



Mera Peak

Mera Peak (6,476m / 21,000ft) is one of the highest of Nepal's trekking peaks but its ascent is a non-technical snow walk which can be accomplished by any fit trekker or mountain walker. The summit views from Mera Peak are some of the finest which can be attained by the mountain walker and include several of the highest 8000 metre peaks. Looking north we see the stupendous wall of Everest, Lhotse and Nuptse. To the west we see Cho Oyu and to the east we look at Makalu and Kangchenjung. In between are countless other peaks including such notable summits as Ama Dablam, Baruntse and Chamlang.

Itinerary

DAY 1 Depart London

We depart from the UK for the overnight flight to Kathmandu. We fly from London Heathrow airport and change planes in the Gulf.

DAY 2 Arrive Kathmandu

We arrive in Kathmandu in the afternoon and are met by some of our team of Sherpas. We transfer by private coach to the comfortable Hotel Marsyangdi situated in the very centre of the Thamel tourist district of the city. We are within close walking distance of the many restaurants, bars and shops which this part of the city is famous for. After checking into our rooms we can relax in the hotel's pleasant garden before an early evening meal. Flying to Kathmandu produces considerable jet lag on this first night and most of us will be asleep by 10pm.

DAY 3 Free in Kathmandu

A free day to explore this lively and exotic city. Guidebooks will suggest many popular excursions including the Buddhist stupa at Bodnath and the Monkey Temple at Swayambunath. These are best visited using a taxi or by bicycles which are available for rental at every street corner. In truth there are so many places to see in the Kathmandu valley that you will not have time for all of them. Many people enjoy just wandering about the narrow alleyways of Asan market place, or down by the temples and pagodas of Durbar Square, near to the old hippy area of Freak Street. Others will need to scour the plethora of walking and climbing shops for that last essential piece of trekking equipment. And for those who just have to stay in touch with the outside world you can check your email in one of the many internet cafes which have sprung up around Thamel Chowk and the Kathmandu guest house. In the evening we will visit a traditional Newari restaurant for an authentic Nepali meal and live entertainment.

DAY 4 Fly to Lukla - Trek to Poyan (2800m)

An early start today for our flight to Lukla. We will need to be ready in the hotel lobby by 5.30am at the latest in order to drive to the airport for the 7.30am flight. Our Sherpa crew will handle everything so you can go onto autopilot and grab a cup of coffee when we enter the mayhem of the domestic terminal building. Flights to Lukla operate within the constraints of the weather at Lukla itself and if there is cloud in the morning we may have a delay which can be up to several hours whilst planes fly other routes until the conditions at Lukla improve. The airport in Lukla has recently undergone an extensive upgrade and the old gravel landing strip of legend and notoriety has been replaced with impressive new tarmac and there is also a modern stone-built terminal building. We fly across the grain of the land over a series of ridges and our Sherpas will be able to point out villages and paths on the original trekking route from Jiri up to Lukla. With clear weather we get fantastic views of the mountains and as we turn into the deep gorge of the Dudh Kosi valley we can look ahead and see Everest itself. But most people will have their sights firmly set on the approach to Lukla and our exciting descent to the runway will cause those of a nervous disposition to hold onto their seats. After we arrive we meet the remainder of our Sherpa crew who will have flown up the previous day to arrange porters and

yaks and to make sure all our trek provisions are in place. We then set off straight away for our first camp at Poyan (2,800m).

DAY 5 Pangkongma (2846m)

This morning we start by crossing the Poyan Khola, we turn off the main trade route coming up from the south and join an older route, which climbs steeply to the ridge-line overlooking the Khare Khola. Here we should have fine views over towards Cho Oyu (8153m), the sixth highest mountain in the world and the most frequently climbed peak over 8000m. Descending the other side of the ridge, we then contour along the hillside through forests of rhododendron before climbing steadily up to the attractive farming and trading village of Pangkongma (2,846m). Many expedition members have been made welcome by the villagers here, spending several pleasant hours warming themselves in front of an open fire in the enveloping and welcoming atmosphere of the local's traditional Sherpa homes.

DAY 6 Nashing Dingma (2600m)

Today we shall climb up to Pangkongma La, making our way through thick rhododendron and bamboo forests. To the West we have a beautiful view of the monastery at Takshindu and Lamjura. From Pangkongma La we have the first view of our challenge, the twin peaks of Mera and its South Face, along with its neighbour Naulekh. We then descend to cross the wire rope bridge that takes us across the now narrow gorge of the Hinku Valley. We have fine views across the Hinku Valley and the seemingly endless foothills rising to its sides. After crossing the Hinku Khola we make a steep and strenuous climb leading us up to Nashing Dingma (2,600m). We stay here for the night at the excellent campsite established by the Makalu National Park.

DAY 7 Chalem Kharka (3600m)

We make gradual progress climbing higher through pastures, chestnut trees and prayer flags as we take the steep trail up to the Surke La. After making it up to the pass we can stop for a welcome cup of tea at a lodge. Eventually, after ascending through a bamboo forest we arrive at the attractive campsite at Chalem Kharka, where, set among the fir trees, we can relax after a long day of trekking.

DAY 8 Chunbu Kharka

After an al fresco breakfast, we set off along the side of a ridge and the landscape quickly becomes more rugged. Kharka means pasture or grazing land, and we pass isolated herders shelters on our way up to Panch Pokari and on to camp at Chunbu Kharka. We should be rewarded with some stunning views of Kanchenjunga and Jannu to the East.

DAY 9 Rest day at Chunbu Kharka

Today we stay at Chunbu Kharka where we can have deserved rest, explore the area and acclimatise to the altitude.

DAY 10 Hinku Valley

Setting off from camp we make our way past the holy lake of Panch Pokhari, and contour our way round the main Hinku valley. We then make a series of steep descents through scree and then rhododendron. Soon we are confronted by the devastation caused by a catastrophic flood that has caused much of the valley to be washed away in 1998. We make our way down through the Mojang Forest to the now debris strewn valley floor where we negotiate the boulders where an ancient forest once stood. We climb up to our campsite which is on a pleasant alpine meadow. This is a relatively short day and gives us the chance explore this fascinating landscape.

DAY 11 Tangnag (4360m)

We start making our way up the dry riverbed today, crossing the rapids of the Hinku Khola over some fallen logs. We continue along the north side of the river where we can enjoy some easy walking. Charpati, also known as Kyashar (6770m), towers above us at the head of the valley. We reach the high alpine meadows of the Hinku Valley, used as summer grazing pastures for Yaks we pass Yak herder settlements such as Gondishung. The meadows are home to some beautiful flora and fauna such as the bearded rhododendron, dwarf juniper and other rare alpine flowers. As we reach Tangnag we pass a small gumpa carved into the rock before we stop for tea in the small hamlet of Tangnag (4,360m).

DAY 12 Dig Kharka (4650m)

As we head east towards the mountain, we slowly gain altitude, passing under the shadow of Kusum Kangguru (6367m) as we head towards the Mera Glacier. Sheltered under the glaciers' moraine Dig Kharka (4,650m) is a pleasant, grassy camp in an impressive situation as Mount Mera's North Summit towers beguilingly above us.

DAY 13 Acclimatisation day at Dig Kharka

A day to acclimatise, as we practice our crampon and ice axe techniques on the glacier (5,100m). We will have our first day on snow tomorrow as we cross the Mera La.

DAY 14 Mera Peak base camp (5,300m)

An early start as we make our way to the Mera La (5,400m). This is an exciting day as we climb onto the Mera Glacier and follow it to the pass. The views from the glacier are spectacular as the omnipotent mountains crowd the horizon, on one side the Charpati and the Kyashar Himal and on the other the peaks of Mount Mera. We establish our base camp on the far side of the pass, so as to avoid sleeping on ice. The descent from the pass to the campsite is very short and can be done easily using the margin between the moraine and the glacier on its northern side as it descends from the col.

DAY 15 Acclimatisation at Mera Peak BC

Another day acclimatising at 5,300m before making our climb tomorrow. We also have another opportunity to work on our snow and ice skills on the snout of the glacier that descends from the Mera La in preparation for tomorrow.

DAY 16 Move to high camp 5,800m

Today, we ascend to high camp where we will make our summit attempt from. This is located at about 5,800 metres on the Northern slopes of the upper mountain. It provides an excellent launch pad for the final climb to the summit. There is no need to make an early start but we must get our equipment ready so that the Sherpas can help with carrying this and the camp stores to the high camp. Having gained the Mera La, the route turns left (south) and follows easy angled snow slopes. After a short distance an area of crevasses is reached. Under normal conditions these can be walked around very easily, although looking into their deep, dark depths is always impressive. The crevasses soon give way to slightly steeper but open snow slopes that lead without difficulty to the high camp. This camp is in an excellent setting with wonderful views of Everest, Makalu and the Nuptse, Lhotse wall directly ahead. The setting sun casts an unbelievably magic light on these awesome mountains.

DAY 17 Mera Peak Ascent (6,476m/21,246ft)

The climb to the summit of Mera starts gradually and much will depend on snow and general weather conditions. The central summit will soon appear above the head of a wide glacier flanked by two ridges. We climb the centre of this over open snowfields and avoiding crevasses. The route then swings south-east, skirting below and to the east of the left-hand ridge before turning back rightwards towards the main summit ridge of Mera. Mera actually has three summits; the highest is our objective. We reach this by following a classic snow-ridge to just below the final wall that guards the top. This short steep snow slope is easily climbed but there is a big effort required to climb this last 50 metres. Your reward, however, is a feeling of ecstatic jubilation as you survey the magnificent panorama from the top. After taking pictures and enjoying the view, we descend by the same route back to our campsite below the Mera La.

DAYS 18-21 Return to Lukla

The direct route back to Lukla can be comfortably achieved in 4 days. It crosses the exciting Zatrwa La pass (4,600m) before descending steeply into the Dudh Kosi valley and to Lukla. The pass gives plenty of opportunities for photographing the dramatic peaks around Mera. On arrival in Lukla we can relax, visit tea shops and bars, and prepare for tomorrow's flight to Kathmandu.

DAY 22 Fly to Kathmandu

The exciting take-off is followed by a 45 minute flight back to Kathmandu. On arrival we transfer to our hotel, with the remainder of the day free for relaxing.

DAY 23 Depart Kathmandu

The morning and early afternoon will be free. In the evening we transfer to Kathmandu Airport for our return flight.

DAY 24 Arrive home

We arrive into London Heathrow Airport in the early morning