



Earthbound Expeditions

Everest Three High Passes Trek

22 days, from US\$2,387 per person

Duration

22 days

Start and end

Kathmandu

Accommodation

Teahouses

Getting there

Fly to Lukla

Grade

Very strenuous

On the trail

5 to 7 hours a day

Meals

All meals on the trek

Max altitude

5,545 m

Best season

Apr to May, Oct to Nov

Group size

Up to 8

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Everest Three High Passes Trek Overview

Every valley in the Khumbu, three passes above 5,300 m, the Gokyo lakes and Everest Base Camp. The complete circuit of the Everest region, and the hardest trek we offer.

Trek overview

This trek links the whole of the Khumbu: four valleys, three passes over 5,300 m, the Gokyo lakes, Everest Base Camp and Kala Patthar, walked as a single anticlockwise circuit over eighteen days on the trail. The Base Camp trek goes up one valley and back; this trek crosses every ridge between the valleys. It is the most complete route in this region that can be walked without ropes.

The three passes

The Renjo La, at 5,340 m, is the easiest: a steady climb from the Bhote Koshi valley to a saddle with Everest ahead and the Gokyo lakes below. The Cho La, at 5,420 m, is the most technical, with a short, flat glacier crossing at the top where you wear microspikes, and a steep, loose descent on the east side. The Kongma La, at 5,535 m, is the highest and by far the hardest: eight to ten hours, with a glacier crossing at the start and a long, continuous climb after it, on day 17 after two weeks of trekking.

Who this trip is for

This is the hardest trek we offer, and the one for which we most often decline bookings. It is for people who have already completed a Himalayan trek of two weeks or more, who were comfortable at 5,000 m rather than simply completing it, and who are genuinely fit. It is not suitable as a first Himalayan trek or as the next step after a week in the Alps. Enthusiasm is no substitute for previous experience at altitude.

Direction of the route

We walk the route anticlockwise, from west to east, for good reason. This puts the easiest pass first, when you are least acclimatised, and the hardest pass last, after two weeks above 4,000 m. It also means every pass is crossed from its lower side, so each involves a climb followed by a descent rather than the reverse. Itineraries in the other direction exist, but they place the Kongma La after only eight days in the mountains.

Itinerary

Day	Route	Hours	Distance	Altitude
1	Arrive Kathmandu	–	–	1,400 m
2	Kathmandu valley sites, kit check	–	–	1,400 m
3	Fly to Lukla, walk to Monjo	4–5 hrs	12 km	2,560 m
4	Monjo to Namche Bazaar	5–6 hrs	8 km	3,440 m
5	Namche, acclimatisation day	2–4 hrs	–	3,440 m
6	Namche to Thame	5–6 hrs	10 km	3,845 m
7	Thame to Marlung	4–5 hrs	8 km	4,135 m
8	Marlung to Lungden	3–4 hrs	6 km	4,600 m
9	Up towards the Renjo La	2–3 hrs	5 km	4,890 m
10	Over the Renjo La to Gokyo	7–8 hrs	12 km	5,340 m

11	Gokyo Ri, rest day	4–5 hrs	5 km	5,357 m
12	Across the Ngozumpa to Thangnak	2–3 hrs	4 km	4,695 m
13	Over the Cho La to Dzongla	7–9 hrs	14 km	5,420 m
14	Dzongla to Lobuche	3–4 hrs	6 km	4,925 m
15	Lobuche to Base Camp, sleep Gorak Shep	7–8 hrs	13 km	5,364 m
16	Kala Patthar at dawn, down to Lobuche	6–7 hrs	10 km	5,545 m
17	Over the Kongma La to Chhukung	8–10 hrs	12 km	5,535 m
18	Chhukung to Tengboche	6–7 hrs	18 km	3,867 m
19	Tengboche to Namche	5–6 hrs	10 km	3,440 m
20	Namche to Lukla	6–7 hrs	13 km	2,860 m
21	Fly to Kathmandu	–	–	1,400 m
22	Fly home	–	–	–

Day 1

Arrive in Kathmandu

We meet you at the airport and take you to your hotel. In the evening, we go through the trek in detail, because it has more elements than most: three passes, four valleys and a decision point at each pass.

Altitude: 1,400 m On foot: None, arrival day Night: Hotel, Kathmandu Meals: Dinner

Day 2

Kathmandu Valley sightseeing

Visit the hilltop stupa at Swayambhunath, the riverside temples at Pashupatinath, the great dome of Boudhanath and the carved squares of Patan. In the afternoon, we check your equipment, paying particular attention to your boots on this trek.

Altitude: 1,400 m On foot: Easy walking, 2–3 hrs Night: Hotel, Kathmandu Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 3

Fly to Lukla and trek to Monjo

After the mountain flight, trek down the Dudh Koshi past Phakding to Monjo at the national park gate. This is a little further than the usual first day, which makes the climb to Namche tomorrow shorter.

Altitude: 2,560 m On foot: 12 km, 4–5 hrs Night: Teahouse, Monjo Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 4

Trek to Namche Bazaar

Pass through the park gate, cross the high Hillary bridge, and make the long climb through pine forest to Namche. On a clear day, you have your first view of Everest on the way up.

Altitude: 3,440 m On foot: 8 km, 5–6 hrs Night: Teahouse, Namche Bazaar Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 5

Acclimatisation day in Namche Bazaar

The first acclimatisation day. Walk up to the viewpoint above the town for views of Everest, Lhotse and Ama Dablam, then return to Namche to sleep. Buy anything you have forgotten here, as it is the last well-stocked shop for two weeks.

Altitude: 3,440 m On foot: Optional 2–4 hrs Night: Teahouse, Namche Bazaar Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 6

Trek to Thame

From here, the trek leaves the Base Camp route. You turn west up the Bhote Koshi into a valley that Base Camp trekkers do not visit. This is the old salt-trading route to Tibet. Thame is a village that has produced a remarkable number of Everest summiteers, including members of Tenzing Norgay's family and Apa Sherpa.

Altitude: 3,845 m On foot: 10 km, 5–6 hrs Night: Teahouse, Thame Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 7

Trek to Marlung

Continue up the Bhote Koshi valley, which becomes narrower and quieter. You pass yak pastures and a few stone houses, with Tibet beyond the ridge ahead. The day is kept short on purpose, because the altitude is now rising steadily.

Altitude: 4,135 m On foot: 8 km, 4–5 hrs Night: Teahouse, Marlung Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 8

Trek to Lungden

Another short day at altitude to the last settlement in the valley. Lungden has two or three buildings and wide open views, and from here the trek becomes truly remote.

Altitude: 4,600 m On foot: 6 km, 3–4 hrs Night: Teahouse, Lungden Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 9

Trek to the Renjo La high camp

A short walk up to a high camp below the first pass, which divides the crossing into two manageable stages. The afternoon is for resting and drinking plenty of water, and the guide checks your oxygen readings before dinner.

Altitude: 4,890 m On foot: 5 km, 2–3 hrs Night: Teahouse, below the Renjo La Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 10

Cross the Renjo La and trek to Gokyo

The first pass, at 5,340 m, is the easiest of the three. A steady climb leads to a saddle hung with prayer flags, with views of Everest, Lhotse and Makalu straight ahead and the Gokyo lakes directly below. A steep stone staircase descends to the third lake and the village.

Altitude: 5,340 m at the Renjo La On foot: 12 km, 7–8 hrs Night: Teahouse, Gokyo Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 11

Hike to Gokyo Ri and rest day

Climb the hill behind the village at dawn to 5,357 m for views of Everest, Lhotse, Makalu and Cho Oyu, four of the six highest mountains in the world. The rest of the day is a full rest day, which you will need after the first pass.

Altitude: 5,357 m at Gokyo Ri On foot: 5 km, 4–5 hrs Night: Teahouse, Gokyo Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 12

Cross the Ngozumpa Glacier to Thangnak

A short day that crosses the Ngozumpa Glacier, the longest glacier in Nepal, which looks like a field of rubble with ice beneath it. On the far side there are a few buildings at Thangnak. The walk takes two or three hours, and the guide chooses the route across the glacier.

Altitude: 4,695 m On foot: 4 km, 2–3 hrs Night: Teahouse, Thangnak Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 13

Cross the Cho La and trek to Dzongla

The most technical pass. After an early start, a steep climb leads to the pass at 5,420 m, followed by a short glacier crossing at the top that is flat but icy, where the guide will fit you with microspikes. The descent on the east side is steep and loose. This is a long and demanding day with outstanding scenery.

Altitude: 5,420 m at the Cho La On foot: 14 km, 7–9 hrs Night: Teahouse, Dzongla Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 14

Trek to Lobuche

A short, easy and scenic day, traversing above the Khumbu glacier with Ama Dablam behind you and Pumori ahead. You join the Base Camp trail at Lobuche, where you meet larger numbers of trekkers for the first time in a week.

Altitude: 4,925 m On foot: 6 km, 3–4 hrs Night: Teahouse, Lobuche Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 15

Trek to Everest Base Camp

Follow the glacier to Gorak Shep for lunch, then cross the moraine to Base Camp below the Khumbu Icefall. In spring, it is filled with the tents of climbing expeditions. Return to Gorak Shep to sleep.

Altitude: 5,364 m at Base Camp On foot: 13 km, 7–8 hrs Night: Teahouse, Gorak Shep Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 16

Hike to Kala Patthar and trek to Lobuche

An early start in the cold and dark to climb Kala Patthar for the best view of Everest at sunrise, then descend to Lobuche to prepare for the last pass. This is the highest point of the trek, but not the hardest day.

Altitude: 5,545 m at Kala Patthar On foot: 10 km, 6–7 hrs Night: Teahouse, Lobuche Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 17

Cross the Kongma La and trek to Chhukung

The hardest day of the trek and the highest pass, at 5,535 m. You first cross the Khumbu Glacier, then climb steadily for a long time to a saddle with frozen lakes and prayer flags, followed by a long descent into the Imja valley. The day takes eight to ten hours, and the whole trek has been preparing you for it.

Altitude: 5,535 m at the Kongma La On foot: 12 km, 8–10 hrs Night: Teahouse, Chhukung Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 18

Trek to Tengboche

Descend the Imja valley through Dingboche and Pangboche, losing height all day and breathing more easily, to the monastery at Tengboche on its ridge with Ama Dablam behind. The hardest part of the trek is now over.

Altitude: 3,867 m On foot: 18 km, 6–7 hrs Night: Teahouse, Tengboche Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 19

Trek to Namche Bazaar

Descend to the river at Phunki Tenga and climb back up to Namche, through forest with birdsong, to a hot shower. The rest of the trek is relatively easy.

Altitude: 3,440 m On foot: 10 km, 5–6 hrs Night: Teahouse, Namche Bazaar Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 20

Trek to Lukla

The last full day on the trail, back across the bridges and through the villages to Lukla. In the evening, we have dinner with the guides and porters, which is a special occasion at the end of this trek.

Altitude: 2,860 m On foot: 13 km, 6–7 hrs Night: Teahouse, Lukla Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 21

Fly to Kathmandu

A short morning flight back to Kathmandu, with the rest of the day free. A farewell dinner in the evening, and a comfortable hotel bed.

Altitude: 1,400 m On foot: None, flight day Night: Hotel, Kathmandu Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 22

Departure

We take you to the airport, or on to any extension you have booked. As on any Khumbu trek, allow a spare day in your wider plans in case of weather delays at Lukla.

Altitude: 1,400 m On foot: None, departure day Night: No overnight Meals: Breakfast

What's included

- Airport transfers & ground transport
- Licensed English-speaking guide
- Accommodation throughout the trip
- All permits & national park fees
- Meals as per the itinerary

Not included

- International flights
- Travel & rescue insurance
- Personal trekking gear
- Tips & personal expenses
- Nepal entry visa (on arrival)

Packing list

Baggage weight limits

Your porter carries a maximum of 20 kg, shared between two trekkers. The Lukla flight allows 15 kg in total, 10 kg checked and 5 kg as hand luggage, and all baggage is weighed. On a trek this long, it is tempting to pack more, but the flight limit does not allow it. We provide the duffel bag, the sleeping bag and the down jacket.

Head and eyes

- Sun hat with a brim, and a warm hat that covers your ears
- Two buffs or neck gaiters
- Category 3 or 4 sunglasses. Snow glare at this altitude is severe
- Headtorch and spare batteries
- SPF 50 sunscreen and lip balm with sun protection

Clothing

- Three or four merino or synthetic base layers, not cotton
- Two mid layers: one fleece and one light insulated jacket
- Down jacket. We provide one, but bring your own if you tend to feel the cold
- Waterproof jacket and trousers that pack small
- Two pairs of trekking trousers, one of them lined
- Underwear for four or five days, washed along the way

Hands and feet

- Liner gloves and insulated outer gloves or mittens
- Trekking boots with ankle support, which must be broken in before the trek
- Four pairs of wool trekking socks
- Camp shoes or trainers for the evenings
- Gaiters, if you are travelling in winter or early spring

Bags

- Duffel bag for the porter, 20 kg maximum. We provide one
- Daypack, 30 to 35 litres, with a rain cover
- Dry bags or thick liners, as rain and snow will eventually soak through ordinary bags

Sleeping

- Sleeping bag rated to -15°C. We provide one
- Silk or cotton liner, for warmth and hygiene
- Earplugs, as teahouse walls are thin plywood

Health

- Personal first aid kit: blister plasters, tape, painkillers and rehydration salts
- Diamox, if your doctor agrees, and any regular medication
- Water purification: tablets, a filter or a SteriPen
- Hand sanitiser and wet wipes
- Throat lozenges. Almost everyone develops a dry cough at high altitude

Documents and money

- Passport valid for six months, and two photocopies
- Four passport photographs for permits
- Travel insurance certificate showing helicopter cover to 6,000 m
- \$450 to \$700 in small notes. The last cash machine is at Namche Bazaar, eighteen days before the end of the trek

For the three passes

- Microspikes. We carry a set for the Cho La, and you are welcome to bring your own if you have a reliable pair
- Warm mittens rather than gloves, and a spare pair of liners. On all three passes, the day starts in the dark at about -15°C
- Gaiters, in all seasons on this trek. The Cho La and the Kongma La both have snow in most seasons
- Two power banks. Charging at Lungden, Thangnak and Dzongla is solar-powered and limited, and there are three-day stretches with almost no charging
- An insulated flask, because hydration bladder hoses freeze on all three passes
- More cash than you think you need. There are eighteen days of tea, charging and showers with no cash machine after Namche
- Two blister kits. Cuts and blisters stop healing above 4,600 m, and you spend nine nights at that altitude

Route map

Everest Three High Passes Trek

22 days | Highest point 5,545 m | Very strenuous



Start: Fly to Lukla, walk to Monjo

End: Fly back to Kathmandu

Altitude by day



Optional extras

Island Peak from Chhukung

from \$1,100, +4 days

You descend from the Kongma La to Chhukung, which is the base for Island Peak at 6,189 m. Adding the climb is a natural next step and requires a day of rope and crampon training. Together, the trek and the climb take about a month.

An extra day at Gokyo

\$140, +1 day

This allows you to visit Gokyo Ri and the fifth lake on separate days and gives you a full rest day between the Renjo La and the Cho La. On a trek with one rest day in eighteen, this is the extra we recommend most.

An extra day before the Kongma La

\$140, +1 day

An extra night at Lobuche between Kala Patthar and the last pass. Day 17 is the hardest day of the trek and otherwise follows a dawn climb to 5,545 m. A rest day in between makes it considerably easier.

Helicopter from Gorak Shep

from \$2,900 for the aircraft, saves 6 days

If the Kongma La cannot be crossed, or if you wish to finish after Base Camp, this is the way out. The helicopter is chartered as a whole rather than by the seat.

Everest scenic flight

\$220, 1 morning

A one-hour flight along the Himalaya from Kathmandu, with a guaranteed window seat. It gives you a view of the whole circuit you have just walked.

Chitwan or Bardia

from \$390, +3 days

Lowland jungle, rhinos and a bed at 150 m. After nine nights above 4,600 m, this is good for your recovery as well as enjoyable.

Luxury lodge upgrade in the lower Khumbu

Price on request

Where the route passes a premium lodge, we book it in place of the standard teahouse. Mountain Lodges of Nepal has lodges at Lukla, Phakding, Monjo, Namche and Deboche, and Everest Summit Lodges has lodges at Lukla, Monjo, Tashinga and Pangboche. Expect warmer rooms, better beds, attached bathrooms in most rooms and a quieter dining room.

There are no premium lodges above Pangboche, so the higher nights are in standard teahouses. We confirm which lodges have rooms on your dates before you book.

Photos, videos and reviews of this trip: enepaltrekking.com/everest-three-passes-trek