew really knows the way to Bigu Gompa, where we have to meet the rest of the team. We are asking around, but we get different directions from different people. Besides, some are mentioning stopping points that are not on the map. That's going to be interesting!

Everest & Rolwaling Section: Rolwaling

February 15: Jiri (1,930 m)-Putchar Kharka (2,341 m); 7 hours

And interesting it was! We took every opportunity to ask for the way. During our lunch in the small and beautiful village of Sherakapti (2,411 m), a villager recommended that we go straight north on a small trail in the direction of Suri Dobhan, instead of going west first, which would have been the GHT route indicated on the map. That route would have been longer and mostly on a dirt road, so a bit boring. We took his advice and the trail was beautiful indeed. We were walking in beautiful forests, with loads of birds. At one point, I stopped for a while to watch them, and they were just flying around me. This must be a paradise for birdwatchers!

At the resting places (which are everywhere in Nepal along the trails), you will find beautiful and colourful Buddhist paintings. Unfortunately, we got a bit lost at one point and had to climb a *very* steep hill to come back on the track. Just the first day we already got lost ☺! We lost an hour, but it is all part of the adventure.

At 5 pm it was still two hours to our intended destination (Surigaon), which would mean we would have to walk in the dark for 45 minutes, so we asked the people of an isolated house if we could stay there for the night. Fortunately, we could. The house was situated in a beautiful spot, with a splendid view of the hills around and the snow-capped Himalaya, including the impressive Gaurishankar (7,135 m). Although there were no other houses in sight, the place does have a name: Putchar Kharka (2,341 m).

I was surprised to find out that our hosts were Hindu Chettris. I didn't expect that there would be Hindus among all the Buddhist Sherpa villages here, but from now on we would meet more Hindu villages again. They were very friendly and we spent a lovely evening sitting on the ground around the cooking fire. They don't even have solar light here, so they manage with the light of the fire and torch light. Amazing what a great meal they prepared on that one-pit fire for all of us!

February 16: Putchar Kharka (2,341 m)-Laduk (1,790 m); 6 hours

This was another adventurous day. After a nice breakfast with local milk, and cornflakes brought from Kathmandu, we had to say goodbye. We walked down to the Kaichapa Khola and climbed up again. After about 200 m, I realised that I had forgotten to make a waypoint on my GPS where we crossed the river! The rest of the group was already ahead, but because I thought this was an important waypoint, I took off my backpack and ran down to the river, made my waypoint and ran up again. Including getting my breath together again, this took me exactly 12 minutes, so I was 13 minutes behind now. I just hoped that I wouldn't get lost. Fortunately, after a while I saw two of the Sherpas waiting for me. We reached the small village of Suri, where I practiced my Nepali with two women and took a picture. The rest had already continued, so I rushed on, following the dirt road we were walking on. However, I didn't catch up with them, which was a bit strange. I started to walk faster, shouting out loud "Kanchhaaaaaa" and blowing on the whistle I had especially brought for this kind of situation. However,

no reaction.... I tried to make a call as well, but no network. That was awkward. What to do? Proceed on the same way even quicker, or return? I decided to return, looking for the arrow that they always put up if the crew members leading the walk go left or right and some people in the group are not around. I didn't find an arrow either. I went back to the same women, and fortunately they could tell me my friends had gone left somewhere nearby. I asked one of them to go with me to show me the trail, and after looking very carefully, I saw the arrow there. I had overlooked that one! After another half hour, I found Kanchha waiting for me, to my relief!

Due to all this, I hadn't had time to take even a small break all the way to our lunch stop, so after walking for four hours continuously (and going down 1,500 m), I really needed a break!! But after an energising daal bhaat, I could hit the road again.

We climbed up again to Laduk, where we are again staying with a local family. I got the room of the two girls in the house, who will now sleep with their brothers. Very nice of them ☺!

February 17: Laduk (1,790 m)-Bigu Gompa (2,500 m); 8 hours

On the map, this stretch looks really long, but the local people told us it was possible to cover it in one day. It turned out to be long indeed; we walked 20.5 km and climbed a total of 1,972 m.

This day, not just I, but everyone, got a bit lost on the trail. Fortunately, we got lost all together, and fortunately we found the trail again pretty soon.

The day ended with a long climb from a very scary bridge over the wild Singati Khola (1,650 m) to the village of Bigu Gompa (2,500 m). On the way we had a sudden rain shower. I wanted to put on my raincoat, but it was lost! I had no idea where I lost it.... Fortunately, I have a poncho as well, but I must say it is quite annoying (or should I say stupid) to lose your raincoat!

On the way up, we passed the beautiful village of Alampu (spread out over 1,850m to 1,950 m). Sometimes you pass villages that are almost completely deserted, but here many people were working on the fields, all greeting when we passed. They are Thami, a group that I hadn't heard of before. But well, since Nepal has about 100 cultural groups,

you can't know them all! You could see we were in a Buddhist area by the mani walls and stupas that we passed.

The climb from the river to Bigu Gompa took about two-and-a-half hours, and we arrived at 6 pm, so just in time before it was getting dark. We stayed in an Eco Himal community lodge. There is a sort of circuit of these lodges in the Gauri Shankar Area, developed by Eco Himal, an Austrian development organisation. They really remind you of the Austrian *Berghütte*, with dormitories made in the same style. Both Saurav and I had a dormitory to ourselves 😊. (For more info see: www.ecohimal.org).

February 18: Bigu Gompa (2,505 m)-Durumthali (1,970 m); 9 hours

Today was again a long stretch, crossing the Tinsang La (3,310 m) and covering a distance of 20 km. Altogether, we climbed 1,808 m.

Shortly after leaving, we got lost again! The trails are not always easy to find, and we have to often ask for directions from the local people. But they are not always around! Fortunately, we always find the trail again pretty soon, keeping in mind the direction we have to go in. Personally, I would prefer to backtrack, but in our group I'm the only one who has that view, so that means crossing the hills on tracks where there are no trails at all. Ah well, that's adventure!

I hadn't studied the map properly, and I thought we would climb to the Tinsang La from Bigu Gompa. To my disappointment, we first had to go down to the river (as usual) and only started climbing from 2,282 m. Climbing up, we saw the landscape changing around us, from bamboo forests to a more grassy and rocky landscape, changing into rhododendron and pine forests. Besides, when we got higher, we suddenly had stunning views of the Himalaya, including Gaurishankar (7,135 m), Mount Chekigo (6,257 m), and Mount Bamongo (6,400 m).

About 15 minutes before the pass, there were two small restaurants, where we had a great and energising daal bhaat. Arriving at the Tinsang La (3,310 m), we saw that the trees were blocking the view of the Himalaya a bit, but we did have a splendid view over the new valley we were about to enter.

We were planning to go to the village of Dolangsa (2,600 m), but they had no good electricity/recharge facilities, and especially Saurav need-

ed to recharge, so we continued on. At 6:20 pm, when it was almost dark, we finally reached the village of Durumthali (1,969 m). Fortunately the village had plenty of power, and we installed a recharge station with Saurav's multi-plug ☺.

My computer had gone black the day before; I thought it was because of a lack of power, but even with our power station, the screen stayed black.... A bit alarming, as I am wondering how I can update my blog and day-by-day itinerary without a working computer.

February 19: Durumthali (1,970 m)-Barabise (870 m); 3 hours; and to Kathmandu by bus

As we are pretty ahead of schedule—our planned arrival in Borderlands was February 22—we have been discussing how to spend the coming days for a couple of days now. At breakfast, I told the rest of the group I wanted to go to Barabise, as I had tried my computer again and I couldn't make it power up; so I wanted to find a computer repair shop there. My guide Kanchha discouraged this because he thought the repairers would insert cheap Chinese parts into my computer. "You could go to Kathmandu instead," he said. I hadn't thought about that at all! But indeed it did seem like a good idea to me. So I decided to leave Saurav, who was planning to stay in the nearby village of Khartali, and walk up slowly towards Borderland and then go to Kathmandu. What a strange sensation: a minute before I thought I would only see my home in Kathmandu in May, and suddenly I am going there today!

It took us three hours to walk down to Barabise, from where we took a mini-van to Kathmandu. At 5:30, I was suddenly home!

I had contacted a computer repair expert, who came to my home. He had to take the computer with him, unfortunately. I was hoping he would have been able to do some tricks and repair it on the spot ☺!

February 20-21: Kathmandu

The computer guy called me and he didn't have good news. It would cost 140 euro and take two weeks to repair my computer, as the LCD screen had to be changed. I can't wait so long, so there is only one solution. I have to buy another one. The computer was three-years old, so it was about time for it to shut down, but still, a bit unfortunate.

The good thing is that I am seeing my friends again and have very good internet (and other) facilities here ☺!

February 22: Kathmandu

It seems like a joke! I've been travelling to the most remote places, eating in homestays where no tourist has been before, and there's no problem at all. But now that I'm back in Kathmandu, I get the worst diarrhea ever! No Delhi Belly, but Kathmandu Belly. I spent half the night on the toilet and am feeling quite sick. But there are many things to do, so I have to keep going.

Langtang & Helambu Section

February 23: Kathmandu-Borderlands

At 6:30 am, I had to report at the office of Asian Treks. To my surprise, I found almost the whole crew there; they had all come to Kathmandu as well. I also met two new additions to the team: Elizabeth Fox from the US and Paribesh Pradhan from Nepal. During the trek, Paribesh is going to collect stories about climate change, which he will put on his website: www.myclimateinitiative.org. Besides, he wants to raise funds to provide for children from poor families he meets along the trail: www.trek4education.org. Elizabeth has been asked by Asian Treks to write a blog about the trek.

At about 11 am, we arrived in Borderlands, where I met Apa Sherpa, Dawa Steven, Samir and Saurav again. This time their partners were also there (except for Apa Sherpa's wife who is in the US); it was nice to meet them as well. It was especially great to see Saurav's baby, who is just two months old!

In the afternoon, a press conference was organised, after which I went back to bed because unfortunately I was still not feeling well. Elizabeth had organised a performance by a very good Nepali band, Rudra (which included the well-known sarangi player Shyam Nepali), and their great sounds made me emerge from my bed. I even danced, but afterwards I had to rush to the toilet again ☹. But they did manage to make me feel a bit better!

February 24: Borderlands-Barabise (870 m)-Jalbire (830 m); 8 hours

After another night with regular toilet visits, I was a bit afraid of the day ahead. As most of the days are quite long and a bit tough, I was worried about whether I would be able to keep up. And what if I have to go all the time? How will I manage?

We drove back to Barabise so that we could start the walk again where we had stopped last. I found out we had even two more additions to the team: Sahana, the girlfriend of Dawa Steven, is joining us for a week. Besides, we have our own GHT mascot: Setuk, a beautiful black dog, had joined the team in Thame (Everest region) and even crossed the Tashi Lapsta with them!

The day started nicely, with a climb of about 800 m till 1,650 m. It was quite hard for me, of course; all this diarrhea makes you weak. And it was not getting better. But strangely enough, although the diarrhea didn't get less, my strength came back and I could catch up with the rest without too many difficulties.

We walked through beautiful landscapes, with views of the Sunkosi Nadi valley and the hills, which are completely terraced. A beautiful sight and a sign of hard work!

It was a long day again, and we had to do the last descent in the dark. We arrived at 7 pm in Jalbire, a bigger village, which you could almost call a town. As the group is quite big now, we have been divided into smaller units: Elizabeth, Paribesh and I stay with our crew in one place and the rest in another. We are staying in a basic guesthouse and I am sharing the room with Elizabeth. If the people in the room upstairs walk, things keep falling on top of us; let's hope they don't walk too much!

February 25: Jalbire (830 m)-Khobre (2,435 m); 7 ½ hours

Today we climbed altogether 2,180 m, according to my GPS. And I can tell you it was tough, especially after another night spent in the toilet. It is strange that during the day I am more or less ok, but in the evening I get cramps and it all comes back. Very annoying! To make things worse, it is suddenly very hot during the day, which makes climbing a lot harder. When I was in Kathmandu, it was Shivaratri, a big festival

to honour Lord Shiva. It is said that the fires made during this festival bring the heath back into the country. That seems to have worked!

Fortunately, no matter my physical condition, I could still enjoy the beautiful forests and Himalaya. Seeing Dorje Lakpa (6,966 m) from so close is especially impressive. You can see Dorje Lakpa from Kathmandu too, and from there it is a beautiful view already. So seeing it from so close now is stunning!

Most of the villages in this region are Hindu or Tamang (Buddhist). It was surprising to find out that Khobre was a Sherpa village. We camped on the field of one of the Sherpa families, from where we had an amazing view of the Langtang Range and Dorje Lakpa. We gathered around the cooking stove in the kitchen of the friendly family, who kept offering tea and biscuits, which were offerings from Lhosar (Buddhist New Year, which also took place when I was in Kathmandu). A beautiful evening! But unfortunately my cramps came back again.

February 26: Khobre (2,435 m)-Pokhare Bhanjyang (1,574 m); 9 hours

Today, there wasn't much climbing, as we mostly had to go down, but we had a long distance to cross: 22.5 km.

On the way, we passed beautiful Tamang villages like Bote Nam-la (1,795 m) and Chinde (970 m). In between, we passed the Hindu (Chettri) village of Tar Namlang (1,440 m). It is interesting to see how people living in villages that are so close to each other still look completely different: different faces, different dresses, etc.

We passed some very traditional looking Tamang villagers, and I asked if I could take a picture. Even the men wore their traditional dress. I could take the picture, but then he also wanted to take a picture of me with his mobile. Quite unexpected ☺!

I spent most of the time walking with Elizabeth, or close to her. Once, when I was waiting for her, she didn't appear. I walked back, to find Dawa Steven and Sahana, who were behind us before. That meant Elizabeth must have walked the wrong way! I was quite worried, but Dawa Steven said that he would go and find her and that it was better if I continued on my way. Fortunately, he found her quite soon, as we found out during lunch. The system with the arrows is clearly not always waterproof!

It was a long day indeed, and we arrived just before dark, at 6:15 pm. It was getting really late and we were still waiting for Elizabeth's and my porter. At 8:30 pm, part of the crew even went back on the trail to find them. But they returned soon: they had managed to establish contact, and it turned out that the way was too long for them and they had decided to stop for the night at a place that was two hours before our overnight place. That meant Elizabeth and I had to manage without our mattress, etc. I guess this proves that our days are really long!

The long days are taking their toll on us. Elizabeth's feet are full of blisters, and Sahana has blue toes with blood below her skin, and because of that she has to return to Kathmandu. She will join us again later. Also there are more diarrhea victims.

February 27: Pokhare Bhanjyang (1,574 m)-Gyalthung (985 m); 2 hours

Fortunately we had a short day today, so the porters could catch up with us easily. The day was short because of a function that was being organised. People from the Guinness Book of Records had come to honour Apa Sherpa and hand him a certificate for holding the world record for summiting Everest 21 times. He has held the world record already for 10 years, but up till now he had always got the certificate by mail. This was the first time the Guinness people came to hand it over to him personally.

Meanwhile for me, it was very good to have a short day, as I still haven't recovered completely. Besides, because of my being sick and not having a computer yesterday, I was behind with my blog and day-by-day itinerary; it's good to have time to catch up!

February 28: Gyalthung (985 m)-Samundratar (915 m); 8 hours

It is almost 25 km from Gyalthung to Samundratar. We first had to climb to Gul Bhanjyang (2,111 m) and then go down again. But as a big part of the stretch was going over a dirt road it was not too difficult to do this stretch in one day. We even arrived early at 5 pm; how nice!

Before lunch, it was climbing all the way, finally arriving at Gul Bhanjyang (2,111 m), a village with Tamang and Sherpa people. Gul Bhanjyang is on the Helambu trekking route to Lake Gosainkund, so there are nice lodges here, and we had great daal bhaat.

We saw a leaflet created by a small charity, Hands Nepal, run by a Dutch couple, hanging on the wall. They help to improve the local school and improve the access to education for poor children in the nearby villages. A good initiative, so I thought it would be good to mention it! (www.handsnepal.com).

Bhanjyang means something like a pass, so after lunch we went down again. Mostly on a dirt road, but there were many shortcuts, and we were walking through fields, passing a few Tamang villages, like Thulo Golbu (1,938 m) and Dadagaon (1,700 m). Given the fact that we were so close to Kathmandu—it is about 25 km as the crow flies—it was surprising to see how traditional the life in these villages is. Both men and women are often dressed in traditional dresses, the houses are in a traditional style, and you see many plowing the land with oxen.

We are staying overnight in a homestay in the little town Samundratar (915 m), a nice town with a mix of Hindu and Tamang people.

February 29: Samundratar (915 m)-Betrawati (605 m); 9 hours

“We are marching,” Dawa Steven had said once, and I can tell you, we are. Today we walked 30.17 km, with a total ascent of 1,547 m. I had once mentioned that 20 km is a lot in the mountains; I didn’t know nothing yet!

So it was a long day. And quite harsh as well, with a steep climb in the burning sun and a few rain showers in the afternoon. But we survived ☺. And tomorrow is a rest day!

The walk started on a dirt road, and it was easy flat-walking through the countryside, with fields full of bright green wheat and yellow mustard flowers. So here it was easy to cover huge distances. But after a couple of hours, we entered a trail, climbing up steeply, and as I just mentioned, in the burning sun. It was as if our lunch place would never arrive. We took lunch in the small village of Narja, which has been spelled as Narjamandap on the map. We soon had a big audience of school children, and even a few adults, watching us with interest drinking our tea. Fortunately we had our food inside!

After another energising meal of daal bhaat, we continued our journey. In the afternoon, we mostly walked on small trails, first through fields and later through a forest, following the Phalakhu Khola. The scenery

was quite nice, but to be honest, we were so concerned with reaching our destination before it got very late that we didn't enjoy it as much as the landscape deserved to be enjoyed.

At 6:20 pm, when it was nearly dark, we finally saw the lights of Betrawati (605 m) in the distance! Before that we were not really sure how far it still was, so we were quite happy to know we were finally arriving! We are sleeping in a restaurant, using the room of the daughters of the family. And our crew is sleeping on the veranda. Improvising!

March 1: Betrawati (605 m)

Today is a rest day, but how busy these days are! First we wash our clothes in the river, then it's on to washing ourselves: we use cold tap-water to wash our hair; and there's no shower but we're still nice and fresh); and then it's time to work on the day-by-day itinerary, blog and select pictures. As the days are quite long, on a normal day it is difficult enough to find the energy to write the blog and the day-by-day itinerary (the last one takes quite a lot of time each day). So it is good to have a rest day once in a while, to have time to select pictures as well, and to edit what I have written.

We were working on the veranda (where the crew slept the night before), and as always, got an audience once in a while.

Keshi, Elizabeth's porter, will go back to Kathmandu, as it is a bit too hard for him, especially as he also fell during one of the first days. Chauriron, his replacement, who is a bit younger, has arrived from Kathmandu.

In the late afternoon, we were suddenly called to a big hall, where a function was organised to honour Apa Sherpa. The people only came to know about his presence today, so this was very ad hoc. They managed to organise a nice programme, though, with cultural dances by the youth, and Apa was even given a certificate with a very personal text. This confirms what I have experienced before in Nepal: everything always happens at the last moment, which I hate, but everything is always possible at the last moment, which I love.

Manaslu & Ganesh Himad Section

March 2: Betrawati (605 m)-Chautara (1,591 m); 9 hours

Today was a very long day: we walked 28.5 km and climbed 2,460 m. The next press conference will be in Gorkha. However, the planned day is Holi (a big festival day, where people throw colours and water at each other). Therefore we decided to try to cover the distance in one day less—four instead of five days. This way, we can have the press conference the day before Holi, as otherwise most journalists will not come to the conference!

We left before 8 am and arrived at 7 pm, in the dark and quite exhausted. We had to climb all the way to 2,130 m, after which the trail went steeply down to the village of Gairagaon (1,692 m -1,611 m). As it was already 6 pm, we hoped we would camp here, but no, at the end of the village we found another arrow, placed there by the first ones in the group. So another hour to the next village! It was so good to finally arrive in the village of Chautara (1,591 m).

We are staying in the house of a local family. I am just imagining how it would be if somebody would ring my doorbell and ask: “Hello, I am with three tourists and three staff. Can we stay here for the night, eat here and use your kitchen, dining and sleeping rooms?” Because that is exactly how we got to stay here for the night! Paribesh told me that according to Nepali custom, you can’t refuse if anybody knocks on your door and asks for a place to sleep. But still, how weird it must be for them! I asked Kancha, and he said they never had guests before, except for relatives. But they turned out to be excellent hosts; very friendly! Our host was telling us about an old Tamang palace in the surroundings, which could be interesting for tourists. Unfortunately, I didn’t have time to check it out.

Chauriron, Elizabeth’s new porter, also took the long way before lunch. He arrived at the lunch place after we had already left. Right now, he seems lost, and he probably won’t make it to Chautara. So again Elizabeth’s stuff won’t arrive!

Tomorrow, it’s on to Arughat Bazar, another 30 km.

March 3: Chautara (1,591 m)-Arugath (490 m); 8 ½ hours

Chauriron arrived just after we had finished our breakfast. He told us he had slept somewhere in the forest, all by himself! The reason he was late was that he had a terrible headache during the day, which forced him to rest for a couple of hours. Fortunately, he was doing ok now. Today he stayed at the front all the time, with the first porters, probably because he wanted to show that what happened the day before was an exception!

Today was again a long day! The total distance we covered was indeed about 30 km, but there was not a lot of climbing involved; in fact, most of the day we were going down.

We are also on a new section: The Manaslu and Ganesh Himal Section (in fact, the last couple of km of yesterday are already on the map of this section). And as if to prove that we really were in this section, we had our first views of Manaslu (8,163 m) and Ganesh Himal Range (Ganesh Himal I: 7,422 m) today. Stunning!

We passed beautiful villages and walked through an idyllic countryside with bright green terraces. At the end of the day we arrived at Arugath. To our surprise, there was a resort here! Manaslu View Camping Resort. The rooms are set in a Disney-like garden, with lots of decorations, like a huge dragon, a gate with a Buddha on top and penguins. It is all a bit kitschy but nice. We have these bright posters in our room, with tulips, giraffes, deer and a waterfall in one poster and we even have a (stone!) deer head hanging on the wall. And our sheets are golden in colour! It all adds to the flavour. But the nicest thing of all is our attached bathroom with hot shower. It's as if we are in paradise! Why didn't we have our rest day here?

March 4: Arugath (490 m)-Kalikatang/Gorkha Palace (1,313 m); 7 hours

Today was an easy day. We “only” walked 26.33 km and climbed 1,595 m. It seems like we are getting stronger by the day, as this—which in my eyes still feels like quite a long distance—did feel like a relatively easy day! It was also mostly flat-walking; we only had to climb for the last two hours, so that made it easy as well.

On the way I was very surprised to see another white person! Since the Solukhumbu section, we hadn't met any tourists. I stopped to talk to

her. She turned out to be Dorte, from Denmark, and she was helping the village of Kuereni, among others, with building toilets (which almost nobody has) and educating their children. Besides, she mentioned the problem of girl trafficking in these kinds of small villages. Girls are being sent to Kathmandu on the pretext that they will get a cleaning job with a family, but they are forced to work as prostitutes. Very sad.... Nice lady, and it's admirable how she is trying to help. She was with a Nepali friend whom I am to meet when I'm back in Kathmandu. It will be interesting to find out more later.

We are now camping at the foot of the famous Gorkha Palace, which is also an important Hindu temple. This used to be the palace of Prithvi Narayan Shah, who unified Nepal in 1769. We visited the palace just before sunset. Its beautiful woodcarving is impressive.

March 5: Kalikatang/Gorkha Palace (1,313 m)-Gorkha (1,075 m); 1 hour

Today was just a stroll! We climbed back to the Gorkha Palace, looked around and chatted with the security guards, who of course wanted to pose with Apa Sherpa. From the palace, a long stairs led to the town of Gorkha. We arrived at around 11 am, and as usual, everybody promptly went about washing their clothes!

Everybody was quite tired from all these long walking days, so we spent the afternoon leisurely; relaxing, using the internet, selecting pictures, etc.

In the evening, we tried Nepali white wine. Mmmm, the vintners here could probably use a bit of training from some vineyard owner in France or Chile. But if you look at the climate around 1,000 m, Elizabeth and I see lots of potential! Tomorrow we are going to try the Nepali red wine ☺.

March 6: Gorkha (1,075 m)

We had an important guest today: the Minister of State came to open the new Tourist Information Centre. Besides, the joint Secretary of Tourism had come as well. So we had a big programme, with a welcome by members of the Gurung Community, a special lunch, walking in procession, with music, to the Tourist Information Centre and—of course—many speeches. I am sure there will be lots of coverage in the Nepali media, so this is all good promotion of the GHT!

March 7: Gorkha (1,075 m)-Appipal (1,140 m); 7 hours

Happy Holi! It is Holi today, the famous festival of colours, during which people throw water, coloured powder and coloured water at each other. In the big cities it is especially difficult to venture outside on the streets if you don't want to be covered in colours, both on your face and clothes. But here, we hardly noticed anything related to the festival! It was only while we were arriving in Appipal did we see some people with their clothes covered in red and orange colours, which meant that they had played Holi. I have to say, during the day it was so hot, that I was wishing somebody would throw a water balloon at me, but unfortunately this didn't happen ☺.

From Gorkha we went all the way down to the Daraudi Khola (400 m). We waded across the river, which was not easy as it was quite a big river, but it was very refreshing. After crossing the river, of course we had to climb up again. And it was so hot! We passed charming villages and had lunch in one of them, Khoplang. Great daal bhaat with roasted soy beans, which taste a bit like pine pits—very tasty.

Almost all through the rest of the day we climbed till we arrived at the village of Appipal (1,140 m). This is not exactly on the spot shown in the GHT map; in fact, it is quite a bit to the north. But up till now, there is no such thing as one official trail. Quite a few times already we have decided to take a trail other than the one pointed out on the map, mostly because the said trail had been turned into a road. Sometimes it is not a problem to walk on the road, and sometimes, especially in Helambu, it is also hard to avoid doing so. It is good to see that more and more villages are connected by roads, as this is good for their economic development. But if we can avoid walking on them, we do, as of course it is a lot nicer to walk on small trails. Today we mostly walked on small trails, through terraces and forests, and passing charming villages. A beautiful walk indeed!

March 8: Appipal (1,140 m)-Paudi (520 m); 6 hours

The day started with an excellent view of the Manaslu Range: Manaslu (8,163 m) at the left, and next to Manaslu, Himal Chuli (7,893 m) and Baudha Himal (6,672 m). Far below us, we saw the Chepe Khola. Beautiful!

It was another hot day. As this part of the trek is mostly below 1,000 m, it is quite hot during most of the day in this season. But apart from that,

it was quite easy-walking. And for a change, we finished before 5 pm.

Today is International Women's Day. This week is full of festivals ☺. We met a group of women who had organised a picnic for old ladies staying in an ashram. They were very pleased to meet Apa Sherpa and the rest of us, and we all got a beautiful orange scarf as a blessing. They started to sing and dance, and of course Elizabeth and I had to join in. Afterwards, many Sherpas complimented me on my dancing, even as I was afraid of looking like a fool, dancing in my trekking boots ☺.

During the walk, I was talking to Saurav, who is International Climate Champion of the British Council, about the experiences of the people he interviewed along the way, about how these could be related to climate change (could be, as this still has to be verified by scientific research). He had told me earlier about the effects people were noticing in the east of Nepal on their tea and cardamom production. Today, he told me about the effects on potatoes: first of all, some people have seen the production going down. Besides, most people store the potatoes underground during winter, and some people have been complaining that when they dig up the potatoes, many are damaged. Another interesting story is about the access to water. Villages have access to water via water pipes, which are connected to a water source. Quite a few people have told him that they have had to extend the pipes a couple of times already as the water source close to the village had dried up and they have to find another. Also some people talked about droughts in general, and more extreme weather. The storm we had on our way to Lukla was an example. Higher up, in Namche Bazaar, it was so bad that many trees had fallen down, and some people said they had never experienced such a severe storm before. It's quite interesting to hear this all and definitely worth investigating further.

March 9: Paudi (520 m)-Besisahar (810 m); 7 hours

Today is the last day for most of the crew. A few of them will stay till Darchula, but most will go back to Kathmandu tomorrow, as they have assignments in the Everest region. Some of them will be climbing Everest later this year. At least they are in shape, you would say.

Some had quite an adventurous last day indeed. Elizabeth and I are usually the last in the group, and most of the time, Kancha stays close to us. Once, when we had fallen behind, we saw an arrow going left, put up by the first ones in the group. Right at that spot, we met one of

the women of the group we had met yesterday and with whom I had danced. She told us that if we took the trail to the left, we would have to wade across the river (Dordi Khola), and if we just followed the road, it would be a bit longer, but we could cross the river over a suspension bridge. The river was not so deep, though, she said. Even though it had been nice and refreshing to wade across the river the other day, a suspension bridge is a lot easier. So we disregarded the arrow and continued straight. When we met the others later, we learned we had made the right decision. The crossing was indeed very difficult. They had been in the water up to their waist, and some had damaged their mobile phones, as they had forgotten to take them out of their pockets. What a shame. And how happy I am with that lady.

We walked quite a long distance today, about 24 km, so I was a bit tired after the walk. But it was a busy evening. First, I worked on the itinerary and the blog; and after dinner, we had a farewell party for the crew who are leaving and a welcome party for the new crew. It was a nice “change-party” ☺.

Annapurna Section

March 10: Besisahar (810 m)-Ghalegaun (2,078 m); 6 hours

This was a beautiful day. We climbed up to a pass at 1,600 m, and from there onwards we had amazing views of the Himalaya, which were suddenly very close. I haven't seen them so close walking on the GHT yet. Most of the walk went over small trails through forests, passing charming villages like Rapasingh and Khapurgaon. We arrived relatively early, at about 3:30 pm, in Ghalegaun. Ghalegaun is a very beautiful Gurung village. There is no hotel here, but they have established a homestay programme, in which 32 houses participate. The homestays are very nice, mostly in a small separate house, which is nicely decorated and with beds with quite good mattresses, soft pillows and clean sheets. It is a model tourist village, as they call it, and probably because of that it is also surprisingly clean. No waste lingering around, like you see so many times. Besides all of this, Ghalegaun offers beautiful views of the Himalaya. You can see a large part of the range: in the far-west, Machapuchhre, Annapurna II, and further to the east, Lamjung Himal, Namuna Pass, Manaslu, Himal Chuli, Nadi Chuli (also called Doctor Harko Himal) and Buddha Himal. We went up a small hill to enjoy the view and the sunset. Simply stunning.

March 11: Ghalegaun (2,078 m)-Pasgaun (1,650 m); 6 hours

Another day with beautiful mountain views and nice Gurung villages.

The day started with an easy walk through the forest on a dirt road. After half an hour, the road turned into a trail, which I was glad about. But they were working on it, which on the one hand seemed a shame, but on the other hand, is good for the villages. We saw an old sick lady, being carried on the back of a young man. At present, that is how you have to be taken to the clinic if you are ill.

On the way, we had a beautiful view over a “sea of hills”: green hills stretching out in front of us like waves of a sea. We had lunch in Bhu-jung (1,641 m), another Gurung village, and part of the homestay trek we are currently walking on. They were giving a cooking training for the homestay owners (all women), so that they can make a bit more than daal bhaat.

In the afternoon we had to climb a pass at 2,082 m. From the pass we had an amazing view of the Himalaya, including views of the Manaslu, Himal Chuli and Nadi Chuli.

We are staying in the Gurung village of Pasgaun, which is included in the homestay trek. The lady who runs it is very friendly, but to be honest, our room is a bit dirty. They can use some training here.

There is a nice Buddhist monastery in Pasgaun: Karma Thugje Chhy-oling Buddha Gompa.

March 12: Pasgaun (1,650 m)-Yangjakot (1,450 m); 9 hours

Today and tomorrow we will be walking a different route than the one indicated on the GHT trail of Himalaya Maphouse. On that route, there are no villages along the way, so that trek is only possible with a fully organised camping trek. And although we do carry tents, we are not a fully organised camping trek, as we don't carry cooking stoves, etc. So for those who want to stay and eat in a guesthouse, our route is a good alternative. It is possible to get to Siklis in two days. The first is a long day, however, with a total distance of over 22 km and a total ascent of 2,339 m. A good old-fashioned GHT Low Route trekking day. If you have enough time, I can thoroughly recommend to break up this day's itinerary and stay overnight in the charming Gurung village of Bhachok.

This was a day with many rivers to cross, meaning we'd have many

climbs and descents. Along the way, we passed many Gurung villages. We started with a steep descent towards the Rudi Khola, which we could already see far below us. Again, we had a beautiful view over a “sea of green hills”, stretching out in front of us one after another. After crossing a bridge (822 m), we climbed up to the Gurung village of Nagighar (1,232 m), where we had tasty daal bhaat.

From Nagighar, we went down to the river again (964 m) and then up to the two Gurung villages of Bhachok (1,314 m) and Warchok (1,363 m). And again we went down, through a beautiful tropical forest, to another river, the Bhujung Khola (1,029 m). After the crossing, you have to climb, so we climbed again, this time to the Gurung village of Yangjakot (1,450 m), where we arrived just before 7 pm. It has been a long day indeed.

Meanwhile my legs are full of bug bites. And they itch terribly. But I have to refrain from scratching, as these bites create a small scab. If I scratch them open, they might get infected. There is nothing I want to do more than scratch them! But here is a tip: if you have itchy legs full of bug bites, tiger balm helps ☺.

March 13: Yangjakot (1,450 m)-Sikles (1,945 m); 6 hours

After a lovely Western-style breakfast with pancakes, cornflakes and muesli, we set off for Sikles. Again, we had another river to cross first, so we went down to the Madi Nadi (870 m). Shortly after, we arrived at the ACAP check post, where Elizabeth and I had to show our ACAP (Annapurna Conservation Area Project) permits (and strangely enough, fill in new application forms—maybe because we had already entered and exited ACAP before?). It was interesting to get some information about tourist arrivals here. Although Sikles is a well-known trekking destination, it is still off the beaten trek and gets only about 700 tourists a year (ACAP gets over 80,000 in total). Most of them are British (366 in 2011). I would have expected to meet some today, but I haven’t so far.

We followed the Madi Nadi upstream, all the way up to Sikles, with a steep climb of about 900m, after lunch. Sikles (1,945 m) is a beautiful Gurung village, and one of the biggest, with a population of about 2,500. From Sikles, you have a beautiful view of Lamjung Himal (6,983 m) and Annapurna II (7,937 m).

We got a very warm welcome by some Gurung ladies, who welcomed us with garlands and tikas (blessings) on our forehead, made from curd and rice and red vermilion powder. That is a nice aspect of the Gurung culture; everywhere we go, we get blessings on arrival or upon leaving,

from the owners of the place where we stay. Today, we had an even bigger welcome from a group of local women.

We were just in time getting to the lodge, as shortly after our arrival it started to rain heavily. On the hills around us, it even snowed. The temperature dropped considerably as well. I'm typing under my sleeping bag, with stiff, cold fingers: it's a bit difficult to type!

March 14: Sikles (1,945 m)- Ghalekharka (1,674 m); 6 hours

Today, we woke up to a sunny day and a beautiful view of Lamjung Himal and the white hills around us. After a noodle-soup breakfast, Elizabeth and I started the day with a visit to the doctor. She is still suffering from many blisters. In Gorkha, a nurse had pinched them, and the one on her little toe got infected. He had cut some skin off (ouch!) and disinfected and taped them. He also gave her antibiotics. Total fee: Rs 450, or 4,50 euro. He had told her not to walk in shoes, but that is a bit difficult when you are trekking.

Today was one of the most beautiful days so far. We walked all the way through beautiful forests, mostly rhododendron forests, which are in full bloom at the moment. Beautiful pink and red flowers. The rhododendron trees are huge here, and fully covered with moss, which give the forest a fairytale look. You would expect a hobbit to appear any moment.

As there were no villages along the way, we carried along a lunch pack this time. Eating out of lunch packs is quite time saving, as normally the lunch break takes about two hours. It's also nice for a change to have eggs and roti instead of daal bhaat twice a day.

We started walking at 8:30, and till 1:30 we hadn't met anybody. Suddenly we heard some women's voices, and we saw three women from Ghalekharka, who had spread out on the ground some Mars, Kitkats, Toblerones and soft drinks: a small shop in the middle of nature! This was at 2,650 m, and Ghalekharka is at 1,674 m. It took us two hours to get from their little shop to Ghalekharka. They told us that it had been days since any tourist had passed by. So then they had been there, waiting all day long in the cold, with no business at all. All this to earn a few extra rupees. Life is not easy for the average Nepali. We bought some snacks, and they told us that the group who had passed by before had bought some things as well. So they had a good day!

After the shop, we went steeply down on stone stairs to Ghalekharka. We are staying in the only hotel in town, Samjhana Cottage. They are doing a nice job here, with local-style clean rooms, a cozy dining and a small shop.

It is raining again; we heard it was also raining in Kathmandu. It seems to be a bit early for a pre-monsoon shower. Luckily again, the rain only started when we had already arrived.

March 15: Ghalekharka (1,674 m)- Lwang (1,440 m); 5 hours

Although Ghalekharka is a Tamang village, we got the same official goodbye as in the Gurung villages we had stayed in earlier. This time, we even got a speech, after which we were all blessed with tikas and garlands made of rhododendron. Our dog, Setuk, was not forgotten and got a nice red tika and a garland as well.

Again we are diverting a bit from the GHT indicated on the map. As mentioned before, there is not yet one official GHT (lower) route, so we don't see it as a problem to create our own route now and then. From Lahachok, we went northwards, and where the GHT on the map went to the west, we continued going north, up till Lwang, close to Khoramukh (also called Ghalel). From here, we will go to Landruk and Ghandruk tomorrow and then continue to Ghorepani next day. We think this is a more interesting route than the route indicated on the map, as both Landruk and Ghandruk are very nice villages.

It was easy-walking most of the day, through fields and because we were passing several small towns, we could restock our snacks. During our lunch in Lahachok, the sky was getting dangerously grey. It looked like this time the rain would be coming down during walking hours. And so it did, quite heavily too. We even had hail. Even though I wore a raincoat, raintrousers *and* a poncho, my clothes were quite wet when we arrived. I don't know if that is all from sweat, or if the rain went through both layers.

The walk ended with a climb through a forest to the Gurung village of Lwang. Lwang is a very nice village, with a beautiful view over the Mardi Khola. We are staying in homestays again, so the whole group is spread out over the village. Our homestay is quite nice: we have a separate small home, next to the buffalo shed, with a small vegetable field in front of us. And with a great view over the Mardi Khola.

March 16: Lwang (1,440 m)-Ghandruk (2,040 m); 7 hours

This was a day of contrasts. We woke up in the small village of Lwang, with a beautiful sunny morning sun, which was already a contrast to the rain and hail of the day before.

I was surprised to see Machhapuchhre (Fishtail; 6,997 m) rising up behind the village. This makes Lwang even more beautiful. After having a nice breakfast of pancakes with omelet in the courtyard of our hosts, we set off—of course not without being blessed with red vermillion powder and a beautiful garland made of flowers from the forest.

The walk went through the jungle, on a trail that is not often used, and the jungle was sometimes closing in a bit. We passed two viewpoints that offered amazing views of the Annapurna Range. You can see Annapurna South (7,219 m), Annapurna I (8,091 m), Hiunchuli (6,441 m), Machhapuchhre (Fishtail; 6,997 m), Annapurna IV (7,525 m), Annapurna II (7,937 m) and Lamjung Himal (6,983 m), all from quite close. The only reason this trail is not popular is because it is not known. That's for sure. I hope that our walk and the media attention it gets will start to change this.

Along the way, we met a few villagers who warned us about bears. They said that it was better to not walk alone, and to make some noise, by for example, singing aloud. Hmm...I just walked alone quite a big part of the closed jungle trail. Anyway, I don't think the chance is very high that we will meet a bear; but of course, one can never know. So we decided to stay together a bit. We didn't sing, though!

After a couple of hours, we arrived in Pitam Deurali (2,106 m) and there we suddenly arrived on the tourist trail. Talk about contrasts! For the last couple of weeks—in fact, during the whole GHT—I have hardly met any tourists. And suddenly there are so many. And suddenly there are lodges about every 15 minutes, well stocked with snacks, cold drinks and all kinds of things a trekker might need.

It was still rather quiet, though, and we had a beautiful walk through the forest, with Annapurna South and Hiunchuli almost constantly in sight.

After a very steep descent to the Mardi Khola (1,320 m) we had an even steeper climb to Ghandruk (1,874-2,050 m). We are staying in a

very nice guesthouse and we enjoyed apple fritter, pizza, spring rolls, momos and French fries. And that is the last contrast: all the choice of food after all these months of daal bhaat twice a day!

March 17: Ghandruk (2,040 m)-Ghorepani (2,885 m); 6 ½ hours

We started the day with a beautiful sunrise over the Annapurnas. Unfortunately, clouds were coming in quickly, which meant that it could rain or hail later during the day.

At the beginning of the day, something quite tragic happened. We lost our dog Setuk! She had found a boyfriend, a huge dog, and both had been playing together all evening and morning already. And she just decided to stay. We had all become quite attached to her, so it's really a shame she is not with us anymore. But hopefully, she is happy in love. Maybe I have to come back to Ghandruk to get myself a small Setuk after the trek ☺.

The walk was beautiful, going through rhododendron forests most of the day. Many of the trees were in full bloom, with bright pink flowers. A beautiful sight!

As we were walking, I suddenly got an idea: since we were on the tourist trail, why should I have to eat daal bhaat twice a day. Egg and veggie noodles: that is what I wanted! That sounded good to Elizabeth and Shailee as well. But our crew was already ahead and there was no telephone connection. So I decided to run up to tell them about our new idea. I was really on a mission, racing up the mountain to get a hold of our crew. And I managed to get a hold of them! And the food tasted great ☺. But I have to say, in the afternoon, both Elizabeth and I couldn't stop yawning, so it seems we did miss our energising daal bhaat!

There was lots of snow from about 2,600 m onwards. I have been here many times, also around this time, as I used to be a tour leader and I guided the Annapurna Base Camp trek many times. But never did we have snow before on this part and at this altitude. Climate change in reverse!

As we had already suspected in the morning, it rained and hailed all afternoon, and we were walking in the fog. Really a shame, as we were

passing Gurung Hill, from which you have a stunning view of the Annapurnas and Dhaulagiri I, in good weather. But what to do?

In the evening, we celebrated Paribesh's birthday; he turned 30 today. Our cook, Raj Kumar, made a delicious birthday cake and the "core team" joined us to celebrate. We couldn't party too long however, as tomorrow's wake up time is 5 am, to see the sunrise from Poon Hill.

March 18: Ghorepani (2,885 m)-Poon Hill (3,193 m)-Tikot (2,278 m) 1 ½ + 3 hours

Watching the sunrise over the Annapurna and Dhaulagiri ranges from Poon Hill (3,193 m) is *the* attraction of Ghorepani. In season time, each early morning around 5 am, hundreds of trekkers walk up the hill to admire the eight-, seven- and six-thousanders and the first rays of the sun shining on them.

So we went to watch the sunrise as well, with good hope that the weather had cleared up, as we could see stars. However, already when we were going up, it became clear that it was still quite clouded. A bit of a shame, but fortunately, the sky opened up a bit sometimes, providing dramatic images as well.

Back in the lodge we had the best banana pancakes on the whole GHT. I can tell now already that they won't get better than this. That is the advantage of being on the tourist trail ☺.

At about 9 am we left for... yes, for what? That was not quite clear yet. We have to arrive in Beni tomorrow, but according to the locals, the trail to Beni marked on the map doesn't exist. There is another trail, but you have to know the way. Fortunately Asian Treks has good relations with one of the lodge owners who knows the way, and he offered to join us to show us the way.

We went down northwards and entered a rhododendron forest. It was a beautiful walk over small trails through the forest. Many rhododendrons were blooming: so many flowers, both pink and dark red; absolutely stunning. We even saw a few orchids. There were also many small bushes with small white or pink flowers. This is the *loktha* plant, from whose branches Nepali paper is made. We passed a few open fields, which in good weather would have provided excellent views of the Annapurna and Dhaulagiri ranges, but unfortunately today, the mountains were hiding behind the clouds.

Once in a while, we saw a signpost for Tikot (2,278 m), our first destination. We arrived around 12, and we were received with beautiful flower garlands. And in the end, the villagers convinced us to stay. It is only four hours from here to Beni, and Beni and the surrounding places are not very attractive places. And here we were in a beautiful village, with, when the weather is clear, a great view of the Dhaulagiri and Annapurna ranges. So why wouldn't we stay?

Tikot (2,278 m) is a very charming village, inhabited by Magar people, who practice a Hinduism mixed with animism. All special features in nature (such as the spring of a river) are holy to them, and you will often see a small temple around these natural landmarks.

Tikot has a homestay programme as well (nine houses, 20 beds), so we are all spread out over the village. The homestays are very good, with nice rooms with good mattresses, clean bed linen, and clean toilets (and even toilet paper in the toilets!). This time, we don't eat in the house of the host family, but all together, in the hostel of the village school. The proceeds from the food go to the women's group and the school, and the room charge to the family. Nice arrangement.

The homestay programme is part of a 5-8 day itinerary where you stay in homestays and community lodges. You can find more information at www.himanchal.org or send a mail to contact@himanchal.org or Pradeeb Pun, the coordinator of the programme in Tikot, pun-bradeeb71@yahoo.com.

Around 5 pm, Tarcha knocked on our door: the villagers had organised a cultural programme with songs and dances. It's nice how they can organise these events at such short notice, as we were not intending to stay here. It was a nice programme, with the ladies dancing quite beautifully. They ended with a marooni dance, where men are dressed up as women, which I wouldn't have noticed, if it were not for their sneakers. In the evening, in bed, we still heard them singing. It seems like they continued ☺.

March 19: Tikot (2,278 m)-Beni (850 m); 4 hours

We woke up to an amazing view and sunrise over the Annapurna and Dhaulagiri ranges. From our bedroom window! Why climb all the way to Poon Hill when you can see it from your bed ☺?

Today we had to go down, down, down....and down. There is a dirt

road going to Tikot, but fortunately the old trail hadn't been built into a road (it was probably too steep), so the trail was still there. After two hours of walking down steps, we reached the Kali Gandaki River. From here, it was another two hours of almost flat-walking on the dirt road, following the Kali Gandaki. Kali means black, and the river is black indeed, or at least dark brown. A special sight. Kali Gandaki is a first-class river for rafting and kayaking, but it's for the courageous, as the rapids are quite difficult.

In Beni, we are staying in a nice comfortable hotel, with attached bathroom and hot shower. What a luxury! The restaurant of the hotel is, however, not so well organised: when we ordered milk tea, we got two glasses of hot milk; when we ordered a small pot of masala (spiced) milk tea, we got a small pot of hot milk with spices; they brought the banana pancake, which we had ordered as a dessert, together with the main dish, etc. Quite hilarious!

At 5 pm there was a function with, again, an important guest: the Minister of Environment. Let's hope that all the interest we get during this trail will be converted into concrete action to help develop and promote the trail.

March 20: Beni (850 m)

Today, we are staying in Beni for a day. It means that there's finally time to do all the things that I don't have time for on a regular walking day: for example, selecting pictures to upload to Flickr. Fortunately, the hotel has good internet access, so I can upload the pictures using wireless; with the internet mobile device I have, it would probably take six hours (and be expensive). Not that it is *that* quick here; after an hour I am at 32 percent. So it still takes three hours in total....

One and a half hours later: 48 percent ☺....

In the end, it took me up till 12:30 am! I had to downsize half of the pictures, as the big ones were rejected time and again. So after all the effort, I hope you'll take a look ☺

www.flickr.com/photos/lindaonght/sets

Dhorpatan Trek-Beni to Dunai

March 21: Beni (850 m)-Darbang (1,105 m); 6 ½ hours

Strangely enough, there is no GHT map of this stretch available (yet), so we are referring to the Dhaulagiri Circuit map. After a couple of days, there will even be a small section of which there is no map available at all. So we are completely depending on information given by the local people.

Honestly speaking, today was not exactly one of the most interesting days. We were walking on a dirt road all day long, following the Myagdi Khola. Besides it was an amazingly hot day. I like the heat, but this was a bit too much, even for me!

If you want to walk this stretch of the GHT or if you are a trekking company wanting to offer it, you could consider driving to Darbang, as the road is quite good (except during the monsoon) and start walking from there. Or you can start walking in Babiyaachaur (981 m). This is the place where we lost the rest of the group. At a junction in Babiyaachaur, the group had gone left and we had gone right. The crew said they had placed an arrow, although we hadn't seen any. This meant that they had taken a nice and scenic (and shady) route on the other side of the Myagdi Khola, and we were walking on the hot and boring dirt road. Anyway, starting the trek in Babiyaachaur is a good option as well.

At 5 pm we arrived in Darbang, a rather big bazaar town. At 6 pm, I was just about to freshen myself up and start my work, when we had an unexpected, but interesting, interaction programme with the Darbang unit of the Myagdi Chamber of Commerce. It is good to see the interest in the different destinations in the Great Himalaya Trail Development Programme. At present, we are working in five districts only (Taplejung, Solokhumbu, Gorkha, Dolpa and Humla). Hopefully the GHT Development Programme will be extended, so we will be able to facilitate tourism development in other districts as well.

The programme's taking place meant that I could only start my work after dinner. I was literally falling asleep while typing! I didn't know that that was possible ☺.

March 22: Darbang (1,105 m)-Lamsung (2,160 m); 8 hours

Today was a very beautiful trekking day. We walked on scenic trails with beautiful views of Dhaulagiri (8,167 m) and Gurja Himal (7,193 m) and passed charming villages. There was quite a lot of climbing involved; altogether, we climbed 1,850 m, but this was spread out over the day. It is quite surprising how quickly the whole environment has changed. Yesterday, we left the busy, developed hot town of Beni, and today we are already walking deep in the mountains, passing isolated mountain villages.

The local people are very friendly and open, and I practiced my Nepali a lot today, making small talk. My Nepali is slowly getting better! When we arrived in Takam, our lunch place, we saw to our surprise that another function had been organised to welcome our group. It had been announced on the radio that we were coming. After the speeches and blessings with *lots* of red vermillion powder, there was even music and dance. Of course I had to dance as well!

At 4 pm we were arriving in Muna, which was the place where we would stay for the night; I was happy to arrive a bit early today. However, in Muna we heard from one of our porters that we were not staying here, but in Lamsung, two-and-a-half hours ahead. Another two-and-a-half hours. So long! And who knows, may be even more... But ke garne (what to do)? And when we were walking again (after a cup of tea), it was fine as well.

All day long, we were passing the same group of people: a boy with a bucket full of chicken (which he was going to sell in Lamsung) with his father, and three ladies, a young man and a couple of small children. It turned out that the young man had gone to Darbang to arrange his papers for working in Dubai. He is going to work there in a hotel for 200 euro per month. Normally, they have to pay quite a lot of commission to an agency that arranges the work permit, the job, etc. All that for 200 euro per month! But they don't see any other opportunities. They had also walked all the way from Darbang today, with five small children, so why should I complain about the distance?

March 23: Lamsung (2,160 m)-Chhentung(2,950 m) via Jalja La (3,386 m); 8 hours

Today was a beautiful day, with spectacular views from the Jalja La of the Dhaulagiri and Annapurna ranges, which in my opinion are even

better than the views from Poon Hill. As there are hardly any settlements along the way (only close to Lamsung and close to Chhentung), we had to take a lunch pack. And we got a double breakfast: porridge and pancake with omelet. Amazingly I could eat it all!

The day started with a four-hour climb to the Jalja La. The climb goes almost entirely through a rhododendron forest, offering views of the Himalaya along the way. As just mentioned, the views from the pass were amazing. You can see a whole range of mountains, and especially Dhaulagiri (8,167 m) and Gurja Himal (7,193 m) are very close.

On the way up, we were accompanied by Raju Thapa and Tila Ram, who especially accompanied us to tell us the names of all the mountains we could see (17 altogether). They organise trekkings in the Dhaulagiri and Dolpa area and can only be contacted by phone: 9746703557.

We were very lucky to have the views, as the sky was crystal clear during the whole time we were there (and we stayed up till 1:30 pm). It was difficult to leave, as I really enjoy just looking at these enormous mountains.

But the trail down was beautiful as well, going through a pine forest. Unfortunately, a huge area had been caught in a forest fire, so we had to walk for almost an hour through a kind of dead forest. This was a special experience as well, and we enjoyed the green forest afterwards even more.

Just before Chhentung, our destination, we passed the small village of Kaldegothe (2,940 m). It was really striking to see how poor the people of this village were. A few small children in dirty clothes asked Elizabeth and me if we wanted to take a picture of them. Of course we showed the picture afterwards and they were completely happy. But then suddenly I saw the feet of the girl. She had wounds on them, which were surrounded by very dirty skin. Besides, we saw a few children with eye infections. There is no doctor or clinic around here and they seem to be so much needed.

March 24: Chhentung(2,950 m)-Thakur (3,309) via 2 passes (3,691 m and 4,160 m); 9 ½ hours

The stretch from Chhentung to Thakur was quite exhausting. First of all because we had two passes to cross, and second of all because we got completely lost.

The villagers in Chhentung told us that we could take a shortcut to Thakur, bypassing the village of Dhorpatan. The way was difficult to find sometimes, and therefore somebody from Chhentung was to accompany us. However, that man was already 67 and it was a bit difficult for him to keep pace with us. Therefore, after crossing the first pass (3,691 m) and after having received explanations about the way to go, our sirdar (head guide) paid him and he went back home. Ironically enough, just after this, we (Elizabeth and I and a few crew members) got a bit lost. We followed footsteps in the snow, which went through a rhododendron forest. We went up and up, higher than the pass itself and the trail was getting more and more difficult with ankle-deep snow. When we got out of the forest, we saw that we should have taken the trail going down! So we went down again, and ate our packed lunch in a beautiful field, surrounded by snowcapped mountains. But once there, we found out that we had to cross another pass, so we had to climb again. It was a tough climb, and a few times I thought I was there only to find out that the trail was climbing up further. But the view and landscape when we finally arrived at the pass were beautiful. We were in a no-man's-land, and there was quite a lot of snow around us.

But the descent took forever! And we didn't know when we would arrive in Thakur. Our crew started to almost run, telling us to walk fast, as we needed to hurry as it was getting late. By around 5 pm, we were walking in a rhododendron forest again. I had a *déjà vu* moment of our walk just before lunch. Where we were walking didn't look like a trail anymore. Just after I was thinking this, we saw Madhab, the sirdar, communicating over the radio with Dawa Steven and Apa Sherpa, who were ahead of us. They had already discovered that this trail was leading nowhere, and we had to climb up the steep slope through the snow, which at times came up till our knees, as there would be a trail up on the slope. At 6:15 pm we arrived on higher ground, and fortunately there was a good trail indeed, as indicated by Dawa Steven. I was quite relieved! But also tired. And still we didn't know exactly how far it would be to Thakur, our destination. So there was nothing else to do but to get our headlamps out and start walking again. Soon we were walking in the dark, which wasn't very easy, as we were descending on a slippery trail, made muddy by the melting snow. At 7:30 pm we arrived at a house that was completely deserted. Madhab was in radio contact with Apa Sherpa, who had passed the house 45 minutes ago and still hadn't seen any signs of a village. We (Paribesh, Elizabeth, I and 10 crew members) discussed what we should do: stay in the house (that strangely enough, but fortunately, was not locked) or continue

on. We decided to stay, a decision with which I was very happy! There were even two sleeping rooms in the house! As we didn't have a cooking stove and utensils, and we didn't want to use theirs, our dinner consisted of Mars and Snickers bars and digestive biscuits, and a bit of water, all together around the fire (and that after having crossed two passes!). After this, we crashed and went to sleep. So I am writing this the day after, as I was completely exhausted the day before!

March 25: Thakur (3,309 m)-Guibang (2,768 m); 7 hours

At 7 am we left with a breakfast of a Mars bar, hoping it would be at most two hours to Thakur, where we would have a good breakfast. We had lost contact with Dawa Steven and Apa Sherpa yesterday, so we didn't know when the rest of the team had arrived in Thakur. The walk was beautiful, through forests with pine and oak trees, but we were definitely longing for a good meal.

After about an hour we saw an extinguished fire. So the team had probably camped here. After another half an hour, we passed a small village, and we asked where Thakur was. It appeared that the house where we had passed the night actually was Thakur! There were a few more houses there as well, as we found out in the morning. How funny; when we were discussing yesterday to stay or continue to our planned destination, we had already arrived there! It turned out that Thakur is only inhabited in season time, more or less from April onwards. It would be another two hours to the next village, Khaimdada (3,136 m), which had a small restaurant, so we had two more hours to go before we could have a decent meal.

At about 11:30 am we arrived at Khaimdada, tired and hungry after not having had a proper lunch, dinner and breakfast. Needless to say, the daal bhaat here tasted delicious!

We continued on our way re-energised. Along the way, we passed some hot springs (tatopani), which were too hot and too dirty to really sit in, but we could use its water flow to at least freshen up a little. Right after this, we had a steep climb in the heat, so the fresh feeling didn't last long.

At about 4:30 pm, we arrived in the small village of Guibang (2,768 m), where we set up our tents. We are in Rukum District now, which is one of the poorest districts in Nepal. Although I have trekked a lot in Dolpa and Humla, which are also quite poor, I am quite shocked with

the level of poverty here. The people really *look* poor because of their old and dirty clothes. You don't see the presence of any NGOs here, like you see in Dolpa and Humla. The villages are all very isolated and they don't have any medical facilities. There are some schools, fortunately, but medical service is completely lacking.

The lady of the house where we are eating told us that some tourists do come here. They should, for if you ask me, this is one of the most interesting parts of the trek. Beautiful forests, great views of snow-capped mountains, isolated villages, friendly people—they make it all to a unique experience. For now, fully organised trekking is recommended, as there are stretches with no villages or—as we experienced yesterday—mostly deserted villages.

March 26: Guibang (2,768 m)-Campsite Sen Khola (3,996 m); 7 hours

Today we really went into no-man's-land. We first climbed up for about one-and-a-half hours to the small village of Dule, also called Dule Bazaar, as this village has a few guesthouses and shops. In fact, almost all the houses here (about six) are used as a guesthouse or as a shop. They get few foreign tourists, but they mostly benefit from the yarsagumba season. The yarsagumba is a strange combination of a caterpillar and a fungus, and it is said to have many enhancing properties on your performance. Most are exported to China. In May, thousands of people go looking for these yarsagumbas, both here and in Dolpa. Nowadays, collectors have to pay Rs 1,000 (10 euro) a person for a ticket, so that the local villages also benefit from it. The current price that the yarsagumba collector gets is Rs 300 (3 euro) per piece.

We are on our way to Dolpa, where our first destination is Dunai, the headquarters. To get into Dolpa we have to cross a high pass, the Jang La (4,535 m). Between Dule and Dunai there is nothing, not even a village or settlement. So we have bought extra food and wood and hired cooking utensils and three extra porters to carry this all.

After Dule the landscape quickly changed. We were at first walking in forests, but this soon changed into high-altitude landscape: grass, big rocks and snow. We climbed to a small pass (3,931 m), went down a bit over slippery snow and then climbed up again, following the Sen Khola, walking in a beautiful, completely deserted landscape.

We arrived at the campsite a little after 6 pm. It was great camping in

the snow, as it has been snowing since mid-afternoon. But in a way, this is a bit of a shame, as we are already expecting lots of snow on the pass anyway. I hope it won't be too difficult walking on the snow. Snow is especially tricky when going down; we experienced that today as well. But we'll see.

It's nice to see how the crew is improvising. They found an overhanging rock to make a fire to cook, and we are using a soup bowl for everything: tea, juice and food. Elizabeth and I are working; the guys are playing cards. Quite typical ;).

March 27: Campsite Sen Khola (3,996 m)-Campsite Purpang, Saure Khola (4,065 m); 5 hours

We left quite late, at 9:30 am, because we needed the tents to get dry, and it wouldn't be so cold anymore. That meant sleeping in, which was nice, as I hadn't slept very well. The last couple of nights, my knees hurt like hell and this has been keeping me awake. Fortunately, they don't hurt during the day!

It was quite funny how every few minutes, a crewmember came to our tent in the morning: bringing morning coffee, collecting the bowl, asking for our bottle to fill it up with hot water, bringing back the bottle filled with hot water, bringing breakfast, collecting the bowl after breakfast, bringing a Mars bar, bringing a lunch packet. Room service, everything delivered at the door ☺.

Today was a great hike through high-altitude landscapes. It was quite difficult as well, because of the altitude, but I really enjoyed the spectacular scenery with vivid snowcapped mountains around me. We climbed up till about 4,500 m, which meant walking almost in slow-motion during the steep parts as the high altitude means that you get out of breath and makes your heart race if you go up too quickly. An altitude of 4,500 m is almost the same altitude as the pass we are crossing tomorrow, but we had to go down again. We descended through the snow for about half of the time, which was at times fun and at times quite difficult. Especially when going down and later during the day, when the snow started to melt, our feet sometimes sank in knee-deep.

It was a relatively short day, at least for this GHT trek, as we only walked for five hours and we were in camp before 3 pm. How relaxing! And for walking at this altitude, it was also enough. Tomorrow we'll have to cross the pass and go down more than 2,000 m to Dunai, so a nice rest is also needed!

March 28: Campsite Purpang, Saure Khola (4,065 m)-Dunai (2,096 m) via Jang La (4,519 m); 9 ½ hours

This may have been the most tiring day of all the 53 days I have walked so far. We walked almost 24 km, crossed two passes and went down 2,500 m! We had to climb to a pass at first at 4,346 m, after which we went down to 4,294 m, which is a bit frustrating. After a short snack-break, we started the steep climb to Jang La, which was at 4519 m. I arrived alone, behind most of the group and ahead of Elizabeth. But of course I wanted a picture of myself, which meant 10 minutes waiting in the freezing cold and strong wind for someone to arrive and take my picture. But I have my picture 😊.

Crossing the pass, we were entering Dolpa, as the pass is the border between Rukum and Dolpa districts.

The hardest part was still to come: the long, long descent to Dunai. There was quite a lot of snow, and sometimes we walked knee-deep. It was the trick trying to pass the snow-fields without sinking into the snow by almost running over them, and the later it got (and the stronger the sun), the more difficult it became.

It was nice to see a forest again after a couple of days in the barren mountains. However, especially in the forest, the trail was sometimes hard to find because of the snow, and in fact we did lose the trail a couple of times. Fortunately, our crewmembers were adept at finding it back again.

In one place, the trail became incredibly steep with lots of loose stones (gravel), and I think I felt three times. It could also have been because I was becoming quite exhausted by that whole descent. Finally, finally at 7:15 pm we arrived in Dunai. It was great to find out we were staying an extra day here! That meant rest for our poor knees.

We are staying in Ravindra's house; Ravindra Shahi is the coordinator of DESERT, the local implementing NGO of the GHT Development Programme; and he recently started a homestay. We have been given a beautiful room and best of all... a HOT SHOWER! Paradise!

Dolpa Section

March 29: Dunai (2,096 m)

The District Development Committee (regional authorities in Nepal) had organised a great welcome for our group. We were received with music and dance and lots of *khatas*, after which we went in procession through the whole village. Here we received more *khatas*, this time from school children. Very cute.

To my surprise, we ran into Thinle Lhondup. Thinle is the main character of the beautiful movie *Himalaya/Caravan*, directed by Eric Valli. If you haven't seen that movie yet, go and see it. After seeing it, you will probably want to go to Dolpa, as the images are amazing!

After the procession, there was an official programme. The audience was great, with lots of people from Upper Dolpo, of Tibetan background, in their traditional dresses. They go down to Dunai or Kathmandu in winter, and will go back to their villages in about a week. So if you want to meet the Upper Dolpo-pa without travelling to Upper Dolpo, the end of March is a good time to be in Dunai.

During the programme, attention was paid not only to the GHT, but also to the upcoming Shey Festival. Thinle himself presented the brochure of the festival. Shey is in Upper Dolpo, where Tibetan Buddhism is the main religion (besides Bonpo, a predecessor of Buddhism, which is very much related to Buddhism, but with more animistic features). The Shey Festival takes place once every 12 years, and this will be the 66th time it's being held, so it has a tradition of 792 years. It is a very important Buddhist festival, and it will attract lots of pilgrims. Besides ceremonies, there will be mask dances, archery, and yak and horse riding competitions.

In the evening, there was an informal gathering, and I got the chance to pose with Apa Sherpa and Thinle. It was a big honour for me to pose with two Nepali Himalaya heroes!

March 30: Dunai (2,096 m)-Chhepka (2,655 m); 5 hours

We are taking a side trip from the GHT and are going northwards to Phoksundo Lake. This lake is stunningly beautiful; it would be a shame if we skipped it. For this trip, Netra K.C, a Nepali BBC journalist is joining us as well.

It felt like an easy day, although we did walk 17 km and climb 1,124 m. Probably the high- altitude training of the last couple of days helped ☺. Along the way, we passed a big camp of people from Saldang (a village in Upper Dolpo) with their yaks (they had 60). As the winter is too cold in Upper Dolpo, they had spent the winter in Dunai or Kathmandu, and they are now ready to go back to their homes in Saldang. They are a very traditional people, and they were all wearing their traditional Tibetan dress. We spent some time talking to them and taking pictures; it is quite nice to be able to meet these people here in Lower Dolpa.

We were following the emerald-green and wild-flowing Phoksundo Khola, walking at first in a barren landscape of bald rocks, until the area quite suddenly turned into a beautiful forest. At the other side of the river, there were rocks towering high above us.

The GHT Development Programme has been working since 2009 in Dolpa, as Dolpa was one of the two pilot districts of the programme (the other one is Humla). The programme has conducted several trainings, like cooking and lodge-management training, and they were followed up with monitoring visits to see if the lodge owners had put in practice what they learned and to give individual guidance. I was involved in the trainings and monitoring visits, so I know most of the people of the guesthouses along the way, and it is really nice to see them again.

March 31: Chhepka (2,655 m)-Rigmo/Phoksundo Lake (3,608 m); 8 hours

As we have already acclimatised and are quite fit, we went to Phoksundo Lake in one more day. However, especially if you are not acclimatized, it is recommended that you stay overnight before, for example, in Chunuwar, next to the Amchi Hospital (3,130 m).

From Chhepka the walk went through a narrow gorge created by the Phoksundo River and on both sides were steep rocks with pine trees towering high above us. We crossed the Phoksundo River regularly on good wooden bridges. One time, however, we had to cross the wild-flowing river on one trunk! They had flattened the top of the trunk, but I still found it rather scary. Fortunately, a local guy gave me a hand ☺.

We passed an Amchi Hospital (in Chunuwar; 3,130 m). An *amchi* is a traditional Tibetan doctor. The *amchi* makes medicines from plants and sometimes also from the bones of animals found in the Himalaya. Elizabeth's foot is still hurting from the fall of almost two weeks ago, and she got a powder that she has to mix with butter and apply two times daily. Some of the crew got medicines as well, one for gastritis and one for a kind of skin affection. The hospital sure did come in handy.

From there on, the trail turned into a small sandy trail and started climbing steeply through a more desert-like landscape with small bushes. It was a tough climb of about one-and-a-half hours to a viewpoint to the Phoksundo Waterfall (also called Suligad Waterfall) at 3,683 m. With a height of 167 m, this is the highest waterfall in Nepal. After crossing a small pass at 3,727 m, the trail went through a pine forest again and on to Rigmo (3,629 m) the small village next to the Phoksundo Lake (3,608 m).

I went straight on to the lake. I have been here twice before for the GHT Development Programme and I couldn't wait to see the lake again because it is so beautiful. I was quite happy to find out we were camping on the shores of the lake. Most guesthouses are closed still, as people are now returning to their homes after having spent the winter in Dunai or Kathmandu. We are using one guesthouse that is open for our meals, a perfect combination of camping and using locally provided services.

I was even happier to find out that we have a free day tomorrow. It is really worth it to spend a full day here. Phoksundo Lake (the deepest lake in Nepal and the second largest after Rara Lake, further to the west) is such a beautiful lake. It is surrounded by barren and partly snowcapped mountains, its colour is an enchanting deep blue, and close to the shore, emerald green. Its colours keep on changing throughout the day and you just can't get enough of looking at it.

After dinner, Elizabeth and I walked in the dark from the village to our tent at the lake. It was pitch dark and we found it a bit difficult to tell if we were on the right trail. Nearby, jackals were howling, which made it a bit scary. But fortunately, we arrived at our tent safely and in one piece ☺.

April 1: Rigmo/Phoksundo Lake (3,608 m)

How nice to wake up and see the lake! In the morning, we visited the Thasung Tsoiling Monastery, a Bonpo monastery at the shore of

Phoksundo Lake. Rigmo is mainly inhabited by people who are followers of Bonpo. Bonpo is very much related to Buddhism, but Bonpo has more animistic traditions than Buddhism. Their main Buddha is Tomba Sedab Mebo, who lived a long time before Sakyamuni Buddha, and their main mantra is “Om mati muye sale du” (“Om mani padme hum” for Buddhists). For outsiders like me, the most noticeable fact is that while Buddhists circumambulate their stupas and mani walls in a clockwise direction, Bonpo-pa circumambulate in an anti-clockwise direction. The monastery is beautifully situated at the shore of Phoksundo Lake and offers a good view of the snowcapped Kanjirowa Himal (6,612 m).

In the afternoon, for the first time since I started this trek, I really felt I had time to relax. Normally, the rest days are even busier than normal walking days, with official functions, laundry to be done, etc. Now, I was lying at the side of the lake, reading a book and enjoying the views on the lake. What a lovely afternoon!

April 2: Rigmo/Phoksundo Lake (3,608 m)-Kageni (2,228 m); 8 ½ hours

Today was a long day again. We walked down the same way we came, and what we covered in one-and-a-half days on the way up, we now did in one day. Of course going down is quicker, but there are a lot of ups and downs on this route, so it still felt quite tiring.

To my relief, the scary one-trunk bridge that we had crossed before had been replaced by a beautiful and safe wooden bridge. Quick work!

We had lunch in Chhepka, at 3:30 pm! Needless to say, we were incredibly hungry when we arrived. Hunger is not really good for your walking performance, but what to do? The lunch tasted great, and re-energised, we continued on for the last two hours to Kageni.

On the way we met many people from Upper-Dolpo, some by themselves, some with just a horse, and some (the richer ones) with huge yak caravans. They all had spent the winter in the lower areas and were now on their way back. Many times, I started a little conversation with them (Where are you going? Where are you staying tonight? How long do you have to travel? I can ask all these questions in Nepali ☺) Many of them complained about the pain in their legs or knees, so apparently walking here is also not easy for the hardened ones. I have to admit, though, that those who complained were mainly the older ones. But

still, I always thought that the people here were so used to walking that they don't have these kinds of problems. But they do! And they don't have pain cream to apply on their knees in the night like us spoilt tourists.

Rara & Jumla Section

April 3: Kageni (2,228 m)-Liku (2,405 m); 6 hours

Today we got back on the GHT route. We went further south to Suligad, and from there it went westwards again, following the Thuli Bheri Nadi. We were walking on a dirt road for a while, but so far the road is practically only used by "vehicles with one horsepower".

We were walking in a quite desolate, barren landscape. Now and then there were some pastures for the cattle, and around the villages were some bright green fields with wheat, which was a beautiful sight in this barren landscape.

The trail went high above the river and was quite narrow at some parts, with vertical drops of about 100 m down to the river, which was quite scary sometimes. Besides, the wind was blowing in our face with enormous power, and it felt as if you could be blown away any moment. We even got a few raindrops, but nothing serious, fortunately.

We lunched in Tripurakot (2,027 m). Tripurakot is famous for its Hindu temple, Tripura Sundari Devi temple, which is an important destination for many pilgrims. We used our lunch time here as well to charge our batteries, as we had no electric power after Dunai, and we will probably have no power up till Jumla as well. Most villages do have solar energy, but that is just enough for the lights.

From Tripurakot, we continued on for about two hours to the small village of Liku. We could stay in a room, but it had a wet mud floor, which didn't seem very practical for use, so we decided to pitch our tents again, which we did in the courtyard of a school. The people in the village are very friendly, though. If they could get some training about what tourists need, I am sure they would make great hosts.

The only problem is that this is a '*free open-defecation village*' (in contrast to the '*Open- Defecation-Free*' villages that we passed on the way). No toilet can be found here, and it is hard to find a suitable spot in the village. These are the hardships of walking the GHT. But seri-

ously, it is true that many villages still do not or hardly have any toilets, causing much inconvenience and health hazards. In many places, the government and development organisations (such as SNV) are working to increase access to sanitation and hygiene, but a lot remains to be done. It will be a challenge to reach the goal of making the whole of Nepal 'Open-Defecation Free' by 2017.

April 4: Liku (2,405 m)-Kaigaon (2,642 m); 8 hours

We were told yesterday that it was going to be a long day today and that therefore we had to leave at 7 am. We almost made it, and left at 7:25, only to find out that the other team, who was staying nearby, was still busy preparing. So we went ahead, and for one time, we were the group in front ☺.

The walk started in a beautiful pine forest, and we were surrounded by the sound of birds, which was a nice beginning of the day. Along the way, we saw three huge vultures sitting together; what a great sight! Soon we saw what they were scoping out the carcass of a cow that was lying in a small river. Hopefully this river is not used for drinking water.

We lunched in Ghodakhori, in a small restaurant. But even though it was a very local place, they came up with a visitor's book. To my surprise, Sunil Tamang, who had walked the higher GHT route last year all by himself, had left a note here. I met him a couple of months back, so it was nice to see his note here! If you want to read more about his trek, see www.suniltamang.com.

The trail climbed up, through a more barren landscape again at first, but later again entered a beautiful forest of pine trees and trees with light-green moss hanging down from the trees, which is a sign that the air was very clean there. We had to climb all the way to a pass at 3,822 m, the Balangra Lagna pass. I enjoyed the climb. It was more the descent in the end, of about 1,200 m, that got difficult, especially for my knees.

At about 5 pm, we entered the village of Kaigoan. Kaigoan is a bit bigger than the other villages we have been in the last week (except Dunai, of course), and it even has a small guesthouse. We are sleeping on the floor, but no problem; it is a nice and clean room and we have our mattress anyway.

April 5: Kaigaon (2,642 m)-Chotra (3,103 m) via Maure Lagna pass (3,900 m); 9 hours

Today we crossed the Maure Lagna pass (3,900 m), which brought us into Jumla. It was a tough walk, as besides climbing the pass, we covered a distance of about 28 km. The landscape was beautiful; almost the entire day, we walked through beautiful forests with pine trees and trees covered with moss. We passed a few small villages as well, where, especially, the children were very excited to see us ☺.

Close to the pass, the landscape suddenly changed from thick forests into a desolate high- altitude landscape. When we were approaching the Maure Lagna pass, it started to snow. In the beginning I liked it because it was adding to the atmosphere. But during the descent, the snowfall got heavier and heavier, and I was not so happy with it anymore; in fact, it was very cold indeed, especially as my rain jacket unfortunately is not 100 percent waterproof. We arrived at around 7 pm in Chotra. You can imagine how happy I was to find out that we were staying in a guesthouse(all the six houses of this village offer guesthouse/homestay facilities). Now, we can hang our wet clothes to dry around the cooking fire. More importantly, we can warm *ourselves* around the cooking fire ☺.

We are planning to arrive in Darchula towards the end of April, and we are starting to notice that the end is getting nearer. Many of our conversations are about what to eat when we are back, where to eat in Kathmandu, where to meet for a party, etc. Besides, suddenly most people in the team are getting bored of eating daal bhaat twice a day. And funnily enough, they seem to be more bored of it than me, a foreigner ☺!

April 6: Chotra (3,103 m)-Jumla (2,350 m); 9 hours

Today we got a new team member—Carbo—which means white in the language of the people here; he's a Tibetan Mastiff puppy. He belonged to the people of the house where we stayed, and Dawa Steven bought him to take to Kathmandu. He is like a teddy bear and incredibly cute. He allows himself to be carried and caressed; so nice. It is difficult not to fall in love with him!

We walked more than 30 km today. The aim was to be in Jumla Bazaar at 5 pm for a press conference. However, Elizabeth and I unfortunately didn't make it; in fact, we arrived at 7 pm! It was a bit of a shame, but fortunately, there was quite a good presence of SNV people, so at least

my colleagues could represent me. And fortunately, I could catch up with my SNV colleagues during a nice gathering in the evening ☺. The walk went through beautiful forests in the morning and mostly through countryside and villages in the afternoon. Jumla Bazaar is the headquarters of Jumla District and is accessible by a motorable road. As we were arriving, we got quite a culture shock because we had been away for such a long time in the mountains and small villages without road access, electricity, etc.

But it was so good to have hot showers again and to wash our clothes with hot water. I don't think I have ever been so dirty in my whole life; well, at least in my adult life. I really had to rub the dirt off my legs!

April 7: Jumla (2,350 m)-Nauri Ghat (2,700 m) via Daphe Lekh pass (3,900 m); 7 hours

We are heading for Rara Lake, a two-to-three-day walk from Jumla Bazaar. We have lots of additions to our team. Hanna Singer, the country representative of UNICEF Nepal, joined us with two of other staff from UNICEF. Besides, there are four journalists joining us, and Anand, who works for HCI, Himalayan Climate Initiative, who is organising this trek together with Asian Treks. From Rara Lake, you can fly out, so this is a good opportunity for them to walk a few days with us. UNICEF is working in this area and is combining the walk to Rara Lake with a visit to some projects.

We had to climb to a pass again, the Daphe Lekh (3,900 m). The climb started while we were leaving Jumla, and while climbing up, we got a beautiful view over the Jumla Valley. The valley reminds me a bit of Switzerland: fields, pastures, pine forests and behind it the snow-capped Himalaya. Stunning!

We had to wait regularly for big caravans of mules going to the market in Jumla to sell or buy stuff. A good excuse to take a rest when climbing to the pass ☺.

We are staying in a very basic guesthouse, in a dusty room. However, we do have room service, as tea and soup have been delivered to our room. What a luxury!

April 8: Nauri Ghat (2,700 m)-Jhyarigaon (2,672 m) via Ghurchi Lagna Pass (3,447 m); 8 ½ hours

Happy Easter! It is Easter today, not that we noticed this of course, as Nepal is a Hindu and Buddhist country and Easter is thus not celebrated.

The five-star service continued, as we enjoyed our breakfast watching BBC World News. It's incredible that we are in such a small village, and everything is very basic, but there is TV with BBC World, CNN, National Geographic, etc. Disc television is *the* solution for these kinds of villages to learn more about what is happening in the world.

The first two-and-a-half hours were easy-walking through forests and fields, as we passed a few small villages. After a cup of tea in Chautha (2,781 m), the climb to yet another pass began. We broke our climb with a lunch break in the small settlement of Dabha (3,242), after which the landscape got very barren and desolate till we reached the pass, Ghurchi Lagna, (3,447 m). The other side of the pass, however, was covered with a pine forest. We had to go down steeply; poor knees. This was even more troublesome for our guests, who are having a bit of a hard time with our tight schedule/long days. Fortunately, we have rented two horses for the trip up to Rara Lake, and they came in handy.

We were supposed to arrive in Rara today, but even at 5:40 pm, it still would be at least two hours of walking to arrive there. This would be a bit too much, especially for our guests. So we pitched our tents on the roofs of a couple of houses in Jhyari/Jhyarigaon (2,672 m). Our arrival seems to be the event of the year. The children, especially, couldn't hide their curiosity, but even many adults were watching with interest how our crew was pitching our tents, how we were taking pictures, and even if we were just standing or sitting, we were interesting objects. It feels more or less like being an exotic animal in the zoo. But I am very happy we are staying here. It wasn't just that I was not looking forward to arriving at about 8 pm and walking for an hour in the dark, but mostly because the people here look so poor, and I am happy that with our huge group of over 30 persons we are bringing in some extra income into the village. Besides, it is good that the UNICEF country representative is seeing this. I have hardly seen people who look as poor as the people here. Their clothes are extremely old and dirty and many are torn and have been sewed back together several times. Besides, many people here have been complaining about all kinds of pains and health problems. They probably are not aware of simple measures to improve

their hygiene and sanitation, and thus their health. I knew that Mugu, the district we arrived in today, was one of the poorest districts in Nepal, but still it is sad to see and experience it for yourself.

**April 9: Jhyarigaon (2,672 m)-Rara Lake (2,986 m);
2 ½ hours**

After a morning where I got the full attention of the children—whatever I was doing, they found very interesting—we set off for Rara Lake.

We climbed up through the pine forest and after walking flat for a while, suddenly the lake was there. Rara Lake is the biggest lake in Nepal. The lake is surrounded by pine forests, and with the snowcapped Himalaya on the horizon, it is a stunning sight. There was no wind in the morning, so we could see the snowcapped mountains reflected in the lake. Beautiful!

We walked for another one to one-and-a-half hours around the lake, enjoying the views, till we got to the small settlement of Rara. There is a small hotel with four rooms here, Danphe Hotel. But almost all of us preferred to camp at the lakeside.

We enjoyed a relaxing afternoon, enjoying the views of the lake. Although of course some work had to be done, like, as always, our laundry. Besides, as we had journalists joining, some interviews took place with Apa Sherpa, including one by a Chinese television crew.

Far West Section

**April 10: Rara Lake (2,986 m)-Ratapani (1,431 m);
9 hours**

We had a long day again today - about 32 km in nine hours - and we are all quite tired. I am almost too tired to write, but as I'm waiting for dinner anyway, I'd better use the time. We arrived at about 7 pm, and it is 8:15 pm now; we just installed ourselves in the room of the girls at our homestay. The poor girls had to free their room to let us sleep here and are walking in and out to get their clothes and other stuff they need. It would be nice if they would knock, but that is something they still have to learn, I guess.

We left around 8:30 am, after a double breakfast of puri (fried roti)

with potato curry and muesli with hot milk. I always eat it all, and still I am getting skinnier by the day. We walked for about half an hour around the lake again, taking lots of pictures; you can't help but keep on shooting because it is such a beautiful (and peaceful) place.

We left the lake behind and walked through beautiful pine forests all morning, passing a small village now and then. The landscape here still reminds me of the Swiss Alps.

We had lunch in Satabada (2,312 m). During lunch, more and more children arrived to look at these strange white people. At certain moments there must have been about 60 children! But suddenly, two men arrived and the children ran away. Apparently, there was a school just up the hill and these were the teachers looking for their students, who had left school to come and watch us.

After lunch, the landscape got more open. The left side of the trail was green with forests and fields and the right of the trail was barren and arid. We met a *sadhu* (holy man, follower of Shiva or Vishnu who travels around), who was—unlike most sadhus—very young, about 25 years old. I've never seen such a young sadhu before. He was on his way to Rara Lake, travelling with only his sleeping bag. Travelling light! Later on the way, we saw men spinning and weaving—jobs done by women in most other parts of the world. All special encounters!

Finally around 7 pm, we arrived in Ratapani. We walked so far because we were told that there were many good guesthouses here. In reality, there are just four, and good is a debatable description. They are more homestays, in which people free up the rooms that they normally use for themselves, when guests arrive. It is also hard to rely on local information here regarding the hours we need to walk. If you ask how long it takes to get to a certain village, one person will say half an hour and the next one will say two hours. And it might take three hours. You can never tell!

In the courtyard of the homestay where Apa Sherpa and his team stayed, there was a woman sitting outside; she had to sleep outside because she was menstruating. It is still common practice in this part of Nepal that women are not allowed to stay in their house for four to five days each month. They have to stay in a shed or outside, and every year women freeze to death as a result. I can only hope that this problem will get more attention and that women will no longer tolerate this cultural practice.

April 11: Ratapani (1,431 m)-Kolti (1,390 m); 7 hours

We were walking in a mostly barren, desolate landscape for most of today. The villages along the way looked like small oases, with their bright green fields of wheat. We walked in the heat through an arid landscape dotted with cactuses, and we occasionally passed shepherds with their goats or cows.

In Riga, a tiny settlement of just a few houses, one woman asked me to take a picture, which was quite special, as normally I am the one asking if I can take a picture of them. It turned out that she wanted a family picture. After I took the picture, they asked me to send it to them. But how to send mail to such a tiny settlement in the middle of nowhere? I was telling them that I could email the picture and they could download it off the computers in the boarding school the children go to. But then the man of the house went inside and came back with an envelope addressed to him, sent by somebody in Holland (my country)! So mail does arrive even here! The man who sent it probably never knew whether his pictures had arrived, so in case you read this, Marc Nederlof from Leeuwarden, your pictures have arrived, and they are very happy with them😊!

The trail followed the Karnali River most of the day. At one point, we had to climb high above the river on a rocky trail, which was quite scary, as the trail was pretty narrow in some parts, with a vertical drop deep down to the river. You don't want to make a misstep here.

We stopped in another tiny settlement, Khunekhola. There were lots of papaya trees here, and as we hadn't eaten any fruit for the last three weeks, a papaya straight from the tree seemed very appealing. It was quite difficult to get them, though; somebody had to climb up the tree and use a long stick to shake them loose. The papayas looked nice, but unfortunately, they didn't taste as nice as we expected.

We had lunch in the village of Artangechaur. It had a few restaurants, but none had toilets, and the lady of the restaurant we ate at didn't have any soap: not for washing dishes, nor for washing hands. She cleaned her dishes with ash. They were not at all aware about hygiene and sanitation, and for this reason, the cooking was done by our crew. An awareness programme about simple hygienic standards would be good and would definitely have a positive effect on the health of the people living here.

In the afternoon, it started to pour down on us, heavily! Fortunately a friendly man let us stay in his house during the heavy shower. Had it not been for him, I would have been soaking wet, as my rain gear is not 100 percent waterproof. We resumed walking when the heaviest part was over, but not before having taken pictures of each other. I am always surprised when people in these remote parts take out their camera.

It drizzled almost all afternoon and so the walk was a bit boring.

We are staying in Kolti now, a small bazaar town. It's nice to be able to do a bit of shopping: washing powder for our clothes, pain cream for our knees, candies to keep us going, etc.

In the evening, we met Jivan Karki, who is working for a small NGO, Phase Nepal (www.phasenepal.org), which brings health care to remote areas in western Nepal. The NGO is expanding its reach, and he was here to do a baseline study of the health situation of the people living here, which is not very good at the moment. It's good to know that there are organisations like this working here, as they are very much needed.

April 12: Kolti (1,390 m)-Martadi (1,591 m); 10 hours

In the morning, we had an interesting conversation with Farid Ait Mansour of another small and good NGO working here, Next Generation Nepal (www.nextgenerationnepal.org). They are trying to prevent child trafficking and they reunite trafficked children with their families. Child trafficking is a huge problem, especially in west Nepal. Parents actually *pay* money to send their children to Kathmandu, expecting that they will get a good education there. But in Kathmandu these children end up in fake orphanages, where they mostly live in poor conditions, so that the owner of the orphanage gets money from tourists who visit the orphanage. It is a sad situation. The NGO has also published a book about this problem, called *Little Princes*.

This was probably the longest day of our trek. In the afternoon, I walked with Paribesh and Samir and we arrived in our hotel at 8:45 pm! I have to add that we had “already” arrived in Martadi at 7:45 pm, but we stopped for *sekuwa* (barbecued mutton), a real treat. It was quite a hike: we climbed to a pass at 2,710 m (my GPS shows that altogether, we climbed 2,043 m) and had to go 1,100 m down again, and we walked a total distance of about 29 km. I am quite exhausted, I have to say.

In the morning, we passed lots of villages. This is quite a fertile valley, which therefore attracts many people. Most of the houses have a cactus on their roof and we were wondering why this was so. It turns out that this is to prevent lightening from striking the house! According to the people living here, lightening has never struck a house with a cactus on the roof, and it is only necessary to put a cactus on your roof if it is a stone-slate roof. If you have a straw roof, this is not needed. Interesting!

Close to the pass, we entered a beautiful forest and the trail went mostly down, through a forest, passing a small village now and then. At around 7 pm, we arrived at a wild-flowing river, without a bridge. We had to cross it stone-hopping. Samir crossed it immediately, but Paribesh and I spent about 10 minutes looking for a better place to cross it. Meanwhile it was getting dark, and we had to cross soon, as crossing in the dark would only be more difficult. Quite scary! In the end, we managed, but it was quite difficult for me, and my feet got soaking wet. But at least we crossed safely. We later found out that upstream, not too far way, there was a kind of bridge made of stones, which would have been a lot easier option ☺!

We had to walk in the dark, and we finally arrived in the small town of Martadi at 7:45 pm. Samir asked around for snacks, and luckily we found this nice *sekuwa* place. After arriving in our hotel (Baniya Hotel, which has 21 rooms!), we got more food: first soup, then spaghetti. Wow, I can't remember how long ago it was that I ate something other than daal bhaat. After dinner, I went straight to bed, completely exhausted.

April 13: Martadi (1,591 m)-Koth (1,962 m); 6 hours

Happy New Year! According to the Nepali calendar, today is the first day of 2069. So Nepal is a bit ahead of the Western world ☺. I hadn't really taken part in a party evening yesterday (far too tired to do so), but I heard that some friends in Kathmandu had a good New Year's Eve party.

We left a bit later, so I could still do some work in the morning, as yesterday I was too tired to even look at my computer. All day today, we still felt tired from yesterday (at least Elizabeth and I; well, maybe the men of our team too: some of them were taking a power nap while waiting for lunch). And we are not only tired, but we also have all kind

of pains, like painful knees, shoulders, feet. I even have shooting pains in my bottom! I didn't know that that was possible! Fortunately, we have "only" six hours of walking today.

It was a day of lots of steep ups and downs, at least before lunch. After our lunch in Kirtichaur, we were entering a valley with lots of small medieval looking villages with small houses thatched with straw roofs; the houses were surrounded by green fields. But while the house may have looked medieval, they had electricity (hydropower) and some houses even had Nepal Disc TV! People here are clearly not used to seeing foreigners, as in every village people stopped what they were doing and came out of their houses to look at us passing by. As if we were some celebrities! Well, it is of course the Climate Smart *Celebrity Trek* :). I tried to tell them that the real celebrity was Apa Sherpa, but they didn't listen!

We are staying in Koth/Kothgaon (VDC of Manakoth), in a small room without any windows and a very low roof. We are sleeping on the ground, and it is a bit like being in a cave. Water is a precious thing here, as the villagers have to go far to fetch it. So we could only use a tiny bit for refreshing ourselves. I realised how fortunate I was to be living in Kathmandu, even though water is rather scarce there as well.

April 14: Koth (1,962 m)-Tuti (2,020 m) via Bateli Bhanjyang pass (3,232 m); 8 hours

We slept very well in our little cave, but I would have loved to sleep a few hours more. Both Elizabeth and I had an "off-day" today. We were low on energy and the pass was quite a struggle, both the climb and the descent. That also meant we were pretty slow. Apa Sherpa arrived around 3 pm, we at 5.45 pm. It is normal that we arrive an hour later than Apa and his team (logically we can't keep up with Apa Sherpa), but this is quite extreme! Fortunately we have a short day tomorrow, about three hours walking. Hopefully this will give us time to recover.

Meanwhile it was a beautiful walk, almost completely through the forest. We left at about 8:30 am and didn't see any settlements until 5 pm. It was a pretty steep climb, and as we got higher, the landscape got more and more barren. At about 2,850 m there was a little shrine, and it even looked like the pass was there, as the trail went a bit down after this. But we still had to climb almost 400 m to get to the real pass, the Bateli Bhanjyang pass (3,232 m). Crossing the pass, we were also

entering in a new district, Bajhang district (and leaving Bajura district). In the barren landscape were some lonely rhododendron trees, which were in full blossom; a beautiful sight! After the pass, we entered the forest again, and there were lots of rhododendrons here too, some with pink flowers and others rose-red. Very beautiful!

Unfortunately, it was raining most of the afternoon. It seems like the monsoon started early this year! At 5:45 pm, we finally arrived in Tuti/Tutigaon. We are staying in a small guesthouse, which has only three single rooms: so one for Elizabeth, one for Paribesh and one for me. What a luxury! But we also have nobody to chat with!

April 15: Tuti (2,020 m)-Chainpur (1,290 m); 4 hours

The rain continued all through the night and hadn't stopped in the morning. It is very difficult to motivate yourself to start walking in the pouring rain. It looked like the rain wasn't going to stop today, so we had to start going. Fortunately, we had only a short day today. And even better, after about an hour, the rain did stop. Now that it was dry, we started enjoying the landscape again, which was really nice, with bright green and yellow terraces of wheat and barley stretching out till the horizon, and small villages spread out all around.

At around lunch time, we arrived in Chainpur, which is not a very beautiful city, but it still has lots to offer: the possibility to do laundry, a hot bucket-shower (after nine days!), nice milk tea (only one cup, though; although I could see cows everywhere, milk seems to be scarce around here), fruit, samosas, nice biscuits and a room with television. Enough to make us happy!

In the afternoon, it started raining again and turned into thunderstorm; it looks like monsoon has started already. I hope it will be dry tomorrow, as we have a long day ahead of us.

We spent a great evening, watching the National Geographic channel and a movie, having dinner in front of the television. Very luxurious room service ☺!

April 16: Chainpur (1,290 m)-Jhota (979 m); 6 ½ hours

Fortunately, we woke up to a beautiful blue sky. That means a lot nicer walking!

To go to Darchula (which is northwest of Chainpur), we are taking a different route than the GHT trail indicated on the map, which goes north from Chainpur. With the other trail, we would have to cross a pass at around 4,500 m. Here in the far-west, the snow starts at a much lower altitude than in other parts of Nepal (I don't know why that is; it's probably got to do with its being a different micro climate), and to cross the pass, we would need special equipment. It would probably be ok to cross the pass later in the year, like in May, but it is probably not a good idea to go through there now without proper equipment. That is why we are going straight westwards now and northwards later.

The trail started very nicely, passing charming villages like Ritapatha (1257 m), surrounded by green fields. We also passed an airstrip, which was just a flat piece of grassland, from which flights go to Nepalgunj, in southwest Nepal.

After about two-and-a-half hours, we arrived at a dirt road, which we were to follow for the rest of the day. Unlike the dirt roads we sometimes walked on during the last couple of weeks, this road does have some traffic, and once in a while we had to step aside for a truck or a bus. We had hardly seen any motorised traffic for a long time, and now suddenly we were encountering a plane, buses and trucks. Culture shock! The people in the bus must think we are crazy. "Why are they walking if they can take the bus?"

Although it is nicer to walk on a small trail than on the road, it was still quite nice walking alongside the roaring Seti River, with bright green and yellow fields of barley and wheat on the banks, and passing many small villages. Most women we met were wearing colourful dresses and bright yellow necklaces. Whereas most people in Bajura, the previous district, were too shy to even greet us (they just looked at us in amazement), here the people are quite open and almost always respond to my "Namaste!" and sometimes even start some small talk ("where are you coming from today"; "where are you going to and where are you from"). Funny how interactions vary in different districts!

The bazaar villages here look like makeshift villages because the shops and local restaurants are constructed from corrugated iron plates. It looks as if they were originally put up there as temporary buildings, but they are still here today. We are staying in one of these villages, Jhota. We noticed that quite a lot of NGOs are working here, and the UN World Food Programme has an office here as well. Maybe that is why

the people here seem to be more used to seeing white faces like ours.

The WFP distributes soya bean oil in these areas. Families get the oil for free under the condition that their children go to school and can demonstrate an attendance rate of a minimum 80 percent. It seems like a good system to me, especially because I do see children working; for example, I ran into a young goat herder here who was just nine years old. This kid needs to be in school!

April 17: Jhota (979 m)-Jhapa (1,185 m); 8 ½ hours

I woke up to the sounds of tropical birds, which made me remember that we were at a lower altitude. The day started with a bright blue sky, but already during breakfast clouds were gathering. Soon after we took off, it started raining. Again! We were walking on a dirt road, in the rain, and as you can imagine, this wasn't one of the best days. But fortunately, after a couple of hours, the rain stopped.

After lunch, we left the dirt road and continued on another one, but this one didn't seem to be in use by motorised transport, so it felt more like we were walking on a large path. It was easy-walking, mostly flat, with good views of the river and green and yellow fields with wheat and barley below.

It was a long day; we walked about 35 km in total. Music kept me going! At around 6 pm, some local villagers told us that if we wanted to save time, we should leave the dirt road and go down on a steep slope. We did as we were told, and we found out we had to cross the river. The river was a wild-flowing one, and we had to cross it over a bridge made up of one tree trunk. This was going to be a bit scary, especially because the trunk was tilting a bit! But fortunately, we all crossed safely, without any difficulty.

We arrived at 6.45 pm in our camp for today, Japha, a tiny village. There are no tourist facilities here, but we managed to get a few rooms. Elizabeth treated a huge open blister on the foot of Prakash, one of the porters. That must have hurt incredibly. Imagine how strong these men are.

April 18: Jhapa (1,185 m)-Sela (988 m) via Ganayi Khan Pass (2,126 m); 8 ½ hours

Another long day. The distance was a lot less, “only” 24 km, but the climb to the pass, although relatively low, made it tough. I arrived in Sela at 7:45 pm, in the dark. There is no place to stay here, so we are camping again. The last time we camped was at Rara Lake. May be this will be the last time we are camping during the whole GHT, as we have only two more days to go.

Today we walked all day on a small trail through a nice green landscape, amidst green terraces and some small forests. Beautiful countryside! To be honest, the last couple of days, I had a bit enough of all the walking. I was getting more and more tired, my knees were hurting, and I was very much looking forward to being home in Kathmandu again. I was looking forward to seeing my friends again, having a choice of foods, not being an attraction for the local children, sleeping in a good bed, putting on other clothes, etc. I guess it is logical to be looking forward to being home again after such a long time. But today, now that the end is really getting near, I suddenly felt melancholic about reaching the end. I will surely miss the beautiful mountains, the countryside, the nice villages, the encounters along the way, the clean air and the sounds of the crickets, birds, and village life when I’m back in the hustle and bustle of Kathmandu. Instead of the bells of the mules, goats and cows, I will hear the claxons of the cars.

April 19: Sela (988 m)-Gogani (1,357 m) via Sipti Pass (2,094 m); 8 hours

We woke up surrounded by a bunch of girls around the tent, who were very curious about what strange creatures were in there. It got a bit on our nerves, so early in the morning, but later we heard that they had never seen foreigners before, so we have to show some understanding here 😊.

Today was another long day. Fortunately, I arrived just before dark, around 7 pm, but Elizabeth had to walk in the dark again, as she was arriving around 8 pm. Again, we had to climb a pass, and although the pass was relatively low (2,094 m), it was one of the hardest climbs we have had. I think it is easier to climb from 2,000 to 3,000 m, than from 1,000 to 2,000 m, at least around this time of the year, as April-end to May-end is the hottest period. The climb was completely in the open, with no relief of shade, and it was incredibly hot.

This was our last full day, and in a way, I felt like today was a kind of a summary of what we have experienced during our GHT trek: a long day, in the heat; a long climb, which I enjoyed at first, but which felt very strenuous at the end; we lost the trail for a while, and we had a long descent, which was hard on the knees. We had it all! But we also had nice landscapes, beautiful mountain views (Api Himal, 7,132 m), nice encounters along the way and beautiful villages.

April 20: Gogani (1,357 m)-Darchula (890) via Dhalek (2,139 m); 5 ½ hours

We did it! We've reached Darchula, and we have completed the whole GHT! I still can't really believe that the trek is over. We just repacked for our bus journey of tomorrow, and as we shortened our walking sticks, I realised that that action was the real sign that tomorrow we would *really* not be walking.

In the end, we still walked about five-and-a-half hours today, which you could call a full trekking day. But compared to the other days of our trek, yes, this was more or less a half- day.

It was a beautiful walk through a green valley full of green terraces and scattered villages, with only the last two hours of the trail going through a more desolate landscape.

It was quite exiting to arrive in Darchula, ending about three months of walking. But strangely enough, none of us were really in a party-mood, maybe because we had still not fully realised that the trek was over. We will probably feel it only when we are back in Kathmandu. We still have two days travelling ahead of us, a 14-hour bus ride tomorrow, and a flight, the day after. We are leaving at 5:30 am.

April 21: Darchula (890 m)-Dhangadi (176 m); 19-hour bus ride

I should have remembered that 5:30 am meant 5:30 am "Nepali Time"; in the end, we left at 7 am, as in the early morning there was an impromptu honouring programme for Apa Sherpa. And in the end, the journey took a bit longer: 19 hours. This was maybe the hardest day of the whole GHT. Although we didn't walk more than from the hotel to the bus, bus to breakfast, lunch and dinner place and toilet, it was a very tiring day indeed. It wasn't much fun sitting in a bus for 19 hours, going over (at some places very) rough dirt road. But fortunately, all

things come to an end and at nearly 2 am, we arrived in Dhangadi. We stayed in a very nice hotel, with even an elevator, air conditioners, etc. With all these facilities, it felt as if the bus was a kind of time machine and we had entered a different time! You can't believe how nice it was to finally touch the pillow and go to sleep. It is still hard to imagine that tomorrow we'll be home.

April 22: Dhangadi (176 m)-Kathmandu (1,330 m); 1 hour 15 minutes flight

After a relaxing morning, including the best shower of my life, we went to the airport. It was a smooth flight to Kathmandu, where we received a warm welcome from the national press, Asian Treks and HCI.

At 4:30 pm I turned the key of my apartment. How strange it is to be back home again! And how nice!

April 23: First day in Kathmandu

I woke up early in the morning because my phone was ringing. Friends were congratulating me for having finished the GHT; they had seen the picture of our group on the front page of Kantipur, one of the leading newspapers in Nepal. How nice to see myself on the front page of a newspaper :). I spent the morning relaxing at home and the afternoon with Elizabeth in downtown Kathmandu. Wow, it was a bit too much hustle and bustle for the first day. In the evening, we had pizza at Fire and Ice with a bottle of white wine and celebrated our successful completion of the trek ☺!

April 24: Kathmandu

In the morning, our team was received by the President of Nepal. The reception had originally been planned for yesterday, but as that was a national holiday, it took place today. As the chairman of HCI also mentioned during his speech, the end of the trek was just the end of the beginning. In other words, this was just the end of the first phase. Now it is our duty to promote the trek and the different destinations that are part of it, so more tourists will come and will bring income and job opportunities for the people living in these places. Besides, mitigating the consequences of climate change for the people living in the Himalaya and in the downstream flat lands has to remain high on the political agenda. Tourism can be a way to build the resilience

of the people. Let's hope we can make it work. I will do my part in composing itineraries for the whole trek and all the destinations, and in providing practical information about the points of interest for tourists, goods and services available, entrance and exit points, etc.

And all this information is the base of the guidebook which is now in your hands ☺!

Blog GHT Low Route November 22 to 1 December 2013

Kanchenjunga Section

22 November 2013: Kathmandu-Tharpu (1,300 m)

I am finally starting with the last stretch of the GHT! More than one-and-a-half years ago, I walked from Dobhan in the east of Nepal till Darchula in the west, where I reached Nepal's border with India. But that meant I still hadn't really walked the entire GHT, as I hadn't touched the border at the eastern part of Nepal. So that is what I am aiming to do right now!

Recently the GHT team decided that it would be a good idea to produce a guidebook about the Low Route of the GHT. This guidebook would of course not be complete if I hadn't reached the border on both sides of the country. So that's why they've sent me now to Tharpu, from where I will start my trek tomorrow.

I already had a beautiful flight with spectacular Himalaya views. I had taken in Mount Everest and Mount Makalu in a single viewing. And then the impressive Mount Kanchenjunga came into view, which at 8,656 m is the third-highest mountain in the world. It was just awesome.

I flew to Bhadrapur, from where we drove in about three hours to Ilam and in another four hours to Tharpu, of which the last half hour was over a dirt road. Along the way, we had great views of the Kanchenjunga. Also along the way, we saw many cheerful party gatherings. Political parties, I mean. There have just been elections in the country,

and people in Nepal are celebrating like we in Europe celebrate when we win the World Cup in soccer!

My guide, Dilli, waited for me at a junction about an hour before Tharpu. The poor guy had been waiting for four hours! Dilli is from this area and is one of the 50 guides who have been trained by the GHT Development Programme to become a licensed guide, in order to increase their job opportunities.

I was happy to arrive a lot earlier than I expected in Tharpu. I had the 1:30 am time in mind that I had arrived in Dobhan on the first day of the GHT almost two years ago. Now we were already there just after 6 pm! I very much enjoyed the tasty daal bhaat. It is good to be back on the GHT!

November 23: Tharpu (1,300 m)-Chyangthapu (1,550 m, 30 km)

I woke up with a beautiful sunrise over Kanchenjunga en Januu (7,711 m). A great start to the day and the trek! I was thinking of going all the way to Lempokhari (which I reckoned to be three hours from Chyangthapu), but we didn't even make it all the way to Chyangthapu on foot. It was a lot longer than I thought! Oyam, the first village on the way, had looked very near on the map, around three to four km. We followed the recently built dirt road, which took a long turn around the hills, making the walking distance in the end almost 15 km! It took us three-and-a-half hours to reach Oyam. There they told us that there was a direct trail as well from Tharpu, which is strange as the hotel owner in Tharpu had said that the only way was to follow the road.

I was walking with my big backpack for the first time, as Dilli - who besides being my guide also helped me carry some of my stuff - had asked me to give him the small/day pack, which I could fill with all my heavy stuff. I had done so, but my big backpack was still a lot heavier than my day pack that I normally carry. What all do I carry with me?? Lots of small and light stuff make one heavy backpack! So when we encountered a tractor going the same way soon after we had left Oyam, I was happy to ask for a ride. As this is still just the access route till the GHT, I am not cheating ☺. And the people on the tractor were happy to

give us a lift, which we gladly accepted. But it still took us four hours to get to Chyangthapu. So I doubt we would have reached Chyangthapu in one day if we had walked all the way!

November 24: Chyangthapu (1,550 m)-Phalut/Simhalila Bhanjyang (3,450 m); 7 ½-8 hours

Today was a very heavy day. We climbed 2,574 m altogether, according to my GPS. I can definitely feel it! But it was a very beautiful hike as well, going all the way through the forest. At first we passed a few tiny hamlets, but after about two-and-a-half hours, after passing the houses of Moruwa Khola Gari Chowk (2,180 m) we only walked through the forest. We were being led by quite a remarkable guide, Birendra Rai, a 60-plus man who is the priest/shaman of Chyangthapu. I was wondering if he could make it all the way, but he turned out to be a lot quicker than me! I could hardly keep up with him, and I reckon he would have done the trek a lot quicker if he had been alone. He is a quite a heavy drinker, and he'd already started early in the morning, and he drank raksi (local wine) and chang (millet beer) along the way. Well, it certainly kept him going, as he walked on the way up a lot more easily than me ☺.

We passed Lem Pokhari/Suketab (2,769 m), a beautiful clearing in the forest that offers beautiful views of Mt Januu when the weather is clear. There is a big house under construction; I think there will be a hotel later?

When approaching our destination, Phalut, it suddenly turned out that Phalut was in India! Even though on my GHT map Phalut was put as if in Nepal. It is just one km, and the border crossing was just a little pole next to the road, but still, it really was in India. We realised that could be a problem, as foreigners need a visa to enter India. So Dilli went ahead to ask if I could only stay for the night. He returned happily with good news. If I could show them my passport, I could stay. However, when we arrived, the Indian Border Control Policemen seemed to have changed their minds, as suddenly it was a problem, and they didn't want to give me permission to stay. Fortunately, we had just passed one lonesome house where a man was staying. But what if he wouldn't

let us stay there? That would mean returning in the night? Besides, we were standing in front of a very appealing lodge...I pleaded to please let us stay, and I said that I could die in the forest and wouldn't that be a bigger problem for them than letting me stay just one night without a visa/permission? But they were not in the least moved by this. Then, fortunately I got help from a forest department officer, who said he would be responsible for me in case anybody came and objected to my presence in India. What a relief. And what a nice man! I was so happy to sit by the fire in the kitchen, eating a nice noodle soup and daal bhaat. And now to go to sleep in a real bed ☺.

**November 25: Phalut (3,450 m)-Chyangthapu (1,550 m);
6 ½ hours**

While it had been completely foggy when we arrived yesterday, this morning we woke up to a beautiful sunrise and a bright sky. After a nice breakfast of porridge with coconut (as this lodge gets lots of tourists, I reckoned I could order something else than chapatti and omelet) we set off, back to Chyangthapu. Our original plan was to go to Chiya Bhanjyang further north along the border, but the Indian border control had threatened to arrest Dilli if we went there, so we thought we'd better take that warning seriously and changed our plans. Fortunately, our local guide knew another way back to Chyangthapu. At first, we climbed up the hill, and we got a pleasant surprise: suddenly we had a great view of the Mt Kanchenjunga and Mt Makalu ranges. Besides, we could see 360 degrees around and look into Nepal, Darjeeling and Sikkim, in India, and even see the mountains of Bhutan. It was absolutely stunning!

And then the trail went down for 95 percent of the time. The viewpoint was at 3,582 m, and Chyangthapu is at 1,550 m; so it was a 2,000 m descent anyway. But according to my GPS, we climbed 733 m as well, which means we went down about 2,750 m. Poor knees! But the trail was at least as beautiful as yesterday. Very soon we entered the forest again, with rhododendrons and huge pine trees layered with long mosses, a sign of clean air. Along the descent, we kept on having good views of Mt Kanchenjunga and Mt Januu (also called Kumbhakarna). As we got lower, the landscape changed into mostly farmland.

About an hour before Chyangthapu, we had to say goodbye to our local guide, who lived further up the slope. He was a very special man indeed. We stopped for tea (and to rest our knees!) at a local house. The woman refused to accept money for the tea. She asked, if I came to your home and I drank tea with you there, would you accept my payment? Well, she had a point. But still, this was very kind! Especially given the fact that she would probably hardly leave her village.

November 26: Chyangthapu (1,550 m)-Limbuding (1,250 m) 6 ½ hours

Today we had a beautiful, and typical GHT Low Route day. We went down to the river then climbed up for three hours, and we went down again. Going down to a river/valley, climbing to a Bhanjyang (ridge) and going down to the next river/valley: that is what the GHT trek is all about!

Today was completely different from the last two days. Then we had walked all the time in the forest, while today we walked from village to village, walking through terraced rice paddies and small forests.

In one of the villages, Ankhaop, we stopped for tea. The teashop was next to a school, and the school happened to have their midday break just when we arrived. The place probably hadn't seen many foreigners before me because all the students immediately hurried to the teashop, just to watch me drinking my tea. I felt like I was a monkey in a zoo! This brought back memories of similar incidents that had happened to me along the GHT in spring 2012, where this happened quite often, especially in the far-west regions.

We are staying in Limbuding, a beautiful small village surrounded by terraced fields; it is appropriately named, as it is mostly populated by Limbus, one of the many cultural groups in Nepal. There is no guest-house here, so we are staying with a hospitable Limbu family.

My room is full of nice colourful posters with beautiful sayings, such as: "The heart is happiest when it beats for others"; "Doing what you like is freedom, liking what you do is happiness"; "Simple living and

high thinking lead to fulfilment and freedom”; “All is well”. Lots of wisdom in this little room ☺.

I went to bed early, looking forward to a nice, long *and* well-deserved sleep. Unfortunately, our nice homestay also turned out to be a small gambling den, where men gathered to play cards. They were playing right under my room, and it sounded like they were sitting *in* my room. They were of course quite noisy, and I slowly got more and more annoyed. But *Ke Garne*; what to do? They finally left at 1:00 in the morning.... And my alarm was set for 5:45 ☺.

November 27: Limbuding (1,250 m)-Orakpa (Warappa; 1,906 m); 8 hours

This was the longest day of this trek. We started at 7:30 am and reached our destination at 5:30 pm, in the dark. The GPS track record was also quite impressive: we'd covered a distance of 19.7 km and a total ascent of 1,991 m. I have the right to be tired, I should say!

We started continuing our descent, all the way to a suspension bridge at 900 m. That is quite a descent, especially given that eventually we have to arrive at Pathibhara Temple at 3,600m. From the suspension bridge onwards, the only way was up for almost the entire day, till Kande Bhanjyang at 2,108 m. Even my big backpack felt heavier than it did yesterday. During our walk to Phalut I had left most of the stuff in Chyangthapu, but since yesterday I have been carrying my big backpack again. I could give more stuff to Dilli and this made it a bit easier for me. But today, climbing in the hot sun, was still a bit hard. We met some young girls along the way who were taking a rest together at one of the many resting places along the trail. Dilli lifted the loads they were carrying, and I tried as well. But I couldn't. Each load must have been around 30 kg. And the youngest girl was 11.... Carrying a load of about 30 kg! We also met young men who were carrying cardamom. Their loads were huge and I asked how much they weighed: 82 kg! Young, small and thin boys of around 18 years of age carrying 82 kg loads. Incredible.... It made me think twice about complaining about the weight of *my* backpack!

In Kande Bhanjyang, we saw some signs of the GHT Development Programme. There had been a homestay training, and about 10 homestay owners had been trained in how to run their homestay. Nice. After a tea break, we continued. It would have been nice to experience for myself what the owners had learned during the training, but I didn't have much time, so we had to walk as much as possible in one day. It was a quarter to four and the next village was about two hours away, so we almost ran the last part of the trek. You could say it was a race against the darkness. We had to walk the last 15 minutes in the dark, but that went fine. Fortunately, the first house in Orakpa (on some maps the place is called Warappa) was the homestay that had been recommended to us by one of the homestay owners in Kande Bhanjyang. So here I am now, sitting in my nice spacious sleeping room; this is really a nice homestay. It is not an official homestay, though, so we cooked our own food. It's a self-service homestay ☺.

November 28: Orakpa (1,906 m)-Thulo Phedi (3,155 m) 5 ½ hours

In the morning we had to go to the shop, 10 minutes away, to buy our own breakfast. Unfortunately, the shop was very badly stocked; read: virtually empty. Fortunately, I had two-thirds of a noodle soup packet left, but you could say it is a bit of a meagre breakfast, especially knowing that we would have to climb till 3,100 m and that there would not be anything along the trail till just below our destination. So if you plan to stay in Orakpa, bring your own food supplies!

First, we had to descend to a suspension bridge at 1,786 m. That descent felt a bit frustrating because I knew we had to climb it all up again. The trail was quite difficult and slippery, going alongside slopes full of cardamom plants. And the ascent was not easy either. Especially at the beginning, the trail was very narrow and steep. Sometimes it went down hundreds of metres just next to the narrow trail; this trail wouldn't be good for those who are afraid of heights! Fortunately, the trail got easier and broader when we got higher. Along the way, we met a shepherd, who turned out to be very helpful in giving us directions. Besides, he was so nice to ask us to go to his house further up along the slope (even though he didn't come along with us), and he told us to help ourselves to some curd, milk and rice that he had at his house. I ate some curd, it was delicious! So friendly!

The last 200 metres up the slope was almost vertical again. Then, suddenly we arrived back in civilisation, when we came to Boludanda (2,925 m), a tiny settlement with a few basic guesthouses along the pilgrimage trail to the Pathibhara Temple. Pathibhara is a very popular destination among Hindus, and tens of thousands of pilgrims visit the temple every year.

After tea and noodle soup, we continued to Thulo Phedi. Thulo Phedi is the usual overnight stop for the pilgrims, and it has 14 hotels. Especially in October, it gets very busy, but today most hotels had just a few visitors. All the hotels here mostly cater to Nepali and Indian pilgrims, and they are very basic, with mud or wooden floors and wallpaper made from newspapers. But it was good enough for me, and the place where I am staying served delicious daal bhaat!

November 29: Thulo Phedi (3,155 m) - Pathibhara Temple (3,757 m); return (2 ½ hours) and Thulo Phedi (3,155 m) - Taplejung (1,806 m); 5 hours

We woke up very early today because we had to reach the Pathibhara Temple early in the morning. We were supposed to leave at around 5 am, but everything took a bit longer, and we *really* needed to drink some tea, so in the end we left at 6 am. The temple lies on top of a hill, at 3,757 m, so it is quite a climb. We had been well trained by the long walking days of the last week and passed almost everybody, so in the end we were still almost the first to arrive. We started in the dark, in the fog. I was not counting on seeing anything from the top of the hill, but to my pleasant surprise we were climbing above the clouds. Suddenly we could see this fluffy sea of clouds below us—a wonderful sight, and on the horizon, the Makalu Barun Range. On reaching the top, I suddenly saw Mt Kanchenjunga. So close and so impressive. I just couldn't stop looking.

But of course, I needed to visit the temple as well. According to Dilli, Pathibhara is very popular among Nepali and Indian pilgrims because the goddess Pathibhara fulfils your wishes. So of course I couldn't miss this chance ☺.

On the way to Taplejung, I have been kept very busy with the reporting, as almost every 15 minutes there was a settlement with one or more hotels. Although most are very basic and not very clean, it is good to record them all. We had lunch in Suketar, in Dilli's house, it was very nice to see his wife and little 10-month-old daughter. We arrived in Taplejung just before dark. Here, I am staying in a real hotel, with an attached toilet and bathroom, and it even has a hot gas shower. What a luxury!

Tomorrow is the final stretch to Dobhan. After this, I really have completed the entire GHT and walked from border to border. Feels good already!

November 30: Taplejung (1,800 m)-Dobhan (717 m); 2 ½ hours

Today I really did finish the complete GHT Low Route! It means I really walked from the eastern border of Nepal to the western border. I am really happy that I could finally walk this final stretch of the GHT. The itineraries I made will be good for the GHT website and thus for the promotion of GHT. And also personally of course, it is nice that I can now say that I walked the entire length of Nepal.

There is a dirt road from Taplejung to Dobhan, but fortunately there was also a trail going down directly to Dobhan, which makes for nicer walking and saves lots of kilometres. What struck me on the trail was the amount of waste lingering around all over the place. This is a major problem I have encountered all over Nepal, but on this trail is seemed worse than ever. It would be so good if there could be a programme that was completely dedicated to tackling this problem. Nepal is such an amazingly beautiful country, but the people make it a messy place, just because of a lack of awareness. The Nepal Government could play a huge role in bringing about this awareness, but it is disregarding this problem completely. And that in spite of the fact that there is a Ministry of Environment...

But apart from all the waste, it was a lovely trail, going through the countryside, forests and small villages. It was a special feeling to reach

Dobhan again, as this is the place where I also started my GHT adventure almost two years ago. Nothing seemed to have changed from the last time I was here. We took some pictures to mark the endpoint of my GHT trek and then hurried back to the other end of the village, as the jeep back to Taplejung was to leave any moment. Well, it turned out that we needn't have hurried, as it almost took another two hours before there were enough passengers on board in order for the jeep to get going.

In the evening, I celebrated my GHT accomplishment with Harish, our district coordinator, and his family. It still hasn't sunk in that the big trek has come to an end. Maybe it's time to consider the High Route?

Overview of GPS Data

Below you find an overview of some GPS data of the trek per day: moving (walked) time, stopped time, moving average, overall average, distance walked and total ascend (climb).

You can notice that the moving time in the overview is always less than the estimated walking time mentioned per day in the itinerary. Even though the time shown in the itinerary is excluding breaks, during your walk you will many times take small breaks, to make pictures, take of warm clothes, etc. This is recorded as stopped time on the GPS, but doesn't feel like a proper break, so it has been included in the walking times in the itineraries.

Waypoints and tracks of the GHT you can download from the GHT website on <http://thegreathimalayatrail.org/trek/ght-lower-trail-complete-traverse/>

		moving time	stopped time	moving average	overall average	distance in km	total ascent in m
Day 1	Tharpu (1300 m) - Chyangthapu (1550 m)	5.28	1.07	5.5	4.6	30.09	1492
Day 2	Chyangthapu (1550 m) - Phalut (3455 m) 8 hrs	5.38	2.45	2.8	1.9	15.87	2574
Day 3	Phalut (3450 m) - Chyangthapu (1550 m) 6.5 hrs	5.03	2.54	2.9	1.8	14.6	733
Day 4	Chyangthapu (1550 m)-Limbudung (1250 m) 6.5 hrs	5.17	1.57	3.7	2.7	18.38	1219
Day 5	Limbudung (1250 m) – Orakpa (1906 m) 8 hrs	6.2	3.22	3.1	2	19.7	1991
Day 6	Orakpa (1906 m) - Thulo Phedi (3155 m) 5.5 hrs	3.45	2.35	2.1	1.3	8.06	1688
Day 7	Thulo Phedi (3155 m) to Pathibara temple return	2.14	0.67	2.8	1.6	5.92	783
Day 8	Thulo Phedi (3155 m) to Taplejung (1806 m)	3.51	0.95	4.2	3.4	16.23	542
Day 9	Taplejung (1800 m) – Dobhan (717 m) 2.5 hrs	1.55	0.48	4	3.2	7.67	258
Day 10	Dobhan (717 m)-Deurali Bhanjyang (2800 m) 8 hrs	7.54	4.29	3.2	2.1	13.70	2243
Day 11	Deurali Bhanjyang (2800 m)-Nundaki (1540 m) 6 hrs	5.09	2.5	3.2	2.6	14.30	430
Day 12	Nundaki (1540 m)-Bhanjyang Puchchhar (824 m) 5 hrs	4.21	2.17	4.6	3	19.37	666
Day 13	Banjang Pucha (824 m)-Khadbari (1041 m) 6 hrs	4.28	1.44	3.6	2.6	15.93	1299
Day 14	Khadbari (1041 m)- Majuwadanda (800 m) 5 hrs	3.51	2.09	3.9	2.5	14.92	904
Day 15	Majuwadanda (800 m)-Salpa Phedi (1530 m) 8 hrs	6.54	2.23	3.4	2.6	22.4	890
Day 16	Salpa Phedi (1530 m)-Sanam (2834 m) 8 hrs	5.29	3.37	2.5	1.5	13.67	2464
Day 17	Sanam (2834 m)-Khiraule (2535 m) 8 hrs	5.41	2.26	3.1	2.2	17.62	1580
Day 18	Khiraule (2535 m)-Sibuche 7(2800 m) 7 hrs	4.35	2.57	2.3	1.4	11.57	1677
Day 19	Sibuche (2800 m)-Paiya (2767 m) 7 hrs	5.04	2.11	2.9	2	14.67	1567
Day 20	Paiya (2767 m)-Lukla (2840 m) 4 hrs	3.31	1.01	3.2	2.4	11.1	1173
Day 21	Lukla (2840 m)-Kharikhola (2007 m) 8 hrs	5.5	2.25	3.4	2.5	19.5	1413
Day 22	Kharikhola (2007 m)- Ringmu (2739 m) 8 hrs	5.39	1.55	3.1	2.3	17.18	1972
Day 23	Ringmu (2739 m)-Sete (2538 m) 9 ½ hrs	6.45	2.22	3.5	2.6	24.76	2038
Day 24	Sete (2538 m)-Deurali (2700 m) 7 hrs	4.54	2.03	3.2	2.2	15.51	1618
Day 25	Deurali (2700 m)-Jiri (1930 m) 6 hrs	4.41	1.37	3.4	2.5	15.86	1044
Day 26	Jiri (1930 m) - Putchar Kharka (2341 m) 7 hrs	5.39	2.05	3.1	2.2	17.47	2039
Day 27	Kharka (2341 m) -Laduk (1790 m) 6 hrs	5.01	1.35	3.3	2.5	16.72	1523
Day 28	Laduk (1790 m)-Bigu Gompa (2500 m) 8 hrs	6.02	2.14	3.4	2.5	20.5	1972
Day 29	Bigu Gompa (2505 m)-Durumthali (1970 m) 9 hrs	6.12	2.15	3.2	2.4	20.01	1808
Day 30	Durumthali (1970 m)-Barabise (870 m) 4 hrs	2.22	0.24	4.4	3.7	10.33	211
Day 31	Barabise (870 m)-Jalbire (830 m) 8 hrs	6.27	1.53	3.2	2.5	21.47	1523
Day 32	Jalbire (830 m)-Khobre (2435 m) 7 1/2 hrs	5.47	2.21	2.9	2.0	16.56	2180
Day 33	Khobre (2435 m)-Pokhare Banjang (1574 m) 9 hrs	6.42	2.13	3.3	2.5	22.33	1362
Day 34	Pokhare Banjang (1574 m)-Gyalthung (1034 m) 2 hrs	1.42	0.27	3.9	3.0	6.57	159

		moving time	stopped time	moving average	overall average	distance in km	total ascent in m
Day 35	Gyalthung (985 m)-Samundratar (914 m) 8 hrs	6.42	1.21	3.9	3.1	24.7	1734
Day 36	Samundratar (915 m)-Betrawati (605 m) 9 hrs	7.3	1.52	4.1	3.2	30.17	1547
Day 37	Betrawati (605 m)-Chautara (1591 m) 9 hrs	7.43	2.07	3.7	2.9	28.51	2460
Day 38	Chautara (1591 m)-Arugath (490 m) 9 hrs	6.35	1.31	4.8	3.9	31.59	803
Day 39	Arugath (490 m)-Kalikatang/Gorkha Palace (1313 m) 7 hrs	6.18	1.3	4.2	3.4	26.33	1595
Day 40	Kalikatang/Gorkha Palace (1313 m)-Gorkha (1075 m) 1 hr	0.62	0.28	3.1	2.1	1.9	139
Day 41	Gorkha (1075 m)-Appipal (1140 m) 7 hrs	5.43	1.49	3.5	2.6	19.82	1415
Day 42	Appipal (1140 m)-Paudi (520 m) 6 hrs	4.21	1.20	3.8	2.9	16.69	507
Day 43	Paudi (520 m)-Besisahar (810 m) 7 hrs	6.04	1.41	4.0	3.1	24.42	1243
Day 44	Besisahar (810 m)-Ghalegaun (2078 m) 5 hrs	3.55	1.08	3.1	2.4	12.23	1627
Day 45	Ghalegaun (2078 m)-Pasgaun (1650 m) 6 hrs	4.21	1.25	3.4	2.6	15.65	1216
Day 46	Pasgaun (1650 m)-Yangjakot (1450 m) 9 hrs	7.19	2.15	3.1	2.4	22.74	2339
Day 47	Yangjakot (1450 m)-Sikles (1945 m) 6 hrs	4.51	1.10	3.2	2.6	15.57	1479
Day 48	Sikles (1945 m)- Ghalekharka (1674 m) 6 hrs	5.00	2.00	2.9	2.1	14.54	1344
Day 49	Ghalekharka (1674 m)- Lwang (1440 m) 5 hrs	6.20	0.45	4.5	3.9	19.65	1034
Day 50	Lwang (1440 m)-Ghandruk (2040 m) 7 hrs	4.04	2.08	3.0	2.2	17.98	2139
Day 51	Ghandruk (2040 m)-Ghorepani (2885 m) 6 1/2 hrs	5.08	2.02	3.1	2.2	15.88	1890
Day 52	Ghorepani (2885 m)-Poon Hill (3193)- Tikot (2278 m) 1 ½ + 3 hrs	2.44	0.40	4.0	3.2	10.9	468
Day 53	Tikot (2278 m)-Beni (850 m) 4 hrs	3.63	0.78	4.1	3.4	14.38	439
Day 54	Beni (850 m)-Darbang (1100 m) 6 ½ hrs	5.49	1.32	5.0	4.0	29.2	753
Day 55	Darbang (1105 m)-Lamsung (2160 m) 8 hrs	6.16	2.57	3.5	2.5	21.83	1850
Day 56	Lamsung (2160 m)- Chhentung (2950 m) via Jalja La (3386 m) 8 hrs	6.38	2.36	3.5	2.5	22.9	1829
Day 57	Chhentung (2950 m)-Thakur (3309) via 2 passes (3691 m and 4160 m) 9 ½ hrs	8.36	2.45	2.1	1.8	17.6	1550
Day 58	Thakur (3309 m)-Guibang (2768 m) 7 hrs	5.50	2.14	3.1	2.2	18.06	1612
Day 59	Guibang (2768 m)- Campsite Sen Khola (3996 m) 7 hrs	5.38	2.30	2.5	1.7	14.14	2090
Day 60	Campsite Sen Khola (3996 m)-Campsite Purpang, Saure Khola (4065 m) 5 hrs	3.25	1.34	2.7	1.9	9.4	910
Day 61	Campsite Purpang, Saure Khola (4065 m)-Dunai (2096 m) 9 ½ hrs	7.45	2.52	3.1	2.2	23.88	1581
Day 62	Dunai (2096 m)-Chhepka (2655 m) 5 hrs	4.16	1.39	4.0	2.9	17.15	1124
Day 63	Chhepka (2655 m)-Rigmo/Phoksundo Lake 8 hrs (3608 m)	6.14	2.30	4.0	2.7	18.7	2245
Day 64	Rigmo/Phoksundo Lake (3608 m)-Kageni (2228 m) 8 ½ hrs	6.44	1.50	4.4	3.4	29.66	1369
Day 65	Kageni (2228 m)-Liku (2405 m) 6 hrs	5.22	1.29	4.5	3.5	21.4	1216
Day 66	Liku (2405 m)-Kaigaon (2642 m) 8 hrs	6.46	1.43	3.4	2.7	23.36	2243
Day 67	Kaigaon (2642 m)-Chotra (3103 m) via Maure Lagna pass (3900 m) 9 hrs	8.01	2.00	3.6	2.7	28.69	2117
Day 68	Chotra (3103 m)-Jumla (2350 m) 9 hrs	7.26	1.45	4.6	3.7	30	833
Day 69	Jumla (2350 m)-Nauri Ghat (2700 m) via Daphe Lekh pass (3900 m) 7 hrs	5.55	1.39	3.1	2.4	18.27	1745
Day 70	Nauri Ghat (2700 m)-Jharigaon (2672 m) via Ghurchi lagna pass (3447 m) 8 1/2 hrs	6.38	2.16	4.4	3.3	23.3	1696
Day 71	Jharigaon (2672 m)-Rara Lake (2986 m) 2 ½ hrs	2.16	0.48	3.8	2.8	8.69	584
Day 72	Rara Lake (2986 m)-Ratapani (1431 m) 9 hrs	6.54	1.39	4.8	3.9	33.09	579
Day 73	Ratapani (1431 m)-Kolti (1390 m) 7 hrs	5.43	1.49	4.3	3.3	24.71	890
Day 74	Kolti (1390 m)-Martadi (1591 m) 10 hrs	8.19	2.15	3.5	2.8	29.23	2043
Day 75	Martadi (1591 m)-Koth (1962 m) 6 hrs	5.12	1.28	3.3	2.6	17.14	1421
Day 76	Koth (1962 m)-Tuti (2020 m) via Bateli Bhanjyang pass (3232 m) 8 hrs	6.41	2.49	2.6	1.8	17.34	2147
Day 77	Tuti (2020 m)-Chainpur (1290 m) 4 hrs	3.10	0.63	3.6	3.0	11.53	617
Day 78	Chainpur (1290 m)-Jhota (979 m) 6 ½ hrs	5.18	1.22	4.9	4.0	26	352
Day 79	Jhota (979 m)-Jhapa (1185 m) 8 ½ hrs	7.21	2.21	4.6	3.5	34.7	882
Day 80	Jhapa (1185 m)-Sela (988 m) via pass Ganayi Khan (2126 m) 8 ½ hrs	6.44	2.23	3.6	2.6	24.06	1618
Day 81	Sela (988 m)- Gogani (1357 m) via pass Sipti (2094 m) 8 hrs	6.58	2.54	3.1	2.2	21.64	2165
Day 82	Gogani (1357 m)-Darchula (890) via Dhalek (2139 m) 5 ½ hrs	4.59	0.88	3.8	3.2	18.82	1217
Total						1548.68	113731
Total ascent divided by altitude Everest (8848 m)							12.85

Glossary

Amchi	a traditional doctor of Tibetan medicine
Bazaar	trading place or town
Bhanjyang	pass, see also Deurali and La
Deurali	minor pass, see also Bhanjyang and La
Daal bhaat	dish of rice, vegetable curry, lentil soup and some pickle
Gaon	Nepali word for village (the ‘n’ is barely pronounced)
Gompa	Buddhist monastery (literally: ‘meditation’)
Himal	snowy mountain range
Himalaya	the ‘eternal snows’
Khola	river or stream, see also Koshi and Nadi
Koshi	alternative name for river; see also Khola and Nadi
La	a pass, see also Bhanjyang and Deurali
Mani wall	Wall with Buddhist prayers, mostly “Om mani padme hum”, which means something like “Blessed is the jewel in the lotus”, with whom The Buddha is meant
Nadi	very large river; see also Khola and Koshi
Pokhari	lake or large pond
Sarangi	Nepali violin type of musical instrument
	Teahouse what Nepali people call a mountain lodge or basic hotel, normally owned and operated by a family; distinct from teashops, which are common throughout the hills, teahouses are normally only found on regular trade and tourist routes
Terai	the plains area, once covered in dense jungle, which forms the southern border with India

Nepali Language Hints

Useful words and phrases

Provided by Siân Pritchard-Jones and Bob Gibbons

(Authors of travel guide books including Annapurna, Manaslu & Dolpo)

Hello/Goodbye

Goodnight

How are you?

Very well

Thank you

Yes (it is)

No (it isn't)

Yes (have)

No (don't have)

OK

What is your name?

My name is Bob

Please go slowly

Where is a lodge?

What's the name of this village?

Which trail goes to Lho?

Where are you going?

I don't understand

I don't know

Please give me a cup of tea

How much is it?

Where is the toilet?

Where is water?

I want to rent a pony

I need a porter

I am sick

I have altitude sickness

Namaste

Suva ratri

Tapailai kasto chha?

Ramro chha

Dhanyabad

Ho

Hoina

Chha

Chhaina

Tik chha

Tapaike naam ke ho?

Mero naam Bob ho

Bistaari jaane

Lodge kahaa chha?

Yo gaaunko naam ke ho?

Lho jaane baato kun ho?

Tapai kahaa jaane?

Maile buhjina

Ta chhaina

Chiyaa dinos

Kati paisa

Chaarpi kahaa chha?

Pani kahaa chha?

Malaai ghoda bhadama chaainchha

Ma kulli chaainchha

Ma biraami chhu

Lekh laagyo

Other useful words

what	<i>ke</i>
where	<i>kun</i>
when	<i>kaile</i>
how much	<i>kati</i>
good	<i>ramro</i>
bad	<i>naramro</i>
cold	<i>jaaro/chiso</i>
hot	<i>garam/tato</i>
trail	<i>baato</i>
steeply up	<i>ukaalo</i>
steeply down	<i>oraalo</i>
river (small)	<i>khola/nadi</i>

Food

food	<i>khanaa</i>
bread	<i>roti</i>
rice	<i>bhaat</i>
noodle soup	<i>thukpa</i>
egg	<i>phul/anda</i>
meat	<i>maasu</i>
yoghurt	<i>dahi</i>
sugar	<i>chini</i>
salt	<i>nun</i>
water	<i>pani</i>
boiled water	<i>umaalekho pani</i>
black tea	<i>kalo chiyaa</i>
hot water	<i>tatopani</i>
cold water	<i>chiso pani</i>
tasty	<i>mitho</i>

Numbers

1	<i>ek</i>	11	<i>ekhaara</i>
2	<i>dui</i>	12	<i>baara</i>
3	<i>tin</i>	15	<i>pandhra</i>
4	<i>char</i>	20	<i>bis</i>
5	<i>paanch</i>	30	<i>tis</i>
6	<i>chha</i>	40	<i>chaalis</i>
7	<i>saat</i>	50	<i>pachaas</i>
8	<i>aath</i>	100	<i>ek say</i>
9	<i>nau</i>	500	<i>panch say</i>
10	<i>das</i>	1000	<i>ek hazaar</i>



The Great Himalaya Trail (GHT) is one of the longest and highest walking-trails in the world. In Nepal, trekkers can choose between the GHT High Route, winding through high mountain ranges and the GHT Low Route, also referred to as the cultural route. The Low Route goes mostly through the mid-hills between 1,500 and 2,500 m, passing through small villages, inhabited by Nepal's various ethnic groups, with the snowcapped Himalaya at the horizon.

This guidebook describes the Low Route of the Great Himalaya Trail in Nepal, broken up into 11 packages, which can be done separately from each other. In the second half of the book you will find the travel experiences of the author, who hiked the trail in 2012 and 2013.

- Detailed day by day itineraries, including directions
- Information about accommodation and other tourism services along the way
- Lots of practical information to prepare your trek
- Information about health and safety during trekking
- Practical tips for responsible trekking
- Travel experiences of the author during the trek
- Maps of the treks
- Made in Nepal

For more information about the Great Himalaya Trail, please go to

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