

Mera Peak Itinerary

Day 1 – Depart your home country for Kathmandu

Day 2 - Kathmandu (1527 metres)

Arrive Kathmandu. Flying into Kathmandu along the northern border of Nepal on a clear day is in itself an unforgettable experience, with the entire Nepalese Himalaya sprawling out below you. After customs, you will pass out of the restricted area and into the passenger pick-up area outside the building. You will see a Classic Journeys signboard and our staff will be waiting to welcome you to Nepal. Overnight hotel.

Day 3 - Kathmandu

A day in Kathmandu. Morning guided sightseeing to the Buddhist and Hindu sights in Kathmandu, probably to Kathmandu's Durbar Square, Swayambunath - the Buddhist monkey temple and Pashupatinath – a sacred Hindu temple complex on the banks of the Bagmati River. The afternoon is free for you to explore the city further and pack bags ready for the start of the trek the following morning. You can leave a bag at the hotel with items you will not need on the trek. Overnight hotel.

Day 4 – Fly to Lukla and trek to Phuiyan (2835 metres)

We fly from Kathmandu by Twin Otter STOL aircraft to the airstrip at Lukla (2832m), high above the Dudh Kosi Valley. After sorting out our gear and meeting our Sherpas and trekking crew, we begin the trek by descending to Surkhe and heading down the Dudh Kosi Valley, through Himalayan pine and cedar forest to the small hamlet of Phuiyan, where we camp. (4 to 5 hours walking). Overnight camp.

Day 5 - Pangkongma (2864 metres)

From Phuiyan we cross the Phuiyan Khola and then ascend through rhododendron forest to the Khari La at 3081 metres. From here we leave the main trail and head along a narrow, but well used trail to the village of Pangkongma, which has a Hillary school and Gompa (Buddhist monastery). (6 hours walking). Overnight Camp.

Day 6 - Naji Dingma (2650 metres)

From Pangkongma we follow the Mani walls (Buddhist monuments) out of the village to the trail leading to the Pangum La (3173m) pass. It takes about half an hour to reach the pass and the views are spectacular. From the pass half an hour of gentle descent brings us to the small settlement of Shubuche. Soon after Shubuche the descent becomes steeper down to the suspension bridge over the Hinku Khola (1850m). From here begins the long ascent

through forest and past the occasional building. The first habitation is Gai Kharka, which means 'cow pasture'. Eventually we arrive at Naji Dingma where we camp on the grassy flat knoll. (6 to 7 hours walking). Overnight camp.

Day 7 – Point 3609 metres (Surkie Danda Ridge)

We continue gradually uphill, through bamboo groves towards the Surkie La (3085m) and reach the pass in just over an hour. Each pass is exhilarating and provides a chance to rest and soak up the magnificent views. We continue along the Surkie Danda ridge, up through mossy rhododendron forest and onto the crest of the ridge, which separates the Hinku and Hongu Valleys and offers superb views eastwards to the Kangchenjunga peaks and northwards to where the Hinku and Hongu summits dominate. The trail is mostly uphill; winding either side of the ridge, it is a scramble in places with a boulder field to cross just before camp. Our camp today, at a Col north of the spot height at 3609 metres, is in a small clearing set among fir trees and rhododendron bushes, just 1km beyond Chalem Kharka (3600m). (6 hours walking). Overnight camp.

Day 8 – Chanbu Kharka (Panch Pokhari) (4200 metres)

We continue to climb along the Surkie Danda ridge over two passes, getting above the tree line. After crossing the second pass we descend to the beautiful lakes of Panch Pokhari. On the way we pass through alpine vegetation including Himalayan poppies (*Meconopsis*) and gentians. There are stunning views of Numbur, Kusum Kangguru and the Kangchenjunga range. Our camp is in an impressive cwm at Chanbu Kharka, beyond Panch Pokhari. (6 to 7 hours walking). Overnight camp.

Day 9 – Chanbu Kharka (4200 metres)

Today, we have a well-earned rest day and acclimatisation day. You may wish to explore the area, a useful aid to acclimatisation, or you may choose to have a relaxing day around camp. Overnight Camp.

Day 10 – Kote (Hinku Valley)

After a short initial climb, we contour round and descend towards the Hinku Valley. The going is steep and rocky in places and can be tricky if there is snow on the ground. We will need to use the "new" trail since a large landslide, this can be quite difficult in places with boulders and many tree roots. We stop for lunch beside the Mojang Drangka, and then continue through a beautiful old rhododendron forest to our camp in a clearing beside the Hinku Drangka at Kote. (6 to 7 hours walking). Overnight camp.

Day 11 - Tangnag (4366 metres)

The path continues alongside the riverbed, through thick rhododendron forest. Care has to be taken, as there are many loose boulders on this section. We

continue along the east bank of the Hinku Drangka River before crossing the Hinku River just before the summer Kharka (pasture) at Godishung where we stop for lunch. The valley widens just above the confluence of the Hinku and Sanu Drangka Rivers, providing excellent views of Kusum Kangguru (6369m) and Peak 43 (6769m). The trail continues up the left bank to Tangnag (4366m), a summer settlement that has grown into a small hamlet of teashops and lodges. Our camp is in a superb setting, surrounded by spectacular peaks and views of the west face of Mera. (5 to 6 hours walking). Overnight Camp.

Day 12 – Tangnag

A second well-earned rest and acclimatisation day. In order to help with acclimatisation we will ascend to over 5000 metres by walking up a nearby peak, which is really an east ridge off Kusum Kangguru. There are good views towards the Mera La, as well as views of Mera, Kangtaiga and Kusum Kangguru. Returning to a lower altitude (4366m) to sleep will greatly aid acclimatisation. Overnight camp.

Day 13 – Dig Kharka (4650 metres)

From Tangnag the valley becomes steeper and bends sharply to the east where the path follows the lateral moraine of the Dig Glacier to Dig Kharka close to the foot of the Hinku Nup Glacier. Our camp is on a pleasant grassy plot in a spectacular location. (3 to 4 hours walking). Overnight camp.

Day 14 – Dig Kharka

This is another essential acclimatisation day, which allows everyone the best possible chance of reaching the summit. We have the opportunity to practice crampon and ice axe techniques on the Mera Glacier (5100m). Overnight Camp.

Day 15 - Mera Peak Base Camp (5300 metres)

From Dig Kharka the path passes through moraines of the Hinku Nup and Shar Glaciers before climbing steeply to Khare (5099m). Khare is the start of the glacier that leads to the Mera La. Climbing onto the Mera glacier we cross the Mera La (5400m). We establish our base camp on the far side of the pass, so as to avoid sleeping on ice. The descent from the pass to the campsite is very short and can be done easily using the margin between the moraine and the glacier on its northern side as it descends from the Col. From our camp we have one of the most spectacular view points in Nepal above us the central summit of Mera towers at the head of a wide glacier bay, flanked by two ridges and around us a panorama that takes in Kangchenjunga, Chamlang, Makalu, Baruntse, Everest, Lhotse, Nuptse, Ama Dablam, Cho Oyu and Kangtaiga. (6 to 7 hours walking). Overnight camp.

Day 16 - Mera Glacier High Camp (5800 metres)

Today we move a little higher to high camp on the Mera glacier. A late start

allows us time to sort our gear and cover basic glacier crampon techniques before setting out. On reaching the Mera La, the route turns left (south) following easy angled snow slopes and after a short distance we arrive at an area of crevasses. The crevasses soon give way to slightly steeper but open snow slopes that lead us without much difficulty to the high camp. This camp is in an excellent setting with wonderful views of Everest, Makalu and the Nuptse - Lhotse wall directly ahead. It takes around 5 hours of slow ascent to reach camp. (6 – 7 hours walking). Overnight camp.

Day 17 - Climb of Mera (6476 metres), descend to Khare (5099 metres)

We plan an early start for our summit attempt, depending on weather and conditions. Hopefully we will be away well before dawn to make the best of the snow conditions, though it will be very cold until the sun's warming rays arrive. Technically the climb of the north face glacier is straightforward however; the very high altitude, comparatively long distances and low temperatures combine to make this an extremely strenuous and hard undertaking. Added to this is the unpredictable condition of the glacier itself, as the number and position of its crevasses varies from year to year.

The Mera Glacier and East Ridge provide gradual and interesting climbing. Once high on the ridge the views of the Himalayan giants of Kangchenjunga, Makalu, Everest and Cho Oyu dominate the panorama to the north. From the summit the views are some of the best in the Himalaya, making all our hard work seem worthwhile. Our bird's eye panorama includes Kangchenjunga, Everest, Lhotse, Nuptse, Pumori, Makalu, Chamlang, Ama Dablam, Kangtaiga, Cho Oyu, Gauri Shankar and Menlungtse. After a short rest we descend by the same route, stopping at high camp for a hot drink and soup, then continuing down to Khare. (A long hard day, 12 to 14 hours walking). Overnight camp.

Day 18 – Spare Day

This spare day is to be used where needed on the trek therefore allowing for bad weather or additional summit attempts. Overnight camp.

Day 19 - Hinku Drangka

Retracing our steps we descend to Tangnag and continue down to Phortse for lunch. Following the west bank of the Hinku Drangka River we pass through small summer settlements, which are used during the monsoon when the valley provides good grazing for animals. We camp in a clearing provided by one of these settlements. (6 hours walking). Overnight camp.

Day 20 - Tuli Kharka (Chetrabu) (4320 metres)

We continue down river, on the right bank to Tashing Ongma and on down. After lunch we climb steadily through dense forest to Tashing Dingma and on

up a valley and onto a ridge, high above the Hinku Drangka River. From here there are superb views across the Hinku to the Surkie Danda and Panch Pokhari. We climbing on towards the Zatrava La pass and camp near Tuli Kharka, about 300 metres below the pass. (8 hours walking). Overnight camp.

Day 21 - Lukla (2832 metres)

This is a long hard day to finish with but does have some great views from the passes. From Tuli Kharka we climb steadily to the top of the Zatrava La (4600m). The top is marked by piles of Mani stones, a Chorten and prayer flags. We then traverse through rugged country to a small notch, just west of the Zatr Og on the Sebuk Danda ridge. From here it is a long, steep descent, which can be quite difficult in snowy conditions. Eventually we stop for lunch in a clearing beside the river before continuing along the well-worn trail to Lukla and a celebratory drink! (8 hours walking). Overnight lodge.

Day 22 – Fly to Kathmandu

Today (weather permitting) we pack up early and fly to Kathmandu. Overnight hotel.

Day 23 – Kathmandu

Free time for sightseeing and shopping in Kathmandu before we transfer to the airport for flight to the UK/home.

Day 24 – Depart Kathmandu

NB An extra two days will be added to this itinerary to help with acclimatization and to provide extra days for summiting.