

Manaslu and Tsum Valley Trek

Manaslu, the world's 8th highest mountain, marks the geographical mid-point of Nepal's Great Himalaya Trail, and there are few 8000 meter peaks that allow trekkers to get up so close. Its Sanskrit name means "Mountain of the Spirit" and this spirit seems to reflect into the peaceful villages and valleys that encircle it. Since 2010 it has been possible to complete the trek in traditional teahouses without the need to camp, and many people now compare it favorably to the Annapurna Circuit Trek. Along the cliffs of the lower Budi Gandaki river valley the trails are narrow and challenging, and wind through fascinating villages of varied character. Higher up valleys widen and the mountain views are breath-taking. The highest point on the trek, the Larkya La (5135m) commands views over four converging glaciers and the steep walls of the Lamjung and Annapurna ranges.

The remote Tsum Valley, which branches off from the Manaslu Circuit route near Philim, has only been open to trekkers since 2008. In the past few years several teahouses and pleasant homestays have also been opened along this route. The Tsum Valley is a sacred Himalayan pilgrimage valley in close proximity to Tibet. Its unspoiled natural beauty and its pristine culture make this trekking area unique. Tsum comes from the Tibetan word 'Tsombo', which means "vivid"; the significance of which is abundantly clear as you gaze upon the sparkling mountain vistas. Against the majestic backdrop of the Ganesh Himal, Shringi Himal and Baudha Himal ranges, this serene Himalayan valley is rich in ancient art, culture, and religion. Trails are strewn with artistic chortens and mani walls carved with deities and prayers. The Buddhist saint Milarepa is believed to have meditated in the mountain caves and the ancient remains of the Tsum Kingdom are still visible today. Due to its remoteness and inaccessibility, this sacred valley and its people have been bypassed by mainstream development for centuries, and the unique culture of this valley has remained intact. The Manaslu Circuit and Tsum Valley together are the perfect trek for adventurous trekkers who want an authentic, off the beaten track experience.

Highlights of the trek

Challenging, uncrowded trekking; experience unspoiled Tibetan Buddhist monasteries and local culture; magnificent views of Ganesh Himal and Shringi Himal. Visit Milarepa cave and the remote villages and gompas of the "Tsomba" people.

Magnificent close-up views of the Annapurnas, Manaslu and nearby Ganesh peaks; trek through quaint villages with diverse ethnic groups of Gurung, Tamang Magyar, Tibetan Buddhist, Larke and Siar. Cross the Larkya La pass; chance sightings of snow leopard, blue sheep, gray wolf, musk deer and Himalayan Tahr.

Trek dates

Daily from September to late December and late February to late June

Detailed Itinerary

Itinerary can be *customized* according to your needs and length of stay if you are not planning to join a scheduled group trek.

Day 1 – Arrival in Kathmandu (1400 m)

We will meet your arrival flight at the Kathmandu International Airport and transfer you to your hotel. You will have time to rest or enjoy strolling around on your own to see some of the local sights. Your

iTrekNepal representative will provide you with an initial briefing about your itinerary and answer any questions you might have.

Day 2: - Trek Preparations and Sightseeing in Kathmandu Valley

While your trekking permits are finalized you can enjoy a half day sightseeing around Bhaktapur/Kathmandu. Your guide will escort you on a tour of Buddhist and Hindu temples and shrines that reflect ancient local traditions. There may also be time for shopping or to explore the city's many other places of interest on your own or take a rest. In the evening you will have a trek briefing and enjoy a traditional Nepali welcome dinner with your trek guide. Overnight in Bhaktapur or Kathmandu.

Day 3: Kathmandu To Soti Khola; (730m)

An early departure from Kathmandu travelling by road via the Prithvi highway. After a few hours before Malekhu we turn north taking the single track road for Dhading Besi and beyond to Arughat and Soti Khola - the last few hours on a dusty road. Because of the roughness of this road we recommend a private 4WD rather than local bus. You will also have the option of walking from Arughat to Soti Khola walking along a flat road while scenery of rice fields, waterfalls and greenery unfolds as you pass through villages along the way. (3 - 4 hrs)

Day 4: To Machhekhola (930m)

Soon after leaving Soti Khola the trail enters into a rougher part of the Budhi Gandaki, and goes up and down and with numerous rocky parts. We'll see larger waterfalls cascading down the opposite side of the valley. Some parts of the trail are particularly narrow or we must cross landslides requiring extra care, especially when mule supply convoys are on the trail. Tropical vegetation adds its charm, together with the thrilling suspension bridges that are regular attraction on this trek. Machhekhola ("fish river") is a pleasant village built on the slopes of the hill. (5-6 hrs.)

Day 5: To Jagat (1340m)

We continue trekking up and down the valley walls along the western side of the Budhi Gandaki until reaching Tatopani, a tiny village of a few houses on the narrow trail between the gushing Budhi Gandaki and a tremendous cliff. As we pass Doban and approach Jagat the valley opens up into a broad expanse with plenty of room to walk along the river bed in most seasons. Jagat is a very picturesque Gurung village with slate-paved streets. We'll stop at the Manaslu Conservation Area Project (MCAP) Office here to register our trekking permits, and will be able to learn about MCAP activities in the region. (6 hrs)

Day 6: Jagat To Lok Pa (2240m)

The trail from Jagat descends to the pleasant village of Salleri. It also has a slate paved main street and friendly villagers. About 2 and half hours from Jagat you reach Sirdibas (1430m), a compact village with nice stone houses and slate roofs. We then pass the small village of Ghoti Khola before crossing the Budhi Gandaki on one of the longest suspension bridges of this trek, followed by a steep climb to Philim.

Above Philim the sheer scale and the feeling of being truly amongst the mighty Himalaya is evident at every turn. We cross the Budhi Gandaki yet again, the trail hugging the cliff-side, up and over ridge backs, as we gaze across the valley at cascading waterfalls. Within two hours the trail splits, with one route heading northwest up the Manaslu Circuit towards the Larkye La pass, and our route heading northeast along the Syar river toward the Tsum Valley. After a steep climb through pine forest the trail levels out and we reach the Lokpa where there is a small teahouse on the main trail a few hundred meters below the village. (5 hrs)

Day 7: Lok Pa to Chumling (2386m)

Although we will only gain a few hundred meters altitude overall today it will be up and down all the way along the steep valley walls above the Syar river. We start by descending down to the river, then climb steeply and staying high above the river for a long stretch before returning to cross an old bridge to the north side. From here it's a steady climb up to Chumling, surrounded by open meadows and planted fields that contrast starkly with the deep forest on the opposite side of the valley. We will overnight at the spacious teahouse here with splendid views. Across the valley we can spot the trail leading through Ripchet, an alternate route from Lok Pa. (4 hrs).

Day 8: Chumling to Chukkum Paro (3031m)

After an easy start today along a gentle downward trail we'll cross the river again. From here it's mostly straight up for a few hours, first through a mix of pine and deciduous forest, then opening up to arid terrain of the high plateau with broad meadows and squat shrubbery. As we crest the plateau about 15 minutes before reaching Chukkum Paro the Tsum Valley opens up and we see the full breadth and depth of this geological wonder.

When we reach Chukkum village you will be fully enveloped in the Tibetan Buddhist culture of the indigenous "Tsumbos". Small gompas dot the outskirts of the village where solidly built slate-roofed houses are packed closely together, like herds of yaks shielding themselves against harsh winter weather. During the trekking season though you can expect warm, sunny days with chilly evenings. (4 hrs).

Day 9: Nile/Chule (3300m)

It's an easy hike along well-constructed trails and through primitive yet quite neat little villages toward the larger villages of Chule and Nile, which face each other on opposite sides of the Syar river at the base of the comma-shaped, steep valley leading up to Mu Gompa. A huge headwall with an icy waterfall dominates the background of Chule. About 100 meters above the village looms a 700 year old Buddhist monastery that we can visit before or after crossing the river to Nile where we will stay in a comfortable and hospitable local home. This will be a relatively easy day with lots of time in the afternoon for relaxation and exploration. (4 hrs)

Day 10: Mu Gompa (3700 m) and Nile

We will start the trek early alongside the Syar river leading up the valley to Mu Gompa. The trail steepens sharply as we approach the Gompa after an hour or two of hiking. We will still be engulfed in the shadows of the deep valley but will see the monastery above us lit up brightly as the sun's rays spill unfettered down another high valley to the east, as through a window. There will be plenty of time to explore the monastery complex and its gompa. The views looking back down the valley toward Ganesh Himal are spectacular, with the stark valley terrain serving as a perfect backdrop for the sparkling whiteness of the snow-capped peaks surrounding us. Depending on our trek pace and group interests it may also be possible to explore other gompas and vistas in the mountains surrounding Mu Gompa. There are overnight accommodations at Mu Gompa where we will have the option of staying, or return to Nile (one and a half hours away) for the night. (5 hrs)

Day 11: Chumling

As we start to make our way down the valley you will have a different mountain views, dominated by the broad face of Ganesh Himal. You should also have a fresh and well-informed perspective on the region and its culture as you revisit the villages and people along the route home. Along the way we will stop at

Ranchen Gompa, a sprawling nunnery that hosts hundreds of Buddhist aspirants from around the world each year.

As we approach Chumling the terrain will once again be transformed, this time from arid high plains to verdant forests.

Day 12: Deng

We descend rapidly from the Tsum Valley today, with some challenging ascents and descents on the valley walls, before reaching Lok Pa where we will have lunch. From Lok Pa, we soon meet the Budhi Gandaki river again. At the juncture of the Syar and Budhi Ghandaki below Lok Pa the trail splits off to the Manaslu Circuit route heading northwest. The trail hugs the cliff-side, up and over ridge backs then down again to the river where the Syar Khola cascades into the Budhi. The trail flattens out, winds through bamboo forest to Deng Khola and into the Deng settlement itself (5 – 6 hrs).

Day 13: To Namrung (2540) Leaving Deng we again use the course of the Budhi Gandaki, recrossing the river and following an uphill trail to Rana, before zigzagging past the little monastery (gompa) of Shringi and the religious motifs carved on mani walls by the Shringi Khola suspension bridge, to Ghap – a pleasant lunch stop. Cutting across fields we start to head west and enter a dense mixed forest of conifers and juniper with birdlife and monkeys. The trail stays high above the river and includes another waterfall and serious climb through woods to finally reach Namrung. (6- 7 hrs)

Day 14: To Lho (3020m) There is a marked sense of Tibetan influence in this area with closely packed stone houses sharing a common flat roof and courtyard. Climbing alongside a mani wall, through fields and past first the village of Barchham then Lihi. We then climb to Sho village – another cluster of stone houses. With altitude, the mountain views become more dramatic – Manaslu, Manaslu North, Himalchuli, Saula Himal and Dwijen Himal rise either side of the trail. After a small ravine we enter Lho, with a fabulous view of Manaslu. (4-5 hrs)

Day 15: Samagaon/ Sama Gompa (3390m) The trek resumes with a steep descent and a crossing of yet another rock-strewn torrent, the Thusang Khola. Manaslu and Himal Chuli dominate the entire landscape. Further on, across the glacier-fed Numla Khola the valley drops away to a moraine while we follow the ancient trans-Himalayan trail now just a very few kilometers from Tibet. We then arrive in Samagaon, one of the region's classic lama settlements with monastery and mani walls and all things totally Tibetan. (4-5 hrs)
www.itreknepal.com

Day 16: In Samagaon/ Sama Gompa (3390m) We will take a rest and acclimatization day here with an optional hike to Pung-gyen Gompa, or the day can be spent immersing oneself in the daily life of Sama Gompa.

Day 17: To Samdo (3690m) Passing by the foot of the great, white slide that is the Manaslu Glacier we pass the trail that branches off to Manaslu Base Camp. Our path enters woodland where we might see marmots in the birch and juniper bushes, before a final steep ascent brings us to the charming village of Samdo. The village has a well-established Tibetan refugee community –with Tibet being only a morning's walk away. (3-5 hrs)

Day 18: To Dharamsala (4460m) After an easy first part today we cross the Budhi Gandaki for a final time before the trail gradually rises through juniper and tundra with a viewpoint overlooking the Larkya La glacier. Climbing further we arrive at the Spartan Larkya Rest House. (3-5 hrs)

Day 19: To Bimtang via (3590m) via Larkya La (5100m) An early morning start is needed for what is to be a particularly tough and extended day. A pre-dawn start to avoid gale force wind which usually gains in strength

after mid-day at the pass. After a long gradual climb alongside a moraine we make a short descent to a glacial lake and reach the head of the moraine (4,700m) which we cross to climb to the ridge top. Four frozen lakes lie below and then it is up to the crest of the Larkya La (5,100m). The reward for these difficult trekking conditions is brilliant westerly views of Himlung Himal, Kangurru and Annapurna II as well as the looming omnipresence of Manaslu. On the steep descent we drop around 600m in less than an hour. Our trail then levels off onto yak pastures before finally reaching Bimtang, a collection of typical summer kharkas. (8-9 hrs)

Day 20: To Tilije (2,300m) or Dharapani (Annapurna Circuit trail here) We descend on easier terrain through meadows and pine and rhododendron forest, until arriving in Hampuk. Then the path drops further, following the course of the Dudh Khola, crossing the stream fed by the snows of the Kichke Himal and arrive at Karche and then onto the village of Gho – where rice is back on the menu and Nepalese „dhal bhat“ is revisited. Keeping to the west bank of the river, the afternoon is one of gradual descent to the Gurung settlement of Tilije which is famous for its apple brandy. (4 – 6 hrs)

Day 21: To Jagat 1,300m

Leaving Tilije we cross to the eastern side of the Dudh Khola and match the gradient of the river down to Dharapani. Here is Dudh Khola's confluence with the Marsyangdi and also our meeting with the Annapurna Circuit trail which is ascending towards Manang. This is a comfortable downhill hike that occasionally crosses the new road. (6 hrs)

Day 22: To Besisahar (760m) It's a fairly long but easy downhill walk from Jagat. Because of the road that now crisscrosses the trails you might prefer to take a rough jeep ride down to Besi Shahar to save a few hours. (6-7 hrs)

Day 23: To Kathmandu

We return to Kathmandu by bus or private vehicle on good roads and arrive at our hotel before evening. There is also the option to travel via Pokhara with a return to Kathmandu on your preferred date by either bus or flight.

Day 24: Departure

After breakfast and depending on the time of your departure flight you can enjoy shopping or sightseeing in Kathmandu before transfer to the international airport.

Note: The trek program is – because of weather or unforeseen events are subject to change.

Services and costs included in the price

- International and domestic airport pick-up and drop-off
- Three nights hotel accommodations in Kathmandu or Bhaktapur (with breakfast)
- Licensed and trained trekking guides
- Porters for carrying luggage and supplies
- All accommodations (teahouse lodges) during trek
- All meals (3 per day) with hot beverages whilst trekking
- All necessary documents and permits for trekking
- Trek equipment including sleeping bag and down jacket
- First aid supplies
- Insurance equipment for staff

- Coordination of Rescue service (costs covered by your insurance plan)
- Guided tour of World Heritage sites in Kathmandu area
- Traditional Nepali welcome dinner

Services and costs Not included in price

- Travel/trekking insurance
- Excess baggage charges more than 16kg and hand bag more than 5kg in domestic flights
- Nepal visa fees
- Airport departure tax
- Rescue charge
- Bottled drinks (cold and alcoholic)
- Expenses of personal nature
- Lunches and dinners whilst not trekking

Trek Details

Trek dates

Daily

Season

Late September to early December and late February to early June

Duration

24 days

Trekking days

21 days

Trekking grade

Difficult

Maximum altitude

5100 meters

Trek style (accommodation)

[Tea House](#)/Homestay

Meals & Drinks

[Read more](#)

Equipment

[View list](#)

Trek code

M4