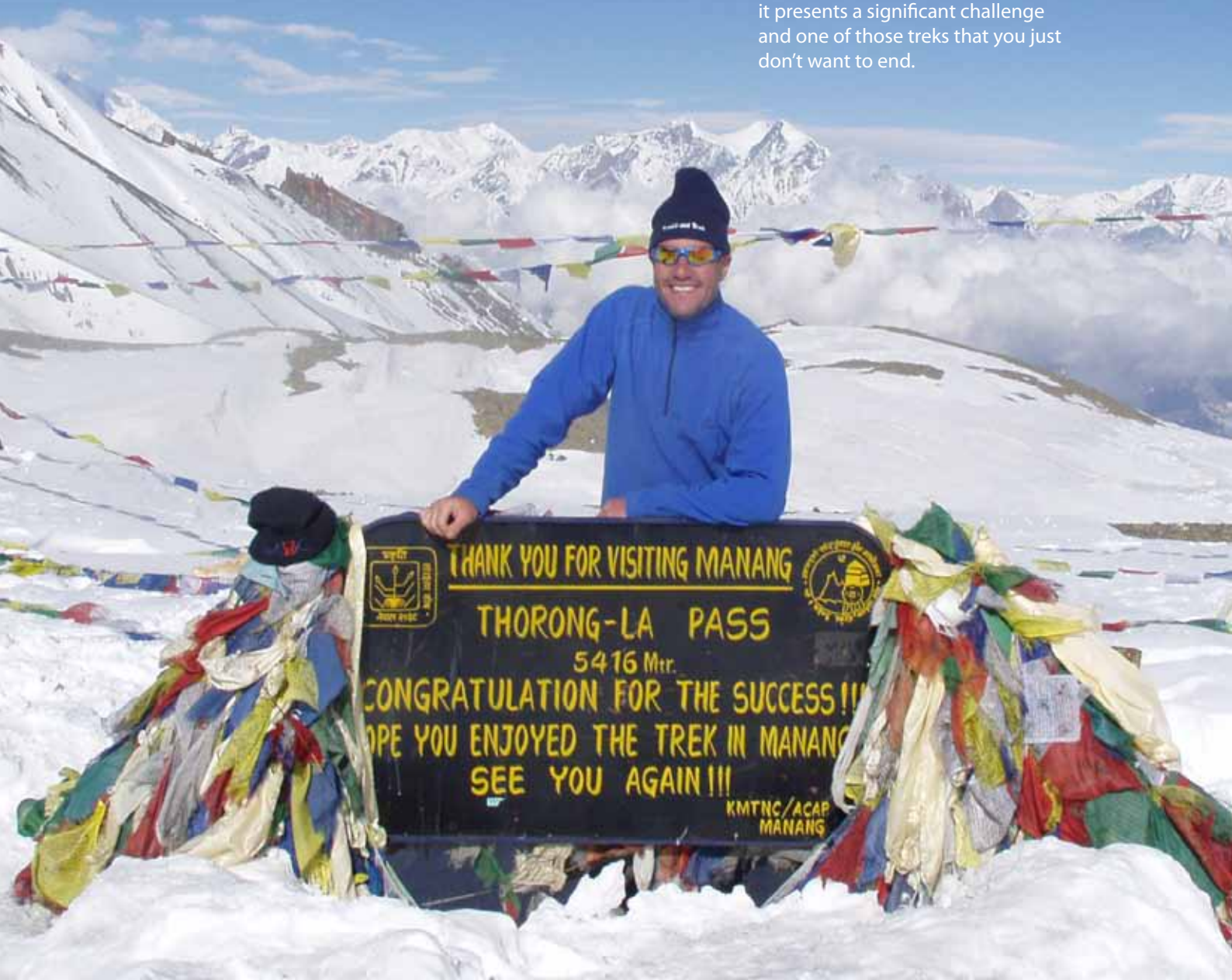


Annapurna Circuit Information and itinerary

The Annapurna Circuit consistently rates as one of the top ten treks in the world.

With the numerous changes of terrain, culture and a very high altitude Pass, it presents a significant challenge and one of those treks that you just don't want to end.



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Approaching the Thorong La Pass



Introduction

The Annapurna Circuit is probably the most well known trek in Nepal with the exception of Everest Base Camp (EBC).

Covering a variety of terrain, experiencing several of the Nepalese cultures, it immerses you deep into the real Nepal. It is one of those treks that you don't want to finish.

It takes 17 days amazing days to complete the Circuit, including acclimatisation. Trekking anticlockwise (see inset box on going clockwise), there is no backtracking on this one way trek. Although termed a 'circuit', the trekking route does not start and finish in the same place. It is a horseshoe shaped trek beginning at Besi Sahar and ending at Naya Pul. The latter can be changed if required.

Amongst travel magazines and journalists, it has consistently ranked in the world's top 10 treks.

You begin this amazing experience with a drive from Kathmandu to Besi Sahar during which you will see life on the road through the Kathmandu Valley. Once you reach Besi Sahar, you will head straight out into the hills.

For the next 5 or 6 days you will slowly ascend through the Hindu heartland until you reach Manang. At an altitude of 3500m it is time not only for a rest but also to acclimatise. By now you will also have noticed a change in the culture and appearance of these robust mountain people.

From here, the walking gets serious for a few days. The scenery has changed from forest to open alpine mountains and the altitude increases through 4000m until a 'dawn raid' gets you up and over the highest Pass in the world – the Thorong La (5416m).

It doesn't get much better than this: you are on the northern edge of the Annapurna range and looking across at the Dhaulagiri range. Both contain peaks that are in the top 10 highest in the world.

After ascending for what seems weeks, it is time to descend – rapidly! The 1800m descent to Muktinath immerses you deep into Buddhist/Tibetan territory with the gorge entrance to Upper Mustang (once of Tibet) on your doorstep. A day later and you are on the bed of the Kali Gandaki river, which stays with you for 3 more days. Just before you reach Jomson, spend some time looking for ammonites (fossils), which can be found on the river bed having been washed down by the monsoons.

The next 3 days will seem like a gallop as you gradually trek south through Marpha, Kalopani, Ghase, finally reaching Tatopani. A rest here is almost compulsory; it is home to some of the most welcoming natural hot springs on earth!

Your climb up to Ghorepani is a long one so take your time. Awaiting you is Poon Hill; one of the best dawn photographic opportunities in the country. Finally, you descend down to Naya Pul and the exit point onto the road. You may be forgiven for shedding a tear here as you look over your shoulder and leave such a beautiful place and quiet existence behind you.

Despite the sadness of leaving, you will welcome the rest and relaxation that a day in the lake side town of Pokhara will bring. Relax by the Phewa Lake, eat and drink in one of the many inviting restaurants and bars or if you are ready for more.....try some world class paragliding or microliting!

You will eventually fly back to Kathmandu, spend a little time there before boarding your flight back to the UK.

This 23 day trip (UK – UK) is an awesome journey that not only takes you through the whole range of terrain that Nepal has to offer but also through its various cultures. You get to chill out in Pokhara and then fly back to Kathmandu.

If you were only allowed to visit Nepal once, this trek should be your destination.

Details

Duration:
22 days UK - UK

Min/Max pers: 2/12

Max altitude:
5416m/17,769ft

Accommodation on trek:
tea houses (no camping)

Dates: See website

Cost:
£835 (2011)
£930 (2012)

Our trips formally begin and end in Kathmandu

When to go

In general terms:

Mar – May
Sep – Nov

Although it is possible to trek throughout the year. Ask for details.

Travel and Trek is a truly independent company specializing in adventure trekking and touring. We pride ourselves on the personal touch and whether you are travelling solo or in a big group, we can adjust itineraries to suit you.

Important information

Costs

Costs are based on 2 people sharing and are per person (singles see below)

Fully Bonded

Your money is safe. We are protected by Insurance Passenger Protection (IPP), which protects YOU against OUR insolvency.



Trek Dossier

On booking, you will receive a comprehensive Trek Dossier, which includes:

- Clothing and equipment list
- Medical notes (including vaccination requirements)
- Notes on trekking at high altitude
- Notes on safe drinking water
- Money saving tips for buying kit in Nepal
- What to do on arrival in Nepal
- Visa application form (including what to do)
- Food, money, guidance on Kathmandu and more...

Airport arrivals

We pick you up on arrival and transfer you back on departure.

Passports

Passports should be valid for a minimum period of 6 months on the date on entry into Nepal (source: Nepal Embassy, UK)

Tourist Visa

A tourist visa is required for UK Nationals. This can be done on entry into Nepal or prior to departure. Full details provided on booking including the visa application form if required.

Itineraries

Day 1 of your itinerary is deemed to be your departure day from the UK.

Hotel Accommodation

Our hotels are of 3* standard with very friendly staff to attend to your every need. Our costs are based on a B&B basis, twin share. All rooms are en suite. If you wish to use a higher grade hotel, then please ask us for details.

Accommodation on Trek

Unless you are climbing a trekking peak such as Island Peak, your accommodation will be in tea houses on a B&B, twin share basis.

Singles

Travel and Trek does not believe in penalising single travellers unnecessarily. If you are a single traveller and do not request sole occupancy of a room, you will be accommodated with another member of the group of the same sex. If there is an odd number travelling and you happen to be

the odd one out then you will be allocated sole occupancy at no extra cost. If you do request sole occupancy throughout all or part of the trip, then you will be charged a supplement (see costs).

Extended Stays

You are free to extend your stay in Nepal with extra days before or after the trek. Travel and Trek can assist you with accommodation if you wish or you are free to make your own arrangements.

Our Guides

Our Nepalese Guides work solely for us and are paid 12 months of the year; not just when they trek. They are all qualified, licenced, English speaking Guides with a wealth of experience and knowledgeable. Some were born in the Everest hills.

UK Leaders

ALL treks have a qualified Nepalese Guide on them. Some of our treks also have a UK Leader IN ADDITION to the Nepalese Guide.

Fitness

The perception that you have to be super fit to reach EBC or even trek in the area is not true. A reasonable level of fitness based on the ability to walk at your own comfortable pace for 6 - 7 hrs a day (with rest stops), for several consecutive days carrying a day sack weighing approx 5kg is all that is required. If you are in any doubt about whether you are fit enough, please consult Travel and Trek prior to booking.

Clothing and equipment

This information is part of the Trek Dossier and is provided on booking.

Medical/Vaccinations

You are advised to consult your GP if you are in any doubt about your physical condition to undertake your chosen trek. Whilst we do provide information on vaccinations, you should also seek professional advice on what vaccinations you require for Nepal and other locations should you have an extended trip. For planning purposes you should need: Hep A, Typhoid, Tetanus, Polio and Meningitis.

Continued overleaf...

Expert Help

If you have any queries in the planning stage of your trip, call our experts on 01476 562763/574497 or 07725 943108

Altitude Sickness

Formally known as Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS), Travel and Trek has produced a 'Guide to Trekking at High Altitude', which can be downloaded from the website. If you wish to discuss it personally, please call the Travel and Trek office; our experienced staff will be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

Local Payments

Travel and Trek does not charge any local payments.

Travel Insurance

It is absolutely vital that you have adequate travel insurance. See separate page.

How To Book

- Complete the booking form (downloadable from the website) and return it with a deposit of £150 pp.
- Booking forms can be completed electronically and returned as an attachment to an e-mail.
- Details of payment options are on the booking form.
- Balance payments are due 10 weeks prior to departure.



Trip inclusions and exclusions



Inclusions

- Return international airport transfers
- Hotel accommodation in Kathmandu, total 3 nights on a twin share, B&B basis
- Hotel accommodation in Pokhara, total 1 night on a twin share, B&B basis
- Lodged accommodation throughout the trek, including breakfasts
- Domestic flight Pokhara to Kathmandu
- Transfers for domestic flights
- Annapurna entry permitw, TIMS certificate (compulsory for all trekking in Nepal)
- Services of an English speaking Nepali Guide throughout the trek
- Porterage
- Comprehensive Trip Notes and other associated documentation

Exclusions

- International flights
- Domestic airport departure taxes (approx £3 return)
- Cost of Nepal Tourist visa
- Personal spending
- Staff gratuities, advice will be given
- Personal travel insurance
- Food, except breakfasts

Itinerary

1

Depart UK

Our trips formally begin and end in Kathmandu but we can assist you with advice on the best flight routings for your circumstances if you require it.

2

Arrive Kathmandu

You will be collected by our Representative and transferred to the hotel (25 mins), which is perfectly placed in the heart of the city. You are then free to settle in and explore your vibrant surroundings. Our friendly staff are on hand to provide any advice or assistance.

3

Free Day

Meet your trekking Guide for a brief and timings for tomorrow

Final preparations for trek

Pre-arranged cultural tour of Kathmandu (optional), with exclusive transport and Guide or choose to roam as you please.

4

Drive to Besi Sahar, the start point of the Circuit.

The drive is approx 6 hrs including a lunch stop.

Possibly trek for a few hours on arrival.

5 - 10

Trek Bahundanda - Chamje - Bagarchlap - Chame - Pisang - Manang

The next 6 days will allow you to get well and truly into the routine.

Whilst the itinerary here states the overnight stops, they can change. The weather, illness and potential injuries are all elements that could slow a group down or even stop it. Ultimately, the group will be in Manang on Day 10.

The ascent rate is nice and slow, allowing good acclimatisation.

This side of the Thorong La has often been described as harsh when compared to the greener, lush terrain of the Kali Gandaki Valley. You will see a change in culture and maybe a change in the visual features of the faces as you progress towards Manang.

Why don't treks go clockwise?

You are strongly advised not to trek the Annapurna Circuit in a clockwise direction. Due to the night stops, you would need to ascend from Muktinath (1700m) to the Thorong La (5416m) in one day; an ascent that would undoubtedly bring on AMS very quickly. It is dangerous.

11

Acclimatisation in Manang

At an altitude of 3500m, Manang is the perfect place to stop and acclimatise. The Nepalese Rescue Association (NRA) is also located here and provide timely daily talks on Acute Mountain Sickness.

Your Guide will take you on an acclimatisation walk to gain some altitude to assist the process.

12 - 13

Trek Manang - Letdar or Yak Kharka (4018m) - Thorong Phedi (4420m)

These two trekking days represent the biggest challenge as it will test your acclimatisation.

Thorong Phedi is your final night at high altitude before you clear the Pass and descend rapidly.

14

Trek Thorong Phedi - Thorong La (5416m) - Muktinath (3800m)

It will be an early, pre-dawn start for the ascent to the Pass. It will take several hours in potentially very cold conditions.

The rewards however, are spectacular. Stand on the Pass and savour the moment; you are higher than Everest Base Camp too!

The descent down to Muktinath is long and can be more demanding than the ascent itself! It is a drop of over 1700m but at least, if any effects of altitude were being felt at the top, they will quickly subside.

15

Trek Muktinath - Marpha (2680m)

This is a fabulous day. Firstly, there are no climbs to talk of! The scenery from Muktinath down to the Kali Gandaki river bed is wonderful; stark mountains with Upper Mustang stretching away to the north (previously of Tibet).

Once on the wide river bed (it is in full flow in the monsoon), it is a battle against the southerly winds that traditionally push through this deep valley from late mornings onwards.

Don't forget to keep your eyes peeled for ammonites (fossils); they sit on the floor having been washed down from the previous monsoon.

Once through Jomson (the local airstrip), it is just 90 mins down to Marpha, the apple capital of Nepal. They have everything from apple crumble, to apple brandy to dried apple.

16 - 17

Trek Marpha - Kalopani - Tatopani (1100m)

For these 2 days, you are trekking in the deepest river gorge in the world. The Dhaulagiri range is on the west side and the Annapurna range is on the east. Both contain world top 10 8000m peaks and with the valley floor under 2000m, it is at least 6km's deep (3.75miles).

Your reward at the end of this section is the infamous natural hot springs in Tatopani. Sat next to the main river, there are two purpose built pools for people to sit in, which are fed by natural hot (boiling!) water, cooled down by the river water as required. It is perfect for trekkers just to wallow in the hot water!

18

Trek Tatopani - Ghorepani (2855m)

The ascent from Tatopani to Ghorepani is a massive 1700m. It is long day but you should also be walking fit by now.

Ghorepani is a real crossroads of trails. There are at least 3 major trails coming in from different directions making this place appear quite busy when compared to some others.

Like Tatopani, there are a few shops and many Tibetan traders.

19 - 20

Trek Ghorepani - Tirkhedhunga - Naya Pul, drive Pokhara

As you approach the end of your trek, you still a few excellent days.

Poon Hill is one of Ghorepani's main attractions. At 3200m, it is a perfectly placed hill to take photos at sunrise of both the Annapurna and Dhaulagiri ranges. All of the major peaks in this area are visible.

It is a pre-dawn 45 min trek to the top of Poon Hill. It is a local ritual every day!

Why not extend your stay in Pokhara?

Pokhara is a vibrant lake side town and very different to Kathmandu.

For the more adventurous, there are opportunities to Paraglide, microlite, mountain bike, paddle out on the lake itself or simply chill out in one of the many road side cafes and bars.

We use the excellent 4* hotel Barahi (it has a lovely swimming pool), which is just a few minutes from the centre of Pokhara.

Additional nights costs just £55 per room on a twin share, B&B basis.

Once you have returned to the tea house, it is breakfast time before you begin the downward trek to Tirkhedhunga.

You will overnight here before continuing on the following day to Naya Pul, just a few hours away. Whilst the elation of completing the trek is there, it is also a sad moment to be leaving such a beautiful place behind.

At Naya Pul, your transport will be waiting to transfer you to your hotel in Pokhara.

Plenty of time to scrub up, explore Pokhara's vibrant atmosphere and have a nice relaxing meal in one of the many restaurants whilst enjoying some local entertainment.

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Pokhara - Kathmandu

Have a relaxing breakfast before the 30 min flight back to Kathmandu.

You will be picked up from the domestic terminal and transferred to your hotel.

The rest of the day is yours to do as you wish. You may shop or catch on some sightseeing you may have missed first time around.

22

Depart Kathmandu

Depending on your international flight arrangements, you will be transferred to the international airport for your flight home.

Travel Insurance

It is absolutely essential that you have adequate travel insurance. Be truthful to your insurance company about precisely what activities you are undertaking and to what altitude (max). Failure to do that may invalidate your policy.

To fly a patient back to the UK under any form of medical supervision (ie on a stretcher) is estimated to cost well in excess of £10,000.

In terms of activities for insurance purposes, you are trekking not climbing. Unless your trek specifically states that it does, your trek does not involve any form of specialist safety or climbing equipment.

This Foreign & Commonwealth Office link is a useful reference and recommended read:
<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/staying-safe/travel-insurance/>

So What Happens If I Have An Accident?

If you have an accident that requires professional medical help, the first priority is to get you to the nearest medical station (provided that you can be moved). Your Guide and his staff will do this as quickly as possible. You will be carried if necessary. There are a number of medical stations scattered in the region; they are manned by volunteer professional doctors and the provisions (drugs, etc..) are generally funded by donations. Expect to pay a fee if you need to see a doctor (approx US\$50) and more if you are provided with any drugs.

If they can provide sufficient assistance to get you trekking again, they will.

Any serious injury that requires further medical assistance outside the scope of the mountain medical stations will probably need the involvement of your travel insurance company. Someone will be required to call your travel insurance company and inform them of the situation if you are unable to do so yourself; the insurance company should do the rest. Many tea houses and all medical stations will have satphones to enable that call to be made (for which you would be expected to pay).

Note

If you require a helicopter and do not have insurance or cannot pay with a credit card on the spot the helicopters will not take off from Kathmandu or Pokhara.

A Little Preparation May Save Your Life

Some insurance companies provide a very handy credit card sized card with all of their contact details on it. If your company does not, then try using this very handy website Ucardit.co.uk. Travel and Trek clients get a 10% discount.

For about £5 (including P&P), you get a virtually indestructible credit card sized card with all of your important information on it. You can either use one of three pre-designed Travel and Trek cards or design your own. An example is shown below. You can literally put whatever you want on it from flight details, mobile numbers, addresses, insurance details, etc...

To try it, go to the Home page, click 'Travel'. Then scroll down, bottom left, click on the 'Travel and Trek' banner and either use a branded template or design your own. These are example cards from the website (not full size).

