



Earthbound Expeditions

Everest Base Camp Luxury Trek, with Helicopter Return

12 days, from US\$3,187 per person

Duration

12 days

Grade

Strenuous

Max altitude

5,545 m

Start and end

Kathmandu

On the trail

5 to 7 hours a day

Best season

Mar to May, Sep to Nov

Accommodation

Premium lodges

Meals

All meals

Group size

Up to 8

Getting there

Fly in, helicopter out

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Everest Base Camp Luxury Trek, with Helicopter Return Overview

The classic trek to Everest Base Camp, staying in the best lodges on the trail, with a helicopter flight from Gorak Shep after Kala Patthar instead of four days walking back.

Trek overview

This trip offers two things. The first is comfort: four-star hotels in Kathmandu and the best lodges in the Khumbu at Phakding, Namche and Dingboche, with heated rooms, private bathrooms, duvets and better food than standard teahouses provide. The second is time: the helicopter flight from Gorak Shep on day 11 removes four walking days, so the trek takes twelve days rather than sixteen. Most people book it for the time saved and also appreciate the comfort.

What stays the same

The ascent. Days 3 to 10 follow the same trail, at the same altitudes and with the same walking hours as the classic trek, and the walking is not easy. You climb from 2,610 m to 5,545 m on foot, sleep at 5,164 m at Gorak Shep in a basic lodge, and can still be turned back by altitude. There are no luxury lodges above Dingboche, and the two nights at Lobuche and Gorak Shep are in the same lodges used on the classic trek.

Acclimatisation on a shorter itinerary

This is the key point to check on any twelve-day Everest itinerary. Ours removes four days from the walk out, all below 3,500 m, which has no effect on acclimatisation. Both rest days, at Namche on day 5 and at Dingboche on day 8, are kept. Some cheaper twelve-day itineraries remove the rest days instead, which makes them a less safe trip of the same length.

What you give up

You do not walk down. For many people, the descent through Pheriche and Namche, with the air getting thicker every hour, is one of the best parts of the trek, and this itinerary replaces it with an hour in a helicopter. If you are short of time or have concerns about your knees, this is a good choice. Otherwise, the classic sixteen-day trek is the better trip and costs \$1,320 less.

Itinerary

Day	Route	Hours	Distance	Altitude
1	Arrive Kathmandu	–	–	1,400 m
2	Kathmandu valley sites	–	–	1,400 m
3	Fly to Lukla, walk to Phakding	3–4 hrs	8 km	2,610 m
4	Phakding to Namche Bazaar	6–7 hrs	11 km	3,440 m
5	Namche, acclimatisation day	2–4 hrs	–	3,440 m
6	Namche to Tengboche	5–6 hrs	10 km	3,820 m
7	Tengboche to Dingboche	5–6 hrs	11 km	4,410 m
8	Dingboche, acclimatisation day	4–5 hrs	–	4,410 m
9	Dingboche to Lobuche	5–6 hrs	8 km	4,910 m
10	Lobuche to Base Camp, sleep Gorak Shep	7–8 hrs	13 km	5,364 m

11	Kala Patthar at dawn, helicopter to Kathmandu	2–3 hrs walking, 1 hr flying	–	5,545 m
12	Fly home	–	–	–

Day 1

Arrive in Kathmandu

You are met at the airport and driven to a four-star hotel in a quiet part of Thamel. In the evening we go through the trek, check your equipment and weigh your bag, because the Lukla baggage allowance applies to every traveller.

Altitude: 1,400 m On foot: None, arrival day Night: Four-star hotel, Kathmandu Meals: Dinner

Day 2

Kathmandu Valley sightseeing

You visit the stupa at Swayambhunath, the riverside temples at Pashupatinath, the great dome of Boudhanath and the carved squares of Patan, with a guide who explains the religious art and symbolism. A private vehicle is provided all day, followed by an early night.

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

Day 3

Fly to Lukla and trek to Phakding

After the mountain flight, you walk gently downhill for half a day beside the Dudh Koshi to Phakding. The walking is easy, and tonight is the first of the upgraded lodges: a private room, a hot shower and a heated dining room.

Altitude: 2,610 m On foot: 8 km, 3–4 hrs Night: Luxury lodge, Phakding Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 4

Trek to Namche Bazaar

You cross the suspension bridges and then climb for a long time through pine forest to Namche, the Sherpa town built around a hillside. On a clear day you have your first view of Everest on the way up.

Altitude: 3,440 m On foot: 11 km, 6–7 hrs Night: Luxury lodge, Namche Bazaar Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 5

Acclimatisation day in Namche Bazaar

A day to allow your body to adjust. You climb to the viewpoint above the town for views of Everest, Lhotse and Ama Dablam, then return to sleep lower, which is how acclimatisation works. Namche has bakeries, coffee shops and reliable hot showers.

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

Day 6

Trek to Tengboche

An open, scenic day with mountains in view most of the way. You descend to the river, then climb for a long time to the monastery at Tengboche on its ridge, with Ama Dablam directly behind it. If a service is taking place, you can attend.

Altitude: 3,820 m On foot: 10 km, 5–6 hrs Night: Teahouse, Tengboche Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 7

Trek to Dingboche

You walk through the last of the forest, past Pangboche and up into open country above the tree line. The trail follows the Imja River to Dingboche, a cluster of stone-walled fields below the high peaks.

Altitude: 4,410 m On foot: 11 km, 5–6 hrs Night: Luxury lodge, Dingboche Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 8

Acclimatisation day in Dingboche

The second acclimatisation day, and an important one. A slow climb up the ridge behind the village gives views of Makalu and Lhotse, two of the highest mountains in the world, before you return to the village to sleep.

Altitude: 4,410 m On foot: Optional 4–5 hrs Night: Luxury lodge, Dingboche Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 9

Trek to Lobuche

A shorter, higher day up the Khumbu valley. You pass the stone memorials at Thukla, built for climbers who died on Everest, before reaching Lobuche near the edge of the glacier. From here onwards there are no upgraded lodges.

Altitude: 4,910 m On foot: 8 km, 5–6 hrs Night: Teahouse, Lobuche Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 10

Trek to Everest Base Camp

The main day of the trek. A rocky walk along the glacier leads to Gorak Shep for lunch, then across the moraine to Base Camp itself, below the Khumbu Icefall. In spring it is filled with climbers' tents. We return to Gorak Shep for the night.

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

Day 11

Hike to Kala Patthar and fly to Kathmandu

A cold, dark and early start up Kala Patthar for the best view of Everest as the sun reaches it. Then, instead of four days walking back, a helicopter takes off from Gorak Shep and flies you to Kathmandu in about an hour, following the route you walked. You have lunch at the hotel and time to rest.

Altitude: 5,545 m at Kala Patthar On foot: 2–3 hrs, then 1 hr flying Night: Four-star hotel, Kathmandu Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 12

Departure

We take you to the airport. As with any Khumbu itinerary, book an international flight that leaves at least one day later than this, because the helicopter also depends on the weather.

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

What's included

- Airport transfers and ground transport
- Licensed English-speaking guide
- Accommodation throughout the trip
- All permits and national park fees

- Meals as per the itinerary
- Four-star hotels in Kathmandu, upgraded from three-star
- Single en suite room wherever available on the route
- One porter per traveller rather than one between two
- Domestic flights in place of the longest road transfers
- Down jacket and sleeping bag provided
- Farewell dinner in Kathmandu

Not included

- International flights
- Travel and rescue insurance
- Tips and personal expenses
- Nepal entry visa (on arrival)

Packing list

Two baggage limits, and the helicopter limit is stricter

The Lukla flight allows 15 kg in total, 10 kg checked and 5 kg hand baggage, and bags are weighed. The helicopter flight out has its own load limit, which is stricter. Each traveller has one porter, who carries up to 20 kg. We provide the duffel bag, sleeping bag and down jacket.

Headwear and sun protection

- A sun hat with a brim, and a warm hat that covers your ears
- Two buffs or neck gaiters
- Sunglasses, category 3 or 4. Snow glare at this altitude is strong
- Head torch and spare batteries
- Sunscreen SPF 50 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; bring your own if you feel the cold at night
- A waterproof jacket and trousers that pack small
- Two pairs of trekking trousers, one lined
- Underwear for four or five days, washed along the way

Gloves and footwear

- Liner gloves and insulated outer gloves or mittens
- Trekking boots with ankle support, worn in before the trek. This is essential
- 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. Nothing stays waterproof for long on a Himalayan trail

Sleeping

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

Health

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

Documents and money

- Passport valid for six months, plus two photocopies
- Four passport photographs for permits
- Travel insurance certificate showing helicopter cover to 6,000 m
- \$300 to \$500 in small notes. The last cash machine is at Namche Bazaar

Items you do not need to bring

- A towel. The upgraded lodges provide one, and at the two lodges that do not, you will not be able to wash
- Clothes for more than four days. Same-day laundry at Namche and Dingboche is included
- A power bank for the lower part of the trek. There are sockets by the bed as far as Dingboche, but bring one anyway for Lobuche and Gorak Shep
- Otherwise, the packing list is the same as for the classic Everest trek, because conditions above Dingboche are the same

Route map

Everest Base Camp Luxury Trek, with Helicopter Return

12 days | Highest point 5,545 m | Strenuous



Start: Fly to Lukla, walk to Phakding

End: Kala Patthar at dawn, then fly to Kathmandu

Altitude by day



Optional extras

Everest scenic flight

\$220, 1 morning

A one-hour flight along the range from Kathmandu, with a guaranteed window seat. It is a good alternative if cloud keeps Lukla closed, and can be added on day 2.

Helicopter landing at Base Camp

from \$300 extra, same day

On the flight out, a landing at Base Camp itself or at Kala Patthar rather than a direct flight from Gorak Shep. This depends on the weather and can be arranged on the morning of the flight.

A night at the Everest View Hotel

\$260, +1 day

At Syangboche above Namche, at 3,880 m, with a view of Everest from the terrace and oxygen supplied to the rooms. It is an unusual hotel, and the view is the one seen on postcards.

Extended Kathmandu Valley tour

\$140, 1 day

Bhaktapur, Patan and Boudhanath with a guide who explains the religious art and symbolism, and a private car. Day 2 includes a shorter version of this tour.

Chitwan luxury safari

from \$690, +3 days

Travel south to the lowland jungle to see rhino, staying in a lodge rather than a camp. A good way to recover after eight days above 3,000 m.

Single room throughout

\$420

A room to yourself in Kathmandu and in every upgraded lodge. Single rooms are not available at Lobuche and Gorak Shep.

Photos, videos and reviews of this trip: enepaltrekking.com/luxury-everest-base-camp-trek