

Earthbound Expeditions

Annapurna Base Camp Trek

14 days, from US$1,287 per person

Duration
14 days

Grade
Moderate

Max altitude
4,130 m

Start and end
Kathmandu

On the trail
5 to 7 hours a day

Best season
Mar to May, Oct to Nov

Accommodation
Teahouses

Meals
All meals on the trek

Group size
Up to 10

Getting there
Fly to Pokhara

Annapurna Base Camp Trek Overview

Trek into the Annapurna Sanctuary, surrounded by a ring of high peaks, and stay the night there. It is the only moderate trek in Nepal that ends with mountains on every side.

Trek overview

The trek follows a river gorge for nine days to a glacial basin surrounded by mountains, which makes it different from any other trek in Nepal. On most treks you see the mountains from one side. Here the valley narrows to an entrance about a hundred metres wide, and once you pass through it there are high peaks on every side. Annapurna I, Annapurna South, Hiunchuli, Gangapurna and Machhapuchhre form a complete ring. The area is known as the Annapurna Sanctuary, and the name describes it accurately.

Who this trip is for

This is the trek we recommend to first-time trekkers, and experienced walkers often return to it. It reaches 4,130 m, which is high enough to notice the altitude but low enough that serious altitude illness is uncommon. There is nothing technical, no pass to cross and no snow underfoot in the trekking seasons. It does require stamina on stone steps: the Ulleri staircase on day 4 and the descent from Chhomrong on day 7 involve thousands of steps, and your leg muscles, rather than your lungs, will feel it in the evening.

Why this route includes Poon Hill

There is a shorter Annapurna Base Camp trek that starts at Jhinu and skips the Ghorepani ridge. It saves two days, but you miss the best viewpoint in the region, and you lose the gradual first week that makes the ascent to the Sanctuary more comfortable. Poon Hill, at 3,210 m on day 5, provides the acclimatisation needed for day 8, and it offers one of the finest sunrises in Nepal without a difficult walk.

Avalanche risk in the gorge

Between Hinku Cave and Machhapuchhre Base Camp the trail passes through a narrow, steep-sided section that is prone to avalanches after heavy snow. People have been killed there. We cross this section early in the morning, before the sun loosens the slopes, and in a winter with heavy snow we turn groups around rather than take them through.

Planning your trek

Other treks in the same region: the Annapurna Circuit over the Thorong La, the Mardi Himal trek along a ridge facing Machhapuchhre, the shorter Ghorepani and Ghandruk circuit by way of Poon Hill, and the Annapurna Luxury Trek with lodge comfort. To compare with the Everest region, see the Everest Base Camp trek.

Key highlights of the Annapurna Base Camp Trek

- Stand inside the Annapurna Sanctuary (4,130 m)
- Sunrise over Dhaulagiri from Poon Hill
- Machhapuchhre, a mountain closed to climbers
- Hot springs at Jhinu Danda on the way out

Itinerary

Day	Route	Hours	Distance	Altitude
1	Arrive Kathmandu	-	-	1,400 m
2	Kathmandu valley, fly to Pokhara	-	-	830 m
3	Drive to trailhead, walk to Tikhedhunga	4–5 hrs	9 km	1,480 m
4	Tikhedhunga to Ghorepani	6–7 hrs	12 km	2,850 m
5	Poon Hill at dawn, on to Tadapani	6–7 hrs	13 km	3,210 m
6	Tadapani to Chhomrong	5–6 hrs	10 km	2,150 m
7	Chhomrong to Dovan	5–6 hrs	11 km	2,500 m
8	Dovan to Machhapuchhre Base Camp	6–7 hrs	11 km	3,700 m
9	Base Camp at sunrise, down to Dovan	7–8 hrs	16 km	4,130 m
10	Dovan to Jhinu Danda hot springs	6–7 hrs	14 km	1,780 m
11	Walk out, drive to Pokhara	4–5 hrs	8 km	830 m
12	Pokhara, free day	-	-	830 m
13	Fly or drive to Kathmandu	-	-	1,400 m
14	Fly home	-	-	-

Day 1

Arrive in Kathmandu

We meet you at the airport and take you to your hotel. If you arrive early, there is time to walk around Thamel. In the evening we brief you on the trek, check your equipment and answer your questions.

Altitude: 1,400 m On foot: None, arrival day Night: Hotel, Kathmandu Meals: Dinner

Day 2

Kathmandu Valley sightseeing and fly to Pokhara

A morning tour of the old city: the hilltop stupa at Swayambhunath, the cremation ghats at Pashupatinath and the carved courtyards of Patan. In the afternoon, a 25-minute flight west to Pokhara, a lakeside town below the Annapurna range.

Altitude: 830 m On foot: Easy walking, 2–3 hrs Night: Hotel, Pokhara Meals: Breakfast

Day 3

Drive to the trailhead and trek to Tikhedhunga

A short drive from Pokhara to the end of the road, then the first day of walking, past the river, rice terraces and villages where the trail is also the main street. The half day is deliberately easy, to give your legs time to adjust.

Altitude: 1,480 m On foot: 4–5 hrs Night: Teahouse, Tikhedhunga Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 4

Trek via Ulleri to Ghorepani

The hardest day of the first half of the trek: more than 3,000 stone steps up to Ulleri, then a gentler climb through rhododendron forest to Ghorepani. In March and April the forest is in red flower all the way.

Altitude: 2,850 m On foot: 6–7 hrs Night: Teahouse, Ghorepani Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 5

Hike to Poon Hill at dawn and trek to Tadapani

An early start in the dark for the 45-minute climb to Poon Hill, one of the best viewpoints in Nepal, where Dhaulagiri, Annapurna South and Machhapuchhre turn gold at sunrise. Return for breakfast, then walk through mossy forest to Tadapani.

Altitude: 2,630 m On foot: 6–7 hrs including Poon Hill Night: Teahouse, Tadapani Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 6

Trek to Chhomrong

A steep descent to the Kimrong river and a climb up the other side to Chhomrong, a village built in terraces down a hillside below Annapurna South. Chhomrong is the entry point to the Sanctuary trail.

Altitude: 2,150 m On foot: 5–6 hrs Night: Teahouse, Chhomrong Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 7

Trek into the gorge to Dovan

Down the long stone staircase from Chhomrong, across the river, and up through Sinuwa and Bamboo into the main gorge. The trail passes through wet forest, where you may see langur monkeys, and the valley narrows on both sides until only a strip of sky is visible overhead.

Altitude: 2,500 m On foot: 5–6 hrs Night: Teahouse, Dovan Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 8

Trek via Deurali to Machhapuchhre Base Camp

The trail passes Hinku Cave and climbs through Deurali, where the forest ends and the gorge opens out. We cross the avalanche-prone section early in the day for safety. By the afternoon you reach Machhapuchhre Base Camp, directly below the summit of Machhapuchhre (Fishtail).

Altitude: 3,700 m On foot: 6–7 hrs Night: Teahouse, Machhapuchhre Base Camp Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 9

Sunrise at Annapurna Base Camp and descend

A two-hour climb to the Sanctuary for sunrise, the main goal of the trek: a flat glacial basin at 4,130 m, with Annapurna I, Annapurna South, Hiunchuli and Machhapuchhre forming a complete ring around you. Then a long descent, because sleeping at a lower altitude keeps this trek safe.

Altitude: 4,130 m at Base Camp On foot: 7–8 hrs Night: Teahouse, Dovan Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 10

Trek to Jhinu Danda and the hot springs

Back down and out of the gorge, then a short descent below Chhomrong to Jhinu Danda. Twenty minutes further down are natural hot pools beside the river, which are very welcome after eight days of walking.

Altitude: 1,780 m On foot: 6–7 hrs Night: Teahouse, Jhinu Danda Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 11

Trek to the road head and drive to Pokhara

An easy morning's walk through terraced fields and along the river to the road head, then a drive back to Pokhara, where you have a hot shower, a proper bed and dinner beside the lake.

Altitude: 830 m On foot: 4–5 hrs Night: Hotel, Pokhara Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Day 12

Free day in Pokhara

A free day. Options include a boat trip on Phewa Lake, the Sarangkot viewpoint, a massage, or paragliding, for which Pokhara is one of the best places in the world.

Altitude: 830 m On foot: None, free day Night: Hotel, Pokhara Meals: Breakfast

Day 13

Return to Kathmandu

A short flight, or the longer scenic drive along the Trishuli river if you would like to see the country between the two cities. In the evening there is a farewell dinner with the guides and a Nepali cultural show.

Altitude: 1,400 m On foot: None, flight day Night: Hotel, Kathmandu Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 14

Departure

We take you to the airport. If you have a few hours before your flight, we can store your bags and suggest parts of the old city you did not see on day 2.

Altitude: 1,400 m On foot: None, departure day Night: No overnight Meals: Breakfast

What's included

- In Kathmandu: Two nights in a three-star hotel, twin or double rooms with a private bathroom: one night before the trek and one after.
- In Pokhara: Three nights in a three-star hotel by the lake, twin or double rooms with a private bathroom.
- On the trek: Eight nights in teahouses on a twin-share basis, with private bathrooms in most lodges at Tikhedhunga, Ghorepani, Chhomrong and Jhinu Danda, and shared bathrooms higher up.
- On the trek: Breakfast, lunch and dinner from day 3 to day 10, and breakfast and lunch on day 11, with tea or coffee at every stop.
- In Kathmandu and Pokhara: Breakfast every morning, dinner on day 1, and the farewell dinner on day 13.
- Airport transfers: Pickup and drop-off at Kathmandu airport in a private vehicle.
- Kathmandu to Pokhara: The 25-minute flight on day 2.
- Pokhara to Kathmandu: By tourist coach on day 13, or by air at extra cost.
- To and from the trail: The drive from Pokhara to the trailhead on day 3, and back from the road head on day 11.
- A government-licensed guide, who leads every departure.
- One porter for every two trekkers.
- Wages, insurance, food and lodging for every guide and porter.
- Annapurna Conservation Area permit (ACAP)
- TIMS card
- Kathmandu tour: Swayambhunath, Pashupatinath and Patan with an English-speaking guide on day 2.
- Sleeping bag and down jacket: Lent for the trek, if you need them.

- Farewell dinner: With a Nepali cultural show, in Kathmandu on day 13.
- First aid: A group medical kit, carried by your guide.
- Taxes: Local taxes and VAT.

Not included

- International flights to and from Kathmandu
- Nepal entry visa, bought on arrival
- Travel insurance covering trekking to 5,000 m and helicopter rescue, which is compulsory
- Rescue and evacuation costs, which your travel insurance covers
- Lunch and dinner in Kathmandu and Pokhara, other than the meals listed above
- Entry fees at the Kathmandu monuments
- Hot showers, device charging and wifi in the teahouses, $2 to $5 each time
- Drinking water, snacks, and drinks other than tea and coffee
- Personal trekking clothing and equipment
- Tips for your guide and porters, usually $120 to $180 per trekker
- Costs from delays, cancellations, weather, landslides or illness, which are outside our control

Permits and other costs

Permit	Fee	Issued by
Annapurna Conservation Area permit (ACAP). SAARC nationals pay NPR 1,000. Checked at Birethanti on the way in and again at Chhomrong.	NPR 3,000, about $22	Kathmandu or Pokhara, before you start
TIMS card. Individual trekkers have not been able to obtain one since April 2023. SAARC nationals pay NPR 1,000.	NPR 2,000, about $15	Through a registered trekking agency only
Licensed guide. Required by law for foreign trekkers in the conservation area since April 2023, and enforced at the Birethanti checkpoint.	Inside the trek price	-

Other cost	Amount	Note
Kathmandu to Pokhara flight, both ways	$120–180	Or $20 by tourist coach, six hours each way
ACAP permit	$22	NPR 3,000. SAARC nationals NPR 1,000
TIMS card	$15	NPR 2,000, issued only through a registered agency
Teahouse bed	$5–12 a night	Less expensive than in the Everest region, because a road runs most of the way to the trail
Food on the trail	$20–28 a day	Three meals and tea. Prices rise past Chhomrong
Licensed guide	$28–35 a day	Plus their bed and board

Porter, one per two trekkers	$20–25 a day	Plus their bed and board
Kathmandu and Pokhara hotels	$35–60 a night	Three-star, five nights in total
Travel insurance to 5,000 m	$90–150	Must cover helicopter rescue
Hot shower, charging, wifi	$2–5 each, each time	Not included, cash only
Jhinu hot springs	$1	About $1
Tips, guide and porter	$120–180	Per trekker, at the end

Packing list

One weight limit, and no flight baggage limits

Your porter carries a strict maximum of 20 kg, shared between two trekkers, and there are no airstrip weight checks on this trek. We provide the duffel bag and the sleeping bag. Anything you do not need on the trek can be stored free of charge at our Kathmandu or Pokhara office.

On your head

- Sun hat with a brim, and a warm hat that covers your ears
- Two buffs or neck gaiters
- Sunglasses, category 3. The sun is stronger than the temperature suggests
- Head torch and spare batteries
- Sunscreen SPF 50 and lip balm with sun protection

On your body

- Three or four merino or synthetic base layers, no cotton
- Two mid layers; fleece is enough
- A light down or synthetic jacket for the evenings
- A waterproof jacket and trousers that pack small
- Two pairs of trekking trousers, one lined
- Underwear for four or five days, washed along the way

Hands and feet

- Light gloves, and a warmer pair for the mornings
- Trekking boots with ankle support, already broken in. This is essential
- Four pairs of wool trekking socks
- Camp shoes or trainers for the evenings
- Gaiters, if you are trekking in winter or early spring

Bags

- Duffel bag for the porter, 20 kg maximum. We provide one
- Daypack, 30 to 35 litres, with a rain cover
- Dry bags or thick liners. Rucksacks do not stay waterproof for long on a Himalayan trail

Sleeping

- Sleeping bag rated to minus 10°C. We provide one
- Silk or cotton liner, for warmth and hygiene
- Earplugs. Teahouse walls are thin plywood

Health

- Personal first aid: blister plasters, tape, painkillers, rehydration salts
- Any medication you take regularly, in its original packaging
- Water purification: tablets, a filter, or a SteriPen
- Hand sanitiser and wet wipes
- Throat lozenges. Most people develop a dry cough at high altitude

Papers and money

- Passport valid for six months, plus two photocopies
- Four passport photographs for permits
- Travel insurance certificate showing trekking cover to your maximum altitude
- $200 to $300 in small notes. The last reliable cash machine is in Pokhara; the machines at Ghorepani and Chhomrong are unreliable

Specific to this trek

- Trekking poles, which are essential. This trek has stone steps both up and down
- A swimming costume, for the hot springs at Jhinu on day 10
- Leech socks or long gaiters if you are trekking close to the monsoon
- A book. It gets dark and cold at Machhapuchhre Base Camp at five in the afternoon

Altitude profile

Day	Place	Sleep at	Highest point
1	Kathmandu	1,400 m	-
2	Pokhara	830 m	-
3	Tikhedhunga	1,480 m	-
4	Ghorepani	2,850 m	-
5	Tadapani	2,630 m	3,210 m
6	Chhomrong	2,150 m	-
7	Dovan	2,500 m	-

8	Machhapuchhre Base Camp	3,700 m	-
9	Dovan	2,500 m	4,130 m
10	Jhinu Danda	1,780 m	-
11	Pokhara	830 m	-
12	Pokhara	830 m	-
13	Kathmandu	1,400 m	-

Getting to the trailhead

This trek does not rely on a mountain airstrip, so there are no flights that can be cancelled for days at a time. This is a practical advantage over the Everest treks.

Flying to Pokhara

The flight from Kathmandu takes 25 minutes and lands at a full-sized airport on flat ground at 830 m, unlike the airstrip at Lukla. Weather delays do happen, but they are usually measured in hours rather than days. This is the main practical difference between an Annapurna trek and an Everest trek, and it is why this itinerary does not need a spare day at the end.

Travelling by road

The drive from Kathmandu to Pokhara takes six to seven hours on the Prithvi Highway along the Trishuli river, and costs about 20 US dollars by tourist coach. Some travellers prefer to see the countryside, and because nothing on this trip depends on the timing, it is a reasonable alternative to flying. Let us know which you prefer when you book.

The changing trailhead

Treks used to start at Nayapul, but the jeep track now runs well beyond it, which shortens the first day. We drive as far as the road is passable on your dates and start walking from there. In practice, day 3 involves four to five hours of walking, wherever the road ends.

Leaving the trek early

There is no helicopter pad at Annapurna Base Camp, but there are landing sites at Machhapuchhre Base Camp and Chhomrong. A charter flight to Pokhara costs around $2,500 for the aircraft, not per seat. For a non-emergency exit, the road at Jhinu is a day's walk from almost anywhere on the upper trail, which is an advantage over the Everest region.

Accommodation

Teahouse accommodation

Every night on the trail is spent in a teahouse: a family-run lodge with one warm dining room, heated by a single stove, and simple twin rooms with foam mattresses and thin walls. Bring a sleeping bag. Most lodges at Tikhedhunga and Ghorepani have private bathrooms, Tadapani has shared bathrooms, and Chhomrong has the best lodges on the route.

Inside the Sanctuary

Above Chhomrong there are fewer lodges and they are simpler. Dovan, where you stay on the way up and again on the way down, has basic rooms and shared bathrooms. Machhapuchhre Base Camp is the highest overnight stop, with basic twin rooms that are often full in season, shared toilets and no shower. Hot showers and charging are paid for separately. On the way down, Jhinu Danda has private rooms, with hot springs below the village.

Where we usually stay

In Kathmandu we use the Thamel Eco Resort, and in Pokhara a three-star hotel by the lake. If either is full in season, we book another hotel of the same standard.

Where	Nights	Type	Room	Bathroom
Kathmandu	2	Three-star hotel	Twin or double	Private, hot water
Pokhara	3	Three-star hotel, lakeside	Twin or double	Private, hot water
Tikhedhunga	1	Teahouse	Twin	Private in most lodges
Ghorepani	1	Teahouse	Twin	Private, hot shower for a fee
Tadapani	1	Teahouse	Twin	Shared
Chhomrong	1	Teahouse, the best on the route	Twin	Private in the better lodges
Dovan	2	Teahouse	Twin, basic	Shared
Machhapuchhre Base Camp	1	Teahouse, the highest on the route	Twin, basic and often full	Shared, no shower
Jhinu Danda	1	Teahouse	Twin	Private, with hot springs nearby

Heating

One stove in the dining room, lit at dusk. Bedrooms are not heated at any altitude.

Hot shower

Up to Chhomrong, $2 to $5, heated by gas or solar. None above Deurali.

Charging

$2 to $4 per device, in the dining room. Bring a power bank: the lodges in the Sanctuary run on solar power, so there may be no charging on a cloudy day.

Wifi

Free or a few dollars in most lodges up to Chhomrong, unreliable above it, and none at Base Camp.

Phone signal

Ncell and NTC have good coverage on the trail up to Chhomrong and poor coverage in the gorge. There is usually some signal at Machhapuchhre Base Camp.

Water

Boiled water costs $1 to $3 a litre, depending on altitude. Safe drinking water stations in several villages are cheaper, and we encourage you to use them.

Sleeping bag

Provided, rated to minus 10°C. It is lent to you for the trek and returned at the end.

Bedding
A mattress, a pillow and a blanket. Use your sleeping bag on top of these, not instead of them.

Meals

Meal	Time	What it is like
Breakfast	7:00–7:30	Porridge, Tibetan bread, eggs, chapati, pancakes, tea or coffee
Lunch	12:00–13:00	Dal bhat, fried rice, noodles, soup, momo, and potato dishes
Dinner	18:30–19:30	Dal bhat, pasta, thukpa, curry and rice, soup to start
Tea	on arrival	Black, milk, lemon, ginger, or masala. Included at every stop.

Diet	How we manage it
Vegetarian	Easy throughout. Dal bhat is vegetarian and is the best dish on the menu.
Vegan	Manageable with notice. Tell us when you book so the guide can order in advance.
Gluten free	Rice, dal, potatoes and eggs are safe. Bread, noodles and momo are not, and cross-contamination in a teahouse kitchen cannot be ruled out.
Halal	There is no certified halal kitchen on the route. Vegetarian food is the practical option.
Meat	Available, but we advise against it above Chhomrong, because the meat has been carried up for two days without refrigeration.

A typical day

Time	What happens
6:00	Tea in your room, and a bowl of warm water to wash in
6:30	Pack, and put the duffel outside your door for the porter
7:00	Breakfast together in the dining room
8:00	On the trail. The guide sets a steady, slow pace
12:00	Lunch at a teahouse on the route, about an hour
13:00	Two to four hours more, depending on the day
15:30	Arrive at the lodge, tea, check in, wash, and rest if you need to
17:00	Oxygen saturation and pulse taken, and written down
18:30	Dinner, and the guide briefs you on the next day
20:30	Bedtime. At 4,000 m most people are asleep by nine

Difficulty and preparation

Difficulty 3 of 5

Long days on stone steps. No technical skills are needed and the altitude is moderate.

- Five to seven hours of walking a day for nine days, with two days of seven to eight hours.
- Many stone staircases. The climb to Ulleri is more than 3,000 steps, and the descent from Chhomrong is similarly demanding.
- You sleep at 3,700 m for one night and reach 4,130 m for about an hour. You will notice the altitude, but most people are fine.
- No ropes, no crampons, no pass to cross, and no exposed sections anywhere on the route.
- The descents are the hardest part on the body. Trekking poles are more useful on this trek than on almost any other in Nepal.

Getting ready

8 weeks before: Build endurance
Three cardio sessions a week, 40 minutes each, at a pace where you can still hold a conversation. Walking, cycling, swimming or rowing are all suitable. If you do only one thing on this list, do this.

6 weeks before: Stair training
Replace one session with stair climbing: a stairwell, a stadium or a steep hill path, 30 to 40 minutes up and down. This trek involves many staircases, and general fitness does not train the specific muscles that stairs use.

5 weeks before: Walk in your boots
Start walking in the boots you will trek in, every time, and carry a daypack loaded to 5 kg. Blisters end more Annapurna treks than altitude does, and they can be prevented by breaking in your boots in the eight weeks before you travel.

4 weeks before: Downhill training
Find a hill with 300 m of descent and walk down it repeatedly, using poles. Your thigh muscles work harder on the descents from Poon Hill and Chhomrong than on any climb, and few people train for downhill walking.

3 weeks before: Consecutive days
Take a long walk at the weekend, four to five hours, then walk for two to three hours the next morning on tired legs. The trek consists of consecutive days of walking, which a single long walk does not replicate.

1 week before: Rest
Halve the amount of training but keep the frequency. Training in the final week will not improve your fitness and increases the risk of injury. Rest, and do not break in any new equipment.

Altitude and safety

The highest place you sleep is Machhapuchhre Base Camp, at 3,700 m, for one night, and the highest point you reach is 4,130 m, for about an hour at sunrise. This is a moderate altitude profile by Himalayan standards, but it should still be taken seriously: acute mountain sickness can start at around 2,500 m, and people do get it on this trek. What makes the trek manageable is the itinerary rather than the height. The ascent is spread over five days rather than three, and on the day you reach the Sanctuary you sleep 1,630 m lower than your highest point.

What to watch for

- A headache that does not improve with water and paracetamol
- Nausea, or loss of appetite
- Dizziness, or feeling drunk without having had alcohol
- Breathlessness at rest rather than while climbing
- Poor sleep at Deurali or Machhapuchhre Base Camp, or waking short of breath
- Loss of coordination, which means you must descend immediately

How to prevent it

- Walk more slowly than you feel you need to on days 8 and 9. Most people arrive at Machhapuchhre Base Camp faster than they should.
- Drink three litres of water a day, even if you do not feel thirsty.
- Eat at Deurali even if you have no appetite. Loss of appetite is often the first sign of altitude.
- No alcohol above Chhomrong, and no sleeping pills at any altitude.
- Poon Hill on day 5 is part of your acclimatisation: it takes you to 3,210 m five days before you need it.
- If Machhapuchhre Base Camp is full and the guide suggests sleeping at Deurali instead, the lower altitude is better for acclimatisation.

What we do

1. Daily health checks

Your guide carries a pulse oximeter and measures your oxygen saturation and pulse every evening from Dovan upwards, and again in the morning if you feel unwell. The readings are recorded, so any decline over two days is clear.

2. Mild symptoms

We descend 400 metres from Machhapuchhre Base Camp to Deurali and spend the night there. Most cases resolve at this stage, and you can continue the following morning.

3. Serious symptoms

Descent is the only effective treatment. From anywhere on the upper trail, Chhomrong, at 2,150 m, can be reached in one long day, which is low enough for anything short of an emergency. The decision to descend is made by the guide.

4. Helicopter evacuation

Helicopters can land at Machhapuchhre Base Camp and Chhomrong and reach Pokhara in 25 minutes. Your insurance covers this: the cost is $2,500 to $4,000, and the helicopter will not fly without a payment guarantee.

5. Road access

Unlike the Everest region, this trek is never more than about a day and a half from a road. This makes it easier to get help quickly if you become unwell at altitude.

Weather by month

We do not run this trek in two months of the year. One of the reasons is specific to this valley rather than to the weather in general.

Month	Day in the gorge	Night in the gorge	Night at Base Camp	Conditions	Note
January	9°C	-3°C	-12°C	Hard	Cold, clear and very quiet. Serious avalanche risk in the upper gorge after any heavy snowfall.
February	11°C	-2°C	-10°C	Hard	Warmer, with snow still above Deurali. The same avalanche risk applies.
March	15°C	2°C	-8°C	Best	The season opens and the rhododendron below Ghorepani starts. Excellent walking.
April	18°C	4°C	-6°C	Best	The best month here. The forest is in full flower and the sanctuary is clear most mornings.
May	20°C	7°C	-3°C	Good	Warm and increasingly hazy. Afternoon cloud builds in the gorge from mid-month.
June	21°C	9°C	-1°C	Hard	The monsoon arrives. Leeches in the gorge, heavy cloud and no mountain views.
July	21°C	10°C	0°C	We do not run it	We do not run this trek. The trail is in cloud for most of the nine days and there are no views.
August	21°C	10°C	0°C	We do not run it	As in July, with more leeches and a serious risk of landslides on the access road.
September	19°C	7°C	-3°C	Good	The monsoon clears through the month. Late September is washed clean and green.
October	16°C	3°C	-6°C	Best	The most reliable month and the busiest. Lodges at Machhapuchhre Base Camp fill by early afternoon.
November	13°C	0°C	-9°C	Best	Cold, clear and quieter. The best combination of views and few trekkers all year.
December	10°C	-2°C	-11°C	Hard	Clear and bright, with very few trekkers. Snow above Deurali from mid-month.

Averages from Nepal DHM station data for the Annapurna region. The winter rows are about avalanche risk in the upper gorge rather than about the thermometer.

Guides and porters

Your guide

A government-licensed guide with wilderness first aid training leads every departure, and there is one porter for every two trekkers. From 11 trekkers, a second guide joins the group, so nobody is left alone at the back. We have run treks in Nepal since 1999, and our guides come from the hill regions where they work.

Porters and luggage

Each porter carries a maximum of 20 kg, which is your duffel bag and one other. This is below the 25 kg limit set by the trekking association and well below the loads you will see on the trail. If your bag is overweight, the load is divided rather than added to. Porters carry the main luggage, not daypacks: you carry your own water, camera, jacket and snacks for the day.

Staff pay and insurance

Salary, insurance, food and lodging for every guide and porter are included in the price you pay, and are not collected separately on the trail. Every member of the team is insured for altitude and helicopter evacuation on the same terms we require of you. Paying fair wages and insurance through the trip price is how we ensure our porters are properly equipped and not overloaded.

Tipping

Tipping is customary but not compulsory, and it never replaces wages. For this trip, $120 to $180 per traveller for the whole team is usual, given together on the last evening rather than daily. Your guide will not ask for a tip, and would prefer that it is not given in front of the group.

Why travel with Earthbound Expeditions

A Nepali company, running treks since 1999

Earthbound Expeditions is a licensed trekking company based in Thamel, Kathmandu, and has organised treks in the Annapurna region since 1999. The team that plans your trip is the team you meet in Kathmandu.

Rated 5.0 on Tripadvisor

Travellers have reviewed us on Tripadvisor since 2008, more than 900 of them. You can read the reviews of this trek further down this page, each with a link to the original.

Guides and porters looked after properly

A government-licensed guide leads every departure, as the conservation area requires, and one porter carries for every two trekkers. Their wages, insurance, food and lodging are included in the price, not raised on the trail.

A gradual ascent

The route climbs over five days rather than three, by way of Poon Hill, so you reach the sanctuary better acclimatised.

A briefing before you set out

We meet you in Kathmandu, go through the trek with you and check your equipment before you leave for Pokhara.

Private departures at the group price

A private departure on your own dates costs the same as a group departure for a party of five or more, and can be arranged for one person.

Responsible trekking

We carry out everything we carry in that is not food, encourage boiled water rather than plastic bottles, and spend almost all of what you pay within the region you trek in.

Responsible travel

Drinking water

A traveller drinking bottled water uses around 25 plastic bottles on this trip, and every one has to be carried in and carried out again. Boiled water is available at every lodge for one or two dollars a litre, and we encourage you to use it. Bring purification tablets or a filter as a backup.

Waste

We carry out everything we bring in that is not food. The Annapurna Sanctuary has a waste problem, and we make sure we do not add to it.

Supporting local communities

The lodges are family businesses in the villages you pass through, and the guides and porters live in this district. The ACAP fee funds the conservation area, which is managed by a national trust rather than the government and returns a documented share of the fee to the villages along the trail. Almost all of what you pay is spent within a few days' walk of the trail. This is one reason to book with a Nepali operator rather than a foreign one that subcontracts the trek locally.

Local customs

Ask before photographing anyone. When you meet a mule train, stand on the mountain side of the path, not the side with the drop, and let it pass. Monasteries welcome visitors, but they are places of worship: remove your hat and shoes, and if a service is taking place, wait.

Booking and payment

How to book

Write to us or send a message on WhatsApp and tell us roughly when you would like to travel. You will receive a reply from a member of our team who has been on this trip. Nothing is payable at this stage, and there is no obligation until you pay a deposit.

Deposit

A deposit of 30 per cent secures your dates, and the balance is paid when you arrive in Kathmandu, in cash or by card. At the same time, we ask for a copy of your passport, your insurance certificate and any dietary or medical information.

Payment

You can pay by bank transfer, or by card through a secure link. Card payments carry the bank's fee of about 4 per cent, which we show you before you pay. The balance in Kathmandu can be paid in US dollars, pounds, euros or Nepali rupees.

Cancellation

If you cancel more than 30 days before departure, your deposit can be transferred to any other date or trip we run, with no time limit. If you cancel within 30 days, the deposit is retained, because the permits, flights and crew have been booked by then. If we cancel for any reason other than weather, we refund everything you have paid.

Private and group departures

For a party of five or more, private and group departures cost the same. A private departure runs on your dates at your pace and can be arranged for one person. A group departure runs on the dates in the table above. Most travellers book privately, at no extra cost.

Late bookings

Outside October, one week's notice is enough, because this trek does not depend on seats on a small mountain aircraft. In October, beds at Machhapuchhre Base Camp are limited, so we need one month's notice.

Optional extras

Paragliding over Pokhara
$95, 1 morning
A 30-minute flight from Sarangkot with views of the Annapurna range across the valley. Pokhara is one of the best places in the world for paragliding, and day 12 is already a free day.

Chitwan jungle safari
from $390, +3 days
Travel to the lowlands to see rhinos, a relaxing change after nine days of trekking. It fits easily between Pokhara and Kathmandu.

Helicopter flight out from Base Camp
from $2,500 for the aircraft, saves 2 days
Priced per aircraft rather than per seat, so it is much more affordable when shared between four people. Most people choose it to spare their knees rather than to save time.

Ghandruk instead of Ghorepani
no change, same length
A different first week through the large Gurung village of Ghandruk, with a museum and a shorter day 4. There is less climbing and no Poon Hill. Ask about this option if you are concerned about the Ulleri stairs.

Two more nights in Pokhara
$120, +2 days
Two extra nights by the lake at the end of the trip, to rest before travelling home.

Single room

$150

A room to yourself for all six hotel nights. On the trail, lodges are twin-share only, especially at Machhapuchhre Base Camp.

Luxury lodge upgrade in the Annapurna foothills

Price on request

Mountain Lodges of Nepal runs lodges in the Annapurna foothills at Dhampus, Landruk, Ghandruk, Majgaon, Tomijong and Birethanti. Where this route stops in one of those villages, we can book the lodge instead of the teahouse: a private room with its own bathroom, a garden and a full dinner.

Higher on the route there are only teahouses, so those nights stay the same. We confirm availability for your dates before you book.

Frequently asked questions

Answers to the 22 questions travellers ask us most often. If your question is not here, contact us and we will answer it.

Is this a good first Himalayan trek?

It is the trek we recommend most often for a first visit. It reaches 4,130 m rather than 5,545 m, it stays within the teahouse network, the walking is long rather than technical, and if something goes wrong you are a day and a half from a road. The scenery at the end is also among the most impressive in Nepal.

How does it compare with Everest Base Camp?

They are very different treks. The Everest trek is higher, longer, colder and harder, and it depends on a mountain flight that is often cancelled. The Annapurna trek is greener, warmer, less expensive and more reliable, and it ends with mountains on all four sides rather than on one. Many people do both treks, and this one is a good choice to do first.

How fit do I need to be?

You need to be fit enough to walk for six hours on stone steps, on consecutive days, carrying a daypack. The eight-week training plan on this page is suitable for a reasonably active person. Train specifically for descents: the steep descent from Chhomrong puts a heavy load on the thigh muscles.

Is there an age limit?

There is no upper age limit. We regularly take trekkers in their sixties and seventies to the Sanctuary. The minimum age is ten, with a parent, and children usually manage this trek better than adults expect. Your walking experience matters more than your age.

Can I book as a solo traveller?

Yes, you can book as one person, but you will not walk alone: since April 2023, foreign trekkers in the conservation area must be accompanied by a licensed guide. A private departure for one person runs on your dates whether or not anyone else books, and costs $1,640.

Is there a risk of avalanches on this trek?

Yes, on one section. Between Hinku Cave and Machhapuchhre Base Camp the trail runs through a narrow gorge below steep, snow-loaded slopes, and trekkers have been killed there, most recently in a spring avalanche in 2025. The risk is real but manageable: it is limited to a few kilometres, it is highest after fresh snow, and it is much lower early in the morning before the sun warms the slopes. We cross this section early, we take local advice on snow conditions at Chhomrong and Deurali, and in a year with heavy snow we turn groups around.

Will I get altitude sickness at 4,130 m?

Some people do. Acute mountain sickness can start at around 2,500 m, and Machhapuchhre Base Camp, at 3,700 m, is well within that range. It is much less common here than on the Everest trek, and it is usually mild. The altitude protocol on this page explains what we do: we check you every evening above Dovan, and if you show symptoms, we descend.

Do I need insurance that covers helicopter rescue?

Yes, it is a condition of booking. Cover up to 5,000 m is sufficient for this trek. A rescue flight from the Sanctuary to Pokhara costs $2,500 to $4,000, and the helicopter will not fly without a payment guarantee, so we ask to see your insurance certificate.

What happens if I cannot go on?

You descend with a guide, which is why the guide-to-trekker ratio matters, and the rest of the group continues. From Deurali or Machhapuchhre Base Camp you can reach Chhomrong in one long day, and from Chhomrong the road at Jhinu is a few hours away. It is much easier to leave this trek early than to leave a trek in the Everest region.

What are the lodges like?

For most of the route the lodges are better than those in the Everest region, but they are more basic near the top. Chhomrong has some of the best teahouses in Nepal, with private bathrooms and a bakery. Dovan and Deurali are basic. Machhapuchhre Base Camp is a small group of buildings in a basin at 3,700 m, and it is cold, cramped and often full.

Does Machhapuchhre Base Camp get full?

In October, yes. There are only a few lodges and nowhere else to sleep, so groups arriving late in the afternoon in peak season sometimes have to sleep on a dining room floor. We start day 8 early and our guides call ahead. If the lodges are full, we stay at Deurali instead, which is 400 m lower and better for acclimatisation.

Is there hot water and wifi?

Hot showers are available up to Chhomrong for 2 to 5 US dollars, and not at all above Deurali. Wifi is free or inexpensive in the lower villages, unreliable in the gorge and unavailable at Base Camp. Charging costs 2 to 4 US dollars per device, and the upper lodges run on solar power, so there may be no charging on a cloudy day. Bring a power bank.

How cold does it get?

At Machhapuchhre Base Camp, night temperatures range from minus 3°C to minus 12°C depending on the month, and bedrooms are not heated anywhere on the route. We provide a sleeping bag rated to minus 10°C. Lower down, in the gorge and at Chhomrong, the weather is mild, and in April you can walk in a shirt.

Are there leeches on the trail?

During and around the monsoon, yes, in the wet forest between Chhomrong and Deurali. They are harmless but unpleasant. In the main trekking seasons they are not a problem. In June and September they are, and long socks with a little salt or insect repellent keep them off.

Which permits do I need?

You need two permits: the Annapurna Conservation Area permit, at NPR 3,000, and a TIMS card, at NPR 2,000. Both are included in the trek price and we arrange them for you. The Everest region is different: it stopped using the TIMS card in 2018.

Do I have to use a guide?

Yes. Since April 2023, foreign trekkers have been legally required to walk with a licensed guide in Nepal's conservation areas, and the checkpoint at Birethanti enforces this. Independent trekking on this route is no longer permitted.

How much cash should I take?

Bring 200 to 300 US dollars' worth of Nepali rupees, in small notes, for tea, hot showers, charging, wifi, drinks and tips. There are cash machines in Pokhara, and less reliable ones at Ghorepani and Chhomrong, so plan to carry all the cash you will need.

Why does this trek cost less than Everest Base Camp?

Mainly because of the road. A jeep track runs to the trailhead and most of the way to Jhinu, so supplies arrive by vehicle rather than being carried by porters for two days, and lodges and food cost less as a result. There is also no mountain flight, which costs $350 to $420. The lower price does not reflect a lesser trek.

When should I go?

October and November offer the most reliable weather and the clearest views. March and April are the months for rhododendron. October is the busiest month of the year and the lodges at the top fill up, so if you can travel in late November instead, the weather is almost the same and there are about half as many trekkers.

How far ahead do I need to book?

Outside October, one week's notice is enough, because this trek does not depend on seats on a small mountain aircraft. For an October departure we need one month's notice, because beds at Machhapuchhre Base Camp are limited.

Can I book this trek privately?

Yes. Most of our departures on this trek are private, and for a party of five or more a private trek costs no more than joining a group. A private trek runs on your dates, at your pace, and can include an extra day at Ghandruk or a night at Deurali if you wish.

Can I add Chitwan or the Annapurna Circuit?

Yes, both combine well and we arrange them regularly. Chitwan fits between Pokhara and Kathmandu and adds three days. Doing Annapurna Base Camp and the Annapurna Circuit back to back takes about four weeks and covers the best of the Annapurna region.

Photos, videos and reviews of this trip: earthbound.rajansimkhada.com/annapurna-base-camp-trek