

Everest Base Camp - Up and Back

Reaching [Everest Base Camp](#) is an adventure that begins with an early morning flight from Kathmandu to the mountain runway at Lukla. Landing conditions are unpredictable at best with low lying clouds, winds, and snow or rain. Knowing this makes the rooftops of Lukla with their fluttering prayer flags a welcome sight and any safe landing a good landing.

The first two days of walking are along green slopes of pine forest, during which you will cross the churning Dudh Kosi river more than once on high suspension bridges. This part of the trek is more than a nature walk it is a cultural trek as well. You will pass numerous stupas and long mani walls comprised of hundreds of stones etched with the Buddhist prayer "Om Mani Padme Hum." You'll also walk through tiny villages cultivating healthy looking vegetables finally reaching the Sherpa capital of Namche Bazaar at 11,286 feet. Already at this point you are at an elevation higher than Mount Hood, Oregon's tallest peak.

Namche Bazaar is a large village which sits in the shadow of Kwongde and Kwongde Ri, two white covered peaks. The market held weekly is positively bustling and provides for great people watching. Old women in traditional dress sit beside baskets of vegetables they've been carrying for a couple of days to sell; men in fur-lined hats pour dried beans and flour from ornate measuring cups; those with stronger stomachs may want to venture into the meat area to watch the butchers at work. Make sure not to miss the two small museums which contain interesting information about the Sherpa way of life and the [Everest Region](#) in general.

It's a good idea to spend the day after you reach Namche Bazaar acclimatizing. On this day "off" consider hiking to the villages of Khunde and Khumding with their fascinating mix of old and new. Many mountaineering organizations have provided funding for local development which is why you'll find a hospital and a school with modern computer lab sitting amidst houses outside which laundry is being washed on the rocks and pats of yak dung are drying on the walls for fuel. But the real highlight of your highlight of your day will be a visit to the Japanese 'Everest View Hotel' which provides a clear view of the top of the world's highest peak.

On day four you could move on to Tengboche, which at 12,664 feet is only 115 feet short of Montana's highest mountain, Granite Peak. Tea houses provide pleasant lodging in Tengboche and the views of Everest are awe inspiring. You'll be able to pick out the shapes of Ama Dablam and Kangtega, and the looming bulk of Thamsherku. In the evening consider moving from the hypnotic atmosphere outdoors to another trancelike state indoors by sitting in the gumpa's prayer room as the monks chant.

Day 5 begins early with the sound of the gongs and trumpets from the gumpa, and ends in at Dingboche 14,107 which is higher than the highest mountains in Wyoming, Nevada and Utah. Here you will be greeted by a phenomenal view of Nuptse and Lhotse, but Ama Dablam steals the show.

It would not be a bad idea to spend days 6 and 7 here to acclimatize before ascending higher. While based here you may wish to climb the nearby peak of Chukkung Ri. Just be aware that it rises 18,044 feet above sea level. On top you will be greeted by a phenomenal panoramic view, but it can also be phenomenally cold. Though a bit ambitious for an acclimatization hike, if you do this the first day you will have a full day of rest before setting off again.

On day seven you'll climb up to the ridge above Tughkla where you'll be met by stone memorials to climbers lost on Everest before moving on to Loboche at 16,076 feet.

Finally, day 9 brings you to Base Camp day assuming the weather is good. You'll set off on the rocky trail to Gorakshep expect your pace to slow as you ascend. Since you will be sleeping at Gorakshep on you way back down you can deposit bags for a lighter climb for the last couple of hours.

You'll likely find that from here to Everest Base Camp is the toughest part of the Three hours of ups and downs, finishing on a section of glacier. You become aware of how much the environment has changed over the past days from the green plots and coniferous forests around Phakding and Namche up to this wild emptiness where the only signs of life are a few hardy birds, yaks and the other humans. Eventually the orange specks in the distance turn into tents and then you reach the prayer flags.

Day 10 is when you will get your best view of Everest. Get up early, very early if you want to see the sun rise over Mount Everest. Walk up to the viewpoint at Kala Pathar at 18372 feet which from Gorakshep will likely take you under 2 hours and it's worth it. The climb up may take 10 long days, but getting back takes just 3 and a bit. Downhill most of the way and an abundance of oxygen increasing all the time the reverse trip can feel quite easy. Before you know it your big trek is over and you're back in Kathmandu.