



Manaslu Circuit Trek

The Manaslu Circuit Trek over the Larky La Pass is one of Nepal's best kept secrets, following remote trails which are little touched by the modern world and which see relatively few visitors throughout the year. It offers beautiful views of the Himalayan range, with the magnificent Manaslu (8163m), the eighth highest mountain in the world almost in the palm of your hand.

The trek begins in a small stone paved village called Arkhet Bazar on the banks of the river Budhi Gandhaki and continues following the river upstream, through small villages and settlements of different Himalayan ethnic groups, from Brahmin, Chhetri, Tamang, Magar, Gurung and Tibetan. Just as diverse as the ethnic population, so too the scenery varies from the lush, low elevation valleys growing rice and bananas, inhabited predominantly by the Hindu ethnic groups of Indo-Aryan origin, through rhododendron and bamboo forests, where you begin to encounter communities of Tibeto-Burmese origin who practice Hinduism, Buddhism or a mixture of both with ancient Shaman practices still remaining alive.

Heading northwards from the starting point, the Budhi Gandhaki Valley opens up to reveal delightful alpine meadows, lush rhododendron and bamboo jungle and small, typical Tibetan villages in the Nubri Valley, which cluster beneath Manaslu's sweeping North Face. The trek passes small villages with rows of prayer wheels and spectacular mani stones and prayer flags, which mark the passes and religiously important sites. After a few days walk, the trail reaches Samagaon, the largest and most important village in the region. From there we head west and cross the Larky La Pass at 5100m, one of the most dramatic pass crossings in the Himalayas. We walk along a classic but tough trail linking the Buri Gandaki with the Marsyangdi Valley, where we reach the old salt routes, which still operate as the main trading routes between the Tibetan plateau and little settlements on Nepal's side of the great mountain range.





The descent from Larky La passes through beautiful alpine meadows at Bimtang, before joining the main Annapurna Circuit route and heading to the trailhead at Besi Sahar. The region shelters endangered animals such as snow leopard, red panda and blue sheep – especially in the northern reaches, as Buddhist Tibetans prohibit the killing of animals.



The Manaslu Conservation Area was closed to foreign trekkers until 1991, with the exception of climbing expeditions such as the Japanese expedition which managed to summit its peak in 1956. The mountain's name comes from the Sanskrit word manasa, meaning "wisdom" or "soul", which leads to the most common translation of the name as "The Mountain of the Spirit".



On the eastern side we get occasional glimpses of Ganesh Himal, the mountain named after the elephant-headed Hindu God of Good Fortune, Ganesha, also worshipped as the 'Dispeller of Obstacles'. The peaks of the Ganesh Range – Yangra/Ganesh I, Ganesh Northwest/Ganesh II, Salasungo/Ganesh III and Pabil/Ganesh IV, form a stunning subsection of the Great Himalayan Trail and the name comes from a ridge on the south face of Ganesh IV, which is reminiscent of an elephant's trunk.



Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival in Nepal and **passport to Himalayan Quests**

Day 2: Trek briefing and preparation

Day 3: Early morning departure by bus/jeep towards Arugath, where we change vehicle to Arkhet Camp in Arkhet Bazar (760m) by the Buri Gandhaki River.

Day 4: On our first actual trekking day, we will start on the stone-paved trail from Arkhet Bazar, climb through fields and pass a beautiful waterfall on the way to the small Gurung village of Soti Khola. From here we will continue to our camp in Lapubesi (884m) (4hrs).

Day 5: From Lapubesi we walk up the Buri Gandhaki Valley and along a dry riverbed to Machhakola (900m). We have the choice of camping here or continuing for another 2 hours to Tatopani village (930m), which offers hot springs, a few rooms and a very small camping ground. (5/7hrs)

Day 6: The walk to Jagat (1410m) ascends slowly through lush forest, crossing the Buri Gandhaki by suspension bridges several times throughout the day. Depending on the previous day's camp – 5/8hrs.





Day 7: From Jagat to the large Gurung village of Philim (1590m) is a short day walk, mostly along the side of the river, with a sharp ascent towards the end. We will enter the Tibetan area on this day and will start passing mani walls, colourful prayer flags and sense the smell of butter tea in the air. (3 hrs)

Day 8: From the village of Philim we walk through fields of corn and millet, following the gorge to a small settlement called Deng (1800m). We enter the Nubri Valley on this day and the scenery and folk culture starts changing dramatically. (4.5 hrs)

Day 9: We leave Deng early for a long day to Namrung (2660m), stopping in the small village of Ghap for lunch. The mani walls start getting their specific ornaments and beautiful carvings here and they become bigger and wider when we ascend up through lush bamboo and rhododendron forest towards Namrung. (7-8 hrs)

Day 10: Departing from Namrung we enter the upper Nubri Valley. The short day to Lho (3180m) offers magnificent views of the mountains and once we reach the village, we get our first look of the snow peaked Manaslu. (4.5hrs)

Day 11: Lho village to Samagaun (3530m) is a short ascent during which we are surrounded by spectacular mountains - Manaslu, Himalchuli, Ngadi Chuli appear close enough to touch. (4hrs)

Day 12: This day in Samagaun is a rest day, with optional day hikes, either to a near by glacier and glacial lake in the foothills of Manaslu, or to the Pungyen Gompa (7hrs), dedicated to the deity that resides on Manaslu, locally called the Pungyen.

Day 13 We leave Samagaun for a three-hour ascent to Samdo (3860m), through high mountain grasslands, surrounded by white peaks. The day is short and the rest is welcome as the thinness of the air becomes more apparent. (3hrs)

Day 14: Another short day from Samdo to Dharmasala (4480m), a high camp before we ascend over the Larky La Pass. On clear days the mountains are breathtakingly close. (3hrs)

Day 15: We leave Dharmasala very early in the morning in order to cross the Larky La Pass (5100m) by 9am, before the wind starts blowing strongly and possible storms appear on the pass. The descent to Bhimtang (3720m) is long, but beautiful. (9/10hrs)

Day 16: From Bhimtang we start descending through lush jungle towards Tilije (2300m) or Dharapani on the other side of the river (2300m). The rhododendrons appear in a wide range of colours, while sheep, horses and monkeys fill the forest and the cold of the high mountains is replaced by heat and humidity starts to appear.



Day 17: On this day we leave the stone village of Tilije/ Dharapani to join the famous Annapurna Circuit for the last part of the trek. We have a chance to meet many tourists and experience the most popular trail in Nepal. The walk to Jagat takes around 6hrs and is mostly downhill.

Day 18: Jagat to Bulbule is a six-hour walk, mostly on the road that is being constructed on the Annapurna Circuit. We drive to Besi Sahar from Bulbule where we can enjoy proper beds and a well-deserved hot shower.

Day 19: In the morning we leave Besi Sahar for Kathmandu by bus/car. The six hours drive on the Kathmandu to Pokhara highway takes us along the river Trisuli, popular for its scenery and rafting adventures.

Costs

Please contact info@himalayanquests.com for costs and further information.

Notes

- >> The trek itinerary is a guide only and may be subject to change at short notice
- >> In order to preserve the remote nature of this trek, it is limited to a maximum of 12 trekkers.
- >> **In order to obtain your Manaslu restricted access permit, we need your original passport at least 2 working days before departure.**