



Earthbound Expeditions

Mardi Himal Trek

10 days, from US\$965 per person

Duration

10 days

Start and end

Kathmandu

Accommodation

Hotels and lodges

Getting there

Fly to 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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Mardi Himal Trek Overview

A short, steep ridge trek beneath Machhapuchhre (Fishtail): two days in mossy forest, a night at 3,580 m, and an early-morning climb to 4,500 m with Machhapuchhre directly above.

Trek overview

The trek is six days of walking up a single ridge that leads directly towards Machhapuchhre. You start at Kande on the road from Pokhara, climb through Gurung villages to Australian Camp, then turn north into forest, where you stay for two days. Above Low Camp the trees end, the ridge narrows, and you sleep at High Camp at 3,580 m with the mountain in view from your window. On the last morning you climb along the crest to 4,500 m and descend again.

Who this trip is for

This trek suits travellers who want to see the high Annapurnas without two weeks of walking or a night above 4,000 m. You walk four to six hours a day for most of the trek, with one long day of eight to nine hours, and nothing technical at any point. It is a good first Himalayan trek that is not a beginners' route, and many experienced Nepal trekkers choose it when they have one week rather than two.

A quieter trail

The trail was only opened to teahouse trekking in 2012, half a century after Jimmy Roberts' party made the first ascent of Mardi Himal in 1961. Everything on the ridge has been built since 2012, which is why the lodges are small and few in number. The trail becomes busier every year, and in October you will meet many other trekkers, but it is much quieter than Poon Hill.

The upper ridge

Above High Camp the ridge is narrow, exposed on both sides, and difficult in cloud or fresh snow. This section causes some trekkers to turn back every week of the season. Cloud rises up the valley most days from about 11 a.m., so we start before dawn. If the weather is unsuitable on your morning, your guide will tell you and the day will be shortened.

Itinerary

Day	Route	Hours	Distance	Altitude
1	Arrive Kathmandu	–	–	1,400 m
2	Fly to Pokhara	–	–	830 m
3	Drive to Kande, walk to Pitam Deurali	4–5 hrs	7 km	2,100 m
4	Pitam Deurali to Forest Camp	5–6 hrs	9 km	2,550 m
5	Forest Camp to Low Camp	3–4 hrs	6 km	2,970 m
6	Low Camp to High Camp	4–5 hrs	6 km	3,580 m
7	Base Camp at dawn, down to Low Camp	8–9 hrs	16 km	4,500 m
8	Low Camp to Siding, drive to Pokhara	5–6 hrs	13 km	830 m
9	Fly or drive to Kathmandu	–	–	1,400 m
10	Fly home	–	–	n/a

Day 1

Arrive in Kathmandu

We meet you in the arrivals hall and drive you to your hotel. The trek starts the day after tomorrow, so the afternoon is free: you can rest after your flight or walk into the old city to see the temples. Over dinner we go through the route, the equipment and the expected weather for your dates.

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

Day 2

Fly to Pokhara

A 25-minute flight over the middle hills takes you to Pokhara, a lakeside town at 830 m with the Annapurnas rising behind it. The rest of the day is free. On a clear afternoon Machhapuchhre is visible from the lake, and it is worth taking time to view it before you trek beneath it.

Altitude: 830 m On foot: None, flight day Night: Hotel, Pokhara Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 3

Drive to Kande and trek to Pitam Deurali

Drive for an hour to Kande, then walk uphill from the start through pine forest to Australian Camp, where the full mountain range comes into view. The path descends to the village of Pothana and climbs gently on stone steps to Pitam Deurali, a junction on a saddle with two lodges. It is a short first afternoon, steep in places.

Altitude: 2,100 m On foot: 7 km, 4–5 hrs Night: Teahouse, Pitam Deurali Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 4

Trek to Forest Camp

Today you leave the villages behind. The trail turns north onto the main ridge and into old rhododendron and oak forest, covered in moss and rich in birdlife, and stays under the trees for several hours. There are no views and very few buildings. Forest Camp is a clearing with a small number of teahouses.

Altitude: 2,550 m On foot: 9 km, 5–6 hrs Night: Teahouse, Forest Camp Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 5

Trek to Low Camp

The trail continues through forest, climbing steadily, until the trees become smaller and then end, and the ridge opens out. Low Camp is just above the tree line, with Machhapuchhre filling the head of the valley ahead. This is a deliberately short day: you gain 400 m and sleep at that altitude to acclimatise.

Altitude: 2,970 m On foot: 6 km, 3–4 hrs Night: Teahouse, Low Camp Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 6

Trek to High Camp

The trail now leaves the trees behind and crosses open grass and low scrub, passing Badal Danda with its long view down the Mardi Khola valley. The last hour is a bare, stony climb onto the shoulder where High Camp stands. Beds are limited here, so we start early. Cloud usually arrives in the afternoon, before we reach High Camp.

Altitude: 3,580 m On foot: 6 km, 4–5 hrs Night: Teahouse, High Camp Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 7

Hike to Mardi Himal Base Camp and trek to Low Camp

We set off before first light with head torches, climbing a narrowing ridge with the ground dropping away on both sides. The Upper Viewpoint at 4,200 m is reached after about three hours, and Base Camp at 4,500 m is an hour further, with Machhapuchhre very close. We then descend past High Camp to Low Camp.

Altitude: 4,500 m at Base Camp On foot: 16 km, 8–9 hrs Night: Teahouse, Low Camp Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 8

Trek to Siding and drive to Pokhara

A long descent on a new trail, leaving the ridge at Low Camp and descending through forest and terraced fields to the Gurung village of Siding at 1,700 m. A jeep meets us for the rough two to three hour drive to Pokhara, where you have a hot shower and a comfortable hotel bed.

Altitude: 830 m On foot: 13 km, 5–6 hrs Night: Hotel, Pokhara Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 9

Return to Kathmandu

Fly or drive to Kathmandu, as chosen when you booked. The afternoon is free for exploring Thamel and shopping for gifts. In the evening we have a farewell dinner together with your guide.

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

Day 10

Departure

We drive you to the airport in good time for your flight. If you have a spare day or two at the end of the trip, Pokhara is worth revisiting, and Chitwan is a few hours by road from there. Tell us before you book and we will add either to the end of your trip.

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

Pack light, as everything on this ridge is carried by hand

Your porter carries 15 kg shared between two trekkers, which is generous for a six-day trek and more than you should need. There is no flight weight limit on this trek, so the limit is set by the trail rather than an aircraft. Above Low Camp the lodges have no road, mule or cable access: gas, rice and washing water are all carried up by porters, which is a good reason to pack less. We provide a duffel bag in Pokhara, and we also supply the sleeping bag and down jacket, so you do not need to bring these from home.

Head

- A brimmed sun hat and a wool hat that covers your ears
- Two buffs, or a buff and a neck gaiter
- Category 3 sunglasses. The ridge is bright even under cloud
- Head torch and spare batteries. The Base Camp day starts in the dark
- SPF 50 sunscreen and a lip balm with sun protection

Clothing

- Three merino or synthetic base layers, no cotton
- A fleece and one light insulated jacket
- Down jacket for High Camp and the early start. We provide one
- Waterproof jacket and trousers that pack small. Afternoon cloud often brings rain
- Two pairs of trekking trousers
- Underwear for four days, with laundry in Pokhara

Hands and feet

- Liner gloves and a warmer pair to wear over them
- Broken-in boots with ankle support. The descent to Siding is hard on feet and boots
- Four pairs of wool trekking socks
- Camp shoes for the evenings
- A pair of trekking poles, which we strongly recommend on this trek

Bags

- A porter duffel bag, 15 kg maximum. We provide it in Pokhara
- Daypack of 25 to 30 litres with a rain cover
- Dry bags or a thick pack liner. Forest Camp is damp in every season

Sleeping

- A sleeping bag rated to -10°C, which we supply
- Silk or cotton liner, for warmth and hygiene
- Earplugs. Walls at High Camp are a single sheet of plywood

Health

- Blister plasters, tape, painkillers and rehydration salts
- Any regular medication, in your daypack rather than your duffel
- Water purification tablets or a filter, because water is scarce above Low Camp
- Hand sanitiser and wet wipes for the two days without a shower
- Leeches are common in the weeks either side of the monsoon: take a small bottle of salt if you trek in June or September

Papers and money

- Passport valid for six months, plus a photocopy
- Two passport photographs for the permits
- Insurance certificate showing helicopter cover to 5,000 m
- \$150 to \$250 in rupees, in small notes. Pokhara has the last cash machine

Route map

Mardi Himal Trek

10 days | Highest point 4,500 m | Moderate



Altitude by day



Optional extras

Paragliding over Pokhara

\$95, 1 morning

A 30-minute flight from Sarangkot with the Annapurnas across the valley. Day 9 is free if you fly to Kathmandu in the afternoon.

Poon Hill first

from \$340, +4 days

Visit Ghorepani and the 3,210 m sunrise viewpoint before starting the ridge. This also helps acclimatisation and makes High Camp noticeably easier.

Two more nights in Pokhara

\$110, +2 days

Two extra nights by the lake at the end of the trek, with time for a boat trip and rest. Most travellers who add these nights are glad they did.

Walk out through Landruk

no change, +1 day

Leave the ridge at Low Camp towards the Modi Khola instead of Siding, for one more night in a village and a gentler descent. Recommended if you have concerns about your knees.

Chitwan jungle safari

from \$390, +3 days

Rhinos, gharials and a warm climate, a few hours by road from Pokhara. It fits between the trek and your flight home without retracing your route.

Single room

\$95

Applies to the four hotel nights in Kathmandu and Pokhara only. Lodges on the ridge are twin share throughout, and when High Camp is full in October you may be placed in a dormitory regardless of any request.

Photos, videos and reviews of this trip: nepal trekking.com/mardi-himal-trek