

## THE ANNAPURNA CIRCUIT Information and Itinerary

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

The Circuit is certainly the longest single trek and attains a higher altitude than EBC. It is also less populated as once you get on the trek, there's no backtracking. 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, in the past it has consistently ranked in the world's top 10 treks.

The Circuit is comfortably completed in 18 days (with 3 days built in as spare/rest days) in an anticlockwise direction (see inset box on going clockwise). 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 stark 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 easily found on the river bed having been washed down by the monsoons.

### DETAILS

Prices from £790 (2010)  
£830 in 2011

Duration: 25 days UK - UK

Min/Max pers: 2/12

Dates: see website

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 and one that you may choose to break down into 2 days. Awaiting you is Poon Hill; one of the best dawn photographic opportunities in the country. Finally, you descend down to Naya Pul and 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



On top of the Thorong La and below, the final spectacular stage of the trek to the Pass.



### Clockwise Circuit?

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

### Maps

Download Travel and Trek's map of the Annapurna Circuit. It is in 4 parts and the links are contained on our Annapurna Circuit webpage.

existence behind you.

Despite the sadness of leaving, you will welcome the rest and relaxation that 2 days 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 25 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.

*These Travel and Trek bags purpose built for porters to carry on trek.*



### Important Information:

- **Costs** are based on 2 sharing and are per person (singles see below).
- **Dates:** see respective website page.
- **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** is required for UK Nationals. This is not onerous and can be done on entry into Nepal or prior to departure. Full details provided on booking including the visa application form.
- **International Departure Taxes from Nepal.** From March 2009, this is included in the price of your air ticket.
- **Itineraries.** Day 1 of itineraries is deemed to be your departure day from the UK.
- When you book with Travel and Trek, you will receive a set of **comprehensive trekking notes**, an itinerary, clothing and equipment list, a visa application form and much more to help you prepare.
- **Airport arrivals.** We pick you up on arrival and transfer you back on departure; all part of the service.
- **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 (£60 based on full trip).
- **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.
- **UK Leaders.** Some treks are led by a UK Leader IN ADDITION to a local Nepalese Guide. ALL treks have a local Guide on them.
- **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. Island Peak does require a higher level of fitness. If you are in any doubt about whether you are fit enough, please consult Travel and Trek prior to booking.
- **Clothing and equipment** list will be 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. You should also seek professional advice on what vaccinations you require for Nepal and other locations should you have an extended trip. Travel and Trek has a specific document on medical issues for clients once they book but as a guide for planning purposes, you should need: Hep A, Typhoid, Tetanus, Polio and Meningitis.
- **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. Alternatively, you can request a copy be sent to you. 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 page 7.

### International Guide and Porter Protection

Travel and Trek takes pride in the way it treats the Guides and porters that it employs. We ensure that they are adequately clothed, medically supported and only carry up to the maximum limit allowed (30kg) as advised by the International Porter Protection Group (IPPG).

## Annapurna Circuit - Daily Itinerary

Days	Event	Remarks
1	<b>Depart London</b>	
2	<b>Arrive Kathmandu</b> Transfer to hotel (25 mins).  Evening free to explore Thamel	After exiting the airport, you will be collected by our Representative and transferred to your hotel (25 mins), which is perfectly placed in the heart of the city - Thamel.  You are then free to settle in and explore Thamel. You may choose to dine in one of the many and varied restaurants, all within minutes of your hotel.
3	<b>Free Day</b>  <b>Cultural tour of Kathmandu</b> (optional), with exclusive transport and Guide.  <b>Preparation for trek</b>	This free day can be used to either relax and prepare for the trek or take in some of the many sights on offer or do both!  We can prearrange a sightseeing tour (private) or you can arrange it on site. See the notes on sightseeing in this document.  You will be advised of what time to meet your Guide in preparation for the drive to Besi Sahar the next day.
4	<b>Drive to Besi Sahar</b> , the start point of the Circuit.  Trek for a few hours on arrival	The drive is approx 6 hrs including a lunch stop.  Trek to Bahundanda (approx 2 hrs)
5 - 9	<b>Trek Bahundanda - Chamje - Bagarchlap - Chame - Pisang - Manang</b>	After the initial few hours of trekking yesterday, these next 5 days will allow you to get well and truly into the routine.  Whilst the itinerary here states the overnight stops, they can change in an instant. 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 9.  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, more lush terrain of the Kali Gandaki. You will see a change in culture and maybe a change in the visual features of the faces as you progress towards Manang.
10	<b>Acclimatisation in Manang</b>	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.
11/12	<b>Trek Manang - Letdar - Thorong Phedi</b>	These two trekking days represent the most important as it will test your acclimatisation.
13	<b>Trek Thorong Phedi - Thorong La (5416m) - Muktinath</b>	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. The achievement and views are well worth it.  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 have subsided by now.
14	<b>Trek Muktinath - Marpha</b>	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 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.

Days	Event	Remarks
15 - 17	<b>Trek Marpha - Kalopani - Ghasa - Tatopani</b>	For these 3 days, you are trekking in the deepest valley 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 for this section is the infamous 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!
18/19	<b>Trek Tatopani - Chitre - Ghorepani</b>	These two legs can be done in one day. I have split it down to cater for groups that may be tired by now and do not wish to extend themselves too much. It is also one of the 'buffer' days in case of injury or sickness earlier in the trek.  It is tempting to get up to Ghorepani, and up it is. The ascent from Tatopani to Ghorepani is 1700m. 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.
20/21	<b>Trek Ghorepani - Ulleri - Naya Pul</b>  <b>Via Poon Hill</b>  <b>Transfer to Pokhara</b>	Poon Hill is one of Ghorepani's main attractions. At 3200m, it is the highest point in this area. It is also perfectly placed to take photos at sunrise of both the Annapurna and Dhaulagiri ranges. All of the major peaks in this area are visible.  To take advantage of this treat, you do have to get up before dawn though and trek the 45 mins to the top of Poon Hill. It is a local ritual every day!  Once you have returned to the tea house, it is breakfast time before you begin the downward trek to Ulleri.  Once again, you can complete the trek to Naya Pul without an overnight stop in Ulleri. It is the 2nd buffer day in case of injury/sickness.  Once you have reached Naya Pul, you will be collected by your private transport and transferred to your hotel in Pokhara. Plenty of time to scrub up and have a nice relaxing meal in one of the many restaurants whilst enjoying some local entertainment.
22	<b>Pokhara, free day</b>	A day to do whatever you wish, primarily relax.  There are numerous options open to you whether it be wandering around this delightful lake side town or just sitting in a café watching the world go by. For the more adventurous, there are also opportunities to go paragliding or microliting; both world class in this region.
23	<b>Pokhara - Kathmandu by domestic flight</b>  <b>Relax in Kathmandu</b>	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.
24	<b>Kathmandu, free day</b>	Free day  Depending on your international flight arrangements, you may have an evening departure. You will be transferred to the international airport for your flight.
25	<b>UK</b>	If you departed yesterday, you will arrive in UK early in the morning. If you depart in the morning today, you will arrive back in UK later in the evening, same day.

**TRIP INCLUSIONS:**

All group accommodation on a twin share basis (hotels and tea houses)  
 All group ground transportation as appropriate  
 Airport pick up on arrival and return on departure  
 Return airport transfers for domestic flight as appropriate  
 Domestic flights as per your itinerary  
 National Park fees and TIMS certificate (trekking certificate)  
 Services of an English speaking qualified Nepali Guide throughout the trek, and portage  
 Breakfasts throughout (hotels and trek)  
 Comprehensive Trip Notes

**TRIP EXCLUSIONS:**

Domestic airport departure taxes (approx £3 return)  
 Nepal Tourist visa (£27)  
 Personal spending  
 Staff gratuities (advice will be given if required)  
 Personal travel insurance  
 Food, other than breakfasts

## Some Guidance for Kathmandu

If you have never been to a place such as Kathmandu, it is difficult to gauge whether the time allocated in any given itinerary is enough for your needs to see what you wish to see and do. This is designed to help you decide.

Our itineraries give you 4 nights in Kathmandu, which is effectively is two full days and a few half days. This is dependant to some degree on your international flight timings. Unless you wish to see every single sight that Kathmandu has to offer, we would suggest that the time we offer in Kathmandu is enough for most people's needs.

If you really wish to relax and take your time with sightseeing and also shopping/dining/bars then consider adding at least a day, if not two (I would suggest at the end of the trek). See insert box to the right.

Kathmandu has more than its fair share of sights to see; here are a selection:

**Swayambhunath**, otherwise known as Monkey Temple. The Buddhist Temple sits high on a hill to the west of Kathmandu and is one of the instantly recognisable icons of the city. It is walkable from Thamel (about 30 - 40 mins) and will take about 1 - 2hrs to get around this complex depending on how much interest you have in what is there. Small entrance fee (under £1).

**Boudanathan (Boudha)**, is the largest Buddhist stupa in Nepal and one of the largest in the world. It is a magnet for the large Tibetan population in Nepal and the circular complex is surrounded by shops selling Tibetan artefacts. A lovely place to see, very tranquil. A good place for lunch on one of the high restaurant floors overlooking the stupa. This would be high on my list to see. Small entrance fee (under £1).

**Pashupatinath**. This is Nepal's most important Hindu Temple. It stands on the banks of the Bagmati river, which flows into the Ganges and is therefore considered holy. It is also one of the most important Shiva Temples on the Asian continent and draws devotees from all over, most notably the colourful *Sadhurs* or holy men. This site is perhaps better known for its open cremations on the ghats of the river bank. This site is quite close to Boudha so it makes sense to combine them both in one outing. Entrance fee approx £2.50.



**Bhaktapur** is one of the original town's in the Kathmandu valley. It is approx 45 mins drive, which in itself can give you a flavour of what the local area is like. A German funded development project in the 1970's restored many very old buildings to their former glory, paved previously dirt tracks and established a sewerage system. Despite its heavy £7 (approx) entrance fee, it is still (in my opinion) worth a visit. The 'town'

is certainly walkable and it has many shops and places to see.

**Patan** is considered the 2nd largest town in the Kathmandu valley, although most people's vision and experience of Patan is its Durbar Square. This Square has the highest concentration of Temples than anywhere else within Kathmandu or Bhaktapur. Worth a visit if you have time and be sure to read more about Patan before you get there!

**Kathmandu's Durbar Square**, is easy walkable from Thamel (20 mins) and for that reason alone, is recommended. Not only do you see the Square but you will walk through the back streets to get there and also (if you plan it right), return from another direction, hopefully through Freak Street and New Street (high concentration of local shops).



### Extended Stays

We can pre-arrange extended stays in the same hotel for as little as £32 per room based on twin share, B&B.

**How to sightsee.** You can do this in one of two ways; Do It Yourself (DIY) or with a professional tour guide and vehicle.

DIY. With a bit of planning you can plan a route, grab a taxi and away you go. You can then either pick up a local guide on the spot (probably a student trying to earn some money) or use a guidebook and self guide your way around. The beauty of this is that you can really please yourself and change your plan as often as you wish. The downside is that you don't quite get the full flavour of local life and may even miss something.

Professional Guide. This can easily be arranged with your hotel (at least a day's notice) or even pre-arranged prior to leaving the UK. The tour will be private to you and will include an appropriately sized vehicle, driver and Guide. They will suggest an itinerary but you can alter that within reason.

Some tips.....I would suggest that you would be able to hit 3 sights in a day between 9am and 3pm, including lunch. This timescale still gives you time to relax and do other things. Save the ones that are walkable from Thamel (Monkey Temple and Durbar Square) for half days. Hit Bhaktapur first thing in the morning and come back into Kathmandu later. Try visiting Monkey Temple early also, better atmosphere, less people.

For some, Thamel is a **shopping paradise**; wall to wall shops. You can find some absolute gems there (literally), from clothing to jewellery, trekking gear to all sorts of wonderful presents at very inexpensive prices. Bargaining is part of their culture; they love a good haggle!

There are many good **restaurants, bars and cafes** in Thamel; more than enough to suit anyone's taste (from Nepali to general continental) for the time that you have there. Watch the prices though; the 10% service and 13% Govt tax are not included in the prices shown on menus.

### Some Guidance for Pokhara

It is unlikely that you will visit Pokhara before Kathmandu and therefore you will appreciate the much slower pace of life.

Pokhara is Nepal's second largest town and although it is quite well spread out, your efforts are likely to be concentrated around Lakeside. It is the areas closest to the lake (Lake Phewa).

Although this area is lined with shops, restaurants and bars, it is much more tranquil than Kathmandu and therefore an air of calm and relaxation always appears to hang over this place. After any form of trek in this region, it is natural to end up here to relax and get back to normal!

Most of our trekking itineraries will include a two night stop here at the end of the trek.

Pokhara is not what I would call a sightseeing location with lots of attractions to go and see. There are a few though depending on your likes. Any good Guidebook will highlight those.

Although most do use Pokhara just to relax, there is plenty to do if you want to.

- The shops provide ample entertainment in themselves.
- The restaurants and bars are inviting and have plenty of character.
- The lake provides a wonderful backdrop and you can hire boats for an hour or more (you can row them yourselves or hire a boatman to do that for you).
- For the more adventurous, you can paraglide (tandem jumps) from Sarangkot and land back down by the lake. Flights cost about \$90 and last about 30 mins. The scenery and natural wind conditions make paragliding in this region truly world class.
- The same goes for microlighting; they take off from Pokhara's airport.
- You can also hire mountain bikes or basic mopeds to tour around the local area.
- There are some museums too: the museum of mountaineering is here as is a Gurkha museum. The latter holds more VC's than any other in the world.



*The streets of Pokhara during a Holi Festival and below, the Lake View Resort Hotel used by Travel and Trek.*



### CONTACT DETAILS

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## Travel Insurance

It is vital that you have adequate travel insurance. Some parts of the Annapurna Region are remote and it would take over a day in some cases to get to any form of professional medical assistance. If you had an unfortunate serious accident, the helicopters would cost up to US\$2500 per flying hour (expect a 1hr return flight) to come and get you and fly you back to Pokhara (and then perhaps onto Kathmandu). To fly you back to the UK under any form of medical supervision (ie on a stretcher) is estimated to cost well in excess of £10,000 and that doesn't include the hospital costs.

Having adequate insurance means that you have to be truthful to the insurance company about precisely what activities you are undertaking and to what altitude (max).

In terms of activities for insurance purposes, there are no treks in the Annapurna region that require the use of specialist equipment (ie crampons or ropes; it is purely trekking).

Please note that any travel insurance that you may have as part of a credit card is unlikely to provide adequate cover but check your own card conditions.

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/>

Whilst Travel and Trek does not sell insurance (and nor can it recommend any particular company), it is aware of several products that meet the criteria that you may be looking for. Your contract would be with the chosen insurance company and not Travel and Trek.

### 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 these stations scattered in the region. On the Annapurna Circuit (Manang), there is a Nepalese Rescue Association (NRA) station manned by volunteer professional doctors and the provisions (drugs, etc..) are funded by donations. Expect to pay a fee if you require attention (min US\$50).

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

Any serious injury that clearly requires a helicopter to get you to a hospital will need the involvement of your travel insurance company. Someone will be required to call your travel insurance company and inform them of the incident 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.

*If you do not have insurance or cannot pay with a credit card on the spot the helicopters will not take off.*

*No payment, no rescue, it is that simple.*

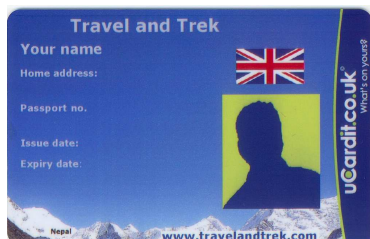
### A Little Preparation May Save Your Life

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](http://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).

Front



Rear

