



Earthbound Expeditions

Khopra Ridge Trek

12 days, from US\$1,090 per person

Duration

12 days

Start and end

Kathmandu

Accommodation

Community lodges

Getting there

Via Pokhara

Grade

Moderate

On the trail

4 to 6 hours a day

Meals

All meals on the trek

Max altitude

4,500 m

Best season

Mar to May, Oct to Nov

Group size

Up to 10

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Khopra Ridge Trek Overview

A quiet ridge above the busy Poon Hill trail, where the lodges belong to the villages and Dhaulagiri fills the western sky.

Trek overview

This is a twelve-day trip, with eight days of walking, on a ridge one valley west of the busy Poon Hill trail. You drive to Ghandruk, climb through forest to Dobato, cross to Chistibung and go up onto Khopra Danda at 3,660 m, where a single community lodge stands on a grass ridge facing Dhaulagiri across the valley. From there the trek descends through Swanta and Ghorepani.

Community-owned lodges

On the main Annapurna trails, the lodges are family businesses competing with each other. At Chistibung, Khopra and Swanta they are owned by the villages. They were built from about 2014 on a model promoted by Mahabir Pun, and households from the community take turns to manage them. A large share of the profit goes to village funds for the school and the health post rather than to an owner.

Who this trip is for

This trek suits people who have walked in the hills at home, want five to seven hours of walking a day rather than nine, and prefer to share a dining room with fourteen people rather than a hundred and forty. It is not technical and there is no pass to cross. If you have done the Poon Hill trek and found it busy, this route goes through the same forest to a much quieter ridge above it.

The two demanding parts

The lodges are simpler than the commercial ones an hour away: fewer rooms, shorter menus, solar power that can run out after a cloudy day, and hot water that sometimes comes in a bucket. The Khayer Lake day is long, high and dependent on the weather, and many trekkers either skip it or turn back. Neither is a problem if you know about them before you book.

Itinerary

Day	Route	Hours	Distance	Altitude
1	Arrive Kathmandu	–	–	1,400 m
2	Kathmandu to Pokhara, fly or drive	–	–	820 m
3	Jeep to Ghandruk, walk to Tadapani	3 hrs walk	6 km	2,630 m
4	Tadapani to Dobato	5–6 hrs	11 km	3,420 m
5	Muldai at dawn, down to Chistibung	5–6 hrs	10 km	3,637 m
6	Chistibung to Khopra Danda	3–4 hrs	7 km	3,660 m
7	Khayer Lake and back, weather allowing	8–10 hrs	16 km	about 4,500 m
8	Khopra Danda to Swanta	5–6 hrs	12 km	2,270 m
9	Swanta to Ghorepani	4–5 hrs	9 km	2,874 m
10	Poon Hill, down to Birethanti, drive to Pokhara	5–6 hrs	13 km	3,210 m

11	Pokhara to Kathmandu	-	-	1,400 m
12	Fly home	-	-	-

Day 1

Arrive in Kathmandu

We meet you at Kathmandu airport and drive you to your hotel. The rest of the day is free to rest after your flight or explore the streets around Thamel. In the evening we have dinner together, check your equipment and brief you on the trek.

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

Day 2

Fly or drive to Pokhara

A twenty-five minute flight, or six hours by road west along the Trishuli river, depending on what you chose when you booked. Pokhara lies at 820 m beside a lake, with the Annapurnas above it, and the afternoon is free. Buy anything you have forgotten here, as there are no proper shops on the trek.

Altitude: 820 m On foot: None, flight or 6 hr drive Night: Hotel, Pokhara Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 3

Drive to Ghandruk and trek to Tadapani

The drive up the Modi Khola to Ghandruk takes three to four hours by jeep. Ghandruk is a large Gurung village at 1,940 m, with slate roofs and views of Annapurna South. From there a short afternoon walk through rhododendron and oak forest takes you to Tadapani, a gentle start to the trek.

Altitude: 2,630 m On foot: 6 km, 3 hrs Night: Teahouse, Tadapani Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 4

Trek to Dobato

The main climbing begins today. The trail goes through forest all morning, thinning as you gain height, with views of Machhapuchhre behind you through the trees. Dobato is a clearing with three lodges at 3,420 m. This is the biggest climb of the trek, so your guide will keep the pace slow.

Altitude: 3,420 m On foot: 11 km, 5–6 hrs Night: Lodge, Dobato Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 5

Sunrise at Muldai and trek to Chistibung

You set off in the dark for the forty-five minute climb to Muldai at 3,637 m, where Dhaulagiri, the Annapurnas and Machhapuchhre are visible together, usually with few other people. After returning for breakfast, you descend a long way through forest to Chistibung at 2,975 m. Sleeping lower than the high point of the day helps your acclimatisation.

Altitude: 2,975 m On foot: 10 km, 5–6 hrs Night: Community lodge, Chistibung Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 6

Trek to Khopra Danda

This is a deliberately short day. The trail leaves the last trees behind and climbs open pasture onto the ridge, where the community lodge stands alone at 3,660 m with Dhaulagiri filling the western sky. You arrive by early afternoon and have the rest of the day to rest and enjoy the view.

Altitude: 3,660 m On foot: 7 km, 3–4 hrs Night: Community lodge, Khopra Danda Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 7

Optional hike to Khayer Lake

This is the hardest day of the trek, and it is optional. You leave before dawn and follow the ridge north above 4,000 m to the sacred lake and the shrine at Khayer Barah, then return the same way. It takes eight to ten hours, there is no lodge or shelter, and in some weeks snow closes the route completely. Your guide decides on the morning whether it goes ahead.

Altitude: about 4,500 m at Khayer Lake On foot: 16 km, 8–10 hrs Night: Community lodge, Khopra Danda Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 8

Trek to Swanta

After a final sunrise from the ridge, you make a long descent, losing nearly 1,400 m through pasture and terraced fields to Swanta. The village grows apples, runs its own lodge and has a warmer climate. The descent is hard on the knees, and trekking poles are more useful here than anywhere else on the trek.

Altitude: 2,270 m On foot: 12 km, 5–6 hrs Night: Community lodge, Swanta Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 9

Trek to Ghorepani

You descend to the river, cross it, then climb the far side through Chitre to rejoin the main trail at Ghorepani. After five quiet days, you are back among lodges with long menus, hot showers and many more trekkers.

Altitude: 2,874 m On foot: 9 km, 4–5 hrs Night: Teahouse, Ghorepani Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 10

Sunrise at Poon Hill and return to Pokhara

You start in the dark to reach Poon Hill at 3,210 m, the best-known viewpoint in this area. It is usually busy, with around a hundred other people, but the view is worth the hour's climb. You then make a long descent on the stone staircase through Ulleri to Birethanti, where a jeep takes you back to Pokhara for a hot bath and dinner.

Altitude: 3,210 m at Poon Hill On foot: 13 km, 5–6 hrs Night: Hotel, Pokhara Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 11

Return to Kathmandu

The morning is free in Pokhara, and a boat trip on the lake is a relaxing option. You fly or drive back to Kathmandu in the afternoon, and in the evening we have a farewell dinner together with the guide and the crew.

Altitude: 1,400 m On foot: None, flight or 6 hr drive Night: Hotel, Kathmandu Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 12

Departure

We take you to the airport for your flight home. If you have a free morning, Bhaktapur and Patan are an hour away, and we can arrange a car and a guide who can explain the carvings to you.

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 & conservation area 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

Porters and baggage limits

Your porter carries a strict maximum of 20 kg, which is your duffel and one other. There is no 15 kg flight limit on this trek because there is no mountain airstrip, so the only limit is what a porter should carry. Anything you do not need on the trek can be stored free of charge at our office in Kathmandu or at your hotel in Pokhara. We provide the duffel, the sleeping bag and the down jacket, so you do not need to bring these.

On your head

- Sun hat with a brim, and a warm hat that covers your ears
- Two buffs or neck gaiters
- Category 3 sunglasses, for the snow glare on the Khayer Lake day
- Headtorch and spare batteries. The walks to Muldai, Khayer Lake and Poon Hill all start in the dark
- Sunscreen SPF 50 and lip balm with sun protection

On your body

- Three merino or synthetic base layers, no cotton
- Two mid layers, one fleece and one light insulated jacket
- Down jacket. We provide one, but bring your own if you feel the cold at night
- Waterproof jacket and trousers that pack small
- Two pairs of trekking trousers
- Underwear for four days, and wash it at Swanta or Ghorepani

Hands and feet

- Liner gloves and warm outer gloves for the early mornings on the ridge
- Trekking boots with ankle support, which must be broken in before the trek
- Three pairs of wool trekking socks
- Camp shoes or trainers for the evenings
- Microspikes if you are trekking in December, January or February

Bags

- Duffel bag for the porter, 20 kg maximum shared between two people. We provide one
- Daypack, 30 litres, with a rain cover
- Dry bags or thick liners, as rain and damp get into packs on this trail

Sleeping

- Sleeping bag rated to -10°C. We provide one
- Silk or cotton liner, for warmth and hygiene
- Earplugs, as the lodge walls are thin plywood and the ridge is windy

Health

- Personal first aid: blister plasters, tape, painkillers, rehydration salts
- Diamox, if your doctor agrees, plus any medication you take regularly
- Water purification: tablets, a filter or a SteriPen
- Hand sanitiser and wet wipes, for the two nights without a shower
- Trekking poles, which are most useful on the descent to Swanta

Papers and money

- Passport valid for six months, plus two photocopies
- Four passport photographs for permits
- Travel insurance certificate showing helicopter cover to 5,000 m
- \$150 to \$250 in small notes, changed into rupees. There is no ATM after Ghandruk and no lodge accepts cards

Route map

Khopra Ridge Trek

12 days | Highest point 4,500 m | Moderate



Start: Kathmandu to Pokhara

End: Pokhara to Kathmandu

Altitude by day



Optional extras

Mohare Danda, the rest of the community trail

from \$320, +3 days

Continue west from Swanta to Mohare Danda at 3,300 m and descend through Nangi, the villages where the community lodge model started. This is an excellent extension to the trek, and few trekkers take it.

Finish at Tatopani hot springs

\$110, +1 day

Descend from the ridge down the Kali Gandaki through Shikha to the hot springs at Tatopani, then drive back to Pokhara. This route avoids the Ulleri staircase entirely.

Paragliding over Pokhara

\$95, 1 morning

A thirty-minute flight from Sarangkot with views of the Annapurnas across the valley. Pokhara is one of the best places in the world for paragliding, and the morning of day 11 is free.

Two more nights in Pokhara

\$120, +2 days

Two extra nights by the lake at the end of the trek, to rest before travelling home.

Chitwan jungle safari

from \$390, +3 days

Travel down to the lowlands to see rhino. This is an easy addition between Pokhara and Kathmandu, with flat ground, a warm climate and no trekking.

Single room

\$110

A room to yourself for all four hotel nights. On the ridge, the lodges offer only twin-share rooms or a dormitory.

Photos, videos and reviews of this trip: enepaltrekking.com/khopra-danda-ridge-trek