

Earthbound Expeditions

Everest Base Camp Luxury Trek, with Helicopter Return

12 days, from US$3,187 per person

Duration
12 days

Grade
Strenuous

Max altitude
5,545 m

Start and end
Kathmandu

On the trail
5 to 7 hours a day

Best season
Mar to May, Sep to Nov

Accommodation
Premium lodges

Meals
All meals

Group size
Up to 8

Getting there
Fly in, helicopter out

Everest Base Camp Luxury Trek, with Helicopter Return Overview

The classic trek to Everest Base Camp, staying in the best lodges on the trail, with a helicopter flight from Gorak Shep after Kala Patthar instead of four days walking back.

Trek overview

This trip offers two things. The first is comfort: four-star hotels in Kathmandu and the best lodges in the Khumbu at Phakding, Namche and Dingboche, with heated rooms, private bathrooms, duvets and better food than standard teahouses provide. The second is time: the helicopter flight from Gorak Shep on day 11 removes four walking days, so the trek takes twelve days rather than sixteen. Most people book it for the time saved and also appreciate the comfort.

What stays the same

The ascent. Days 3 to 10 follow the same trail, at the same altitudes and with the same walking hours as the classic trek, and the walking is not easy. You climb from 2,610 m to 5,545 m on foot, sleep at 5,164 m at Gorak Shep in a basic lodge, and can still be turned back by altitude. There are no luxury lodges above Dingboche, and the two nights at Lobuche and Gorak Shep are in the same lodges used on the classic trek.

Acclimatisation on a shorter itinerary

This is the key point to check on any twelve-day Everest itinerary. Ours removes four days from the walk out, all below 3,500 m, which has no effect on acclimatisation. Both rest days, at Namche on day 5 and at Dingboche on day 8, are kept. Some cheaper twelve-day itineraries remove the rest days instead, which makes them a less safe trip of the same length.

What you give up

You do not walk down. For many people, the descent through Pheriche and Namche, with the air getting thicker every hour, is one of the best parts of the trek, and this itinerary replaces it with an hour in a helicopter. If you are short of time or have concerns about your knees, this is a good choice. Otherwise, the classic sixteen-day trek is the better trip and costs $1,320 less.

Key highlights of the Everest Base Camp Luxury Trek, with Helicopter Return

- Stand at Everest Base Camp (5,364 m)
- Sunrise from Kala Patthar, followed by a helicopter flight
- The best lodges in the Khumbu, with heated rooms
- Four-star hotels in Kathmandu

Itinerary

Day	Route	Hours	Distance	Altitude
1	Arrive Kathmandu	-	-	1,400 m
2	Kathmandu valley sites	-	-	1,400 m
3	Fly to Lukla, walk to Phakding	3–4 hrs	8 km	2,610 m

4	Phakding to Namche Bazaar	6–7 hrs	11 km	3,440 m
5	Namche, acclimatisation day	2–4 hrs	-	3,440 m
6	Namche to Tengboche	5–6 hrs	10 km	3,820 m
7	Tengboche to Dingboche	5–6 hrs	11 km	4,410 m
8	Dingboche, acclimatisation day	4–5 hrs	-	4,410 m
9	Dingboche to Lobuche	5–6 hrs	8 km	4,910 m
10	Lobuche to Base Camp, sleep Gorak Shep	7–8 hrs	13 km	5,364 m
11	Kala Patthar at dawn, helicopter to Kathmandu	2–3 hrs walking, 1 hr flying	-	5,545 m
12	Fly home	-	-	-

Day 1

Arrive in Kathmandu

You are met at the airport and driven to a four-star hotel in a quiet part of Thamel. In the evening we go through the trek, check your equipment and weigh your bag, because the Lukla baggage allowance applies to every traveller.

Altitude: 1,400 m On foot: None, arrival day Night: Four-star hotel, Kathmandu Meals: Dinner

Day 2

Kathmandu Valley sightseeing

You visit the stupa at Swayambhunath, the riverside temples at Pashupatinath, the great dome of Boudhanath and the carved squares of Patan, with a guide who explains the religious art and symbolism. A private vehicle is provided all day, followed by an early night.

Altitude: 1,400 m On foot: Easy walking, 2–3 hrs Night: Four-star hotel, Kathmandu Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 3

Fly to Lukla and trek to Phakding

After the mountain flight, you walk gently downhill for half a day beside the Dudh Koshi to Phakding. The walking is easy, and tonight is the first of the upgraded lodges: a private room, a hot shower and a heated dining room.

Altitude: 2,610 m On foot: 8 km, 3–4 hrs Night: Luxury lodge, Phakding Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 4

Trek to Namche Bazaar

You cross the suspension bridges and then climb for a long time through pine forest to Namche, the Sherpa town built around a hillside. On a clear day you have your first view of Everest on the way up.

Altitude: 3,440 m On foot: 11 km, 6–7 hrs Night: Luxury lodge, Namche Bazaar Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 5

Acclimatisation day in Namche Bazaar

A day to allow your body to adjust. You climb to the viewpoint above the town for views of Everest, Lhotse and Ama Dablam, then return to sleep lower, which is how acclimatisation works. Namche has bakeries, coffee shops and reliable hot showers.

Altitude: 3,440 m On foot: Optional 2–4 hrs Night: Luxury lodge, Namche Bazaar Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 6

Trek to Tengboche

An open, scenic day with mountains in view most of the way. You descend to the river, then climb for a long time to the monastery at Tengboche on its ridge, with Ama Dablam directly behind it. If a service is taking place, you can attend.

Altitude: 3,820 m On foot: 10 km, 5–6 hrs Night: Teahouse, Tengboche Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 7

Trek to Dingboche

You walk through the last of the forest, past Pangboche and up into open country above the tree line. The trail follows the Imja River to Dingboche, a cluster of stone-walled fields below the high peaks.

Altitude: 4,410 m On foot: 11 km, 5–6 hrs Night: Luxury lodge, Dingboche Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 8

Acclimatisation day in Dingboche

The second acclimatisation day, and an important one. A slow climb up the ridge behind the village gives views of Makalu and Lhotse, two of the highest mountains in the world, before you return to the village to sleep.

Altitude: 4,410 m On foot: Optional 4–5 hrs Night: Luxury lodge, Dingboche Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 9

Trek to Lobuche

A shorter, higher day up the Khumbu valley. You pass the stone memorials at Thukla, built for climbers who died on Everest, before reaching Lobuche near the edge of the glacier. From here onwards there are no upgraded lodges.

Altitude: 4,910 m On foot: 8 km, 5–6 hrs Night: Teahouse, Lobuche Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 10

Trek to Everest Base Camp

The main day of the trek. A rocky walk along the glacier leads to Gorak Shep for lunch, then across the moraine to Base Camp itself, below the Khumbu Icefall. In spring it is filled with climbers' tents. We return to Gorak Shep for the night.

Altitude: 5,364 m at Base Camp On foot: 13 km, 7–8 hrs Night: Teahouse, Gorak Shep Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 11

Hike to Kala Patthar and fly to Kathmandu

A cold, dark and early start up Kala Patthar for the best view of Everest as the sun reaches it. Then, instead of four days walking back, a helicopter takes off from Gorak Shep and flies you to Kathmandu in about an hour, following the route you walked. You have lunch at the hotel and time to rest.

Altitude: 5,545 m at Kala Patthar On foot: 2–3 hrs, then 1 hr flying Night: Four-star hotel, Kathmandu Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 12

Departure

We take you to the airport. As with any Khumbu itinerary, book an international flight that leaves at least one day later than this, because the helicopter also depends on the weather.

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

What's included

- Airport transfers and ground transport
- Licensed English-speaking guide
- Accommodation throughout the trip
- All permits and national park fees
- Meals as per the itinerary
- Four-star hotels in Kathmandu, upgraded from three-star
- Single en suite room wherever available on the route
- One porter per traveller rather than one between two
- Domestic flights in place of the longest road transfers
- Down jacket and sleeping bag provided
- Farewell dinner in Kathmandu

Not included

- International flights
- Travel and rescue insurance
- Tips and personal expenses
- Nepal entry visa (on arrival)

Permits and other costs

Permit	Fee	Issued by
Sagarmatha National Park entry permit. SAARC nationals pay NPR 1,500. Children under ten enter free.	NPR 3,390, about $25	Kathmandu, or at Monjo on the way in
Khumbu Pasang Lhamu Rural Municipality permit. Valid for the first four weeks. NPR 2,500 after that.	NPR 2,000, about $15	Lukla, on arrival
TIMS card. No longer required in the Khumbu since 2018, when it was replaced by the municipality permit above. Some other operators still list it. Do not buy one for this trek.	Not required	-

Other cost	Amount	Note
Helicopter, Gorak Shep to Kathmandu	$500–1,100 a head	Chartered per aircraft, not per seat. Shared between five it is $500 each; shared between two it costs considerably more
Lukla flight, one way	$175–210	About $250 via Manthali in the high season. Only the inbound flight is needed

Upgraded lodges, Phakding to Dingboche	$70–160 a night	Compared with $5 to $20 for a standard teahouse bed. Heated rooms and private bathrooms
Lodges at Lobuche and Gorak Shep	$15–25 a night	Standard teahouses, as no other accommodation exists at this altitude
Four-star hotel in Kathmandu	$110–180 a night	Three nights. Compared with $40 to $70 for the three-star hotel on the classic trek
Sagarmatha National Park permit	$25	NPR 3,390
Khumbu Pasang Lhamu permit	$15	NPR 2,000, the local permit
Meals on the trek	$40–60 a day	Better food costs more, and it is all included
Licensed guide	$35–45 a day	Including their accommodation and meals. A senior guide on this trip
Porter, one per traveller	$22–28 a day	One each rather than one between two
Travel insurance to 6,000 m	$120–200	Must cover helicopter rescue, which is separate from the flight included in your trip
Tips for the guide and porter	$200–300	Per trekker, given at the end

Packing list

Two baggage limits, and the helicopter limit is stricter

The Lukla flight allows 15 kg in total, 10 kg checked and 5 kg hand baggage, and bags are weighed. The helicopter flight out has its own load limit, which is stricter. Each traveller has one porter, who carries up to 20 kg. We provide the duffel bag, sleeping bag and down jacket.

Headwear and sun protection

- A sun hat with a brim, and a warm hat that covers your ears
- Two buffs or neck gaiters
- Sunglasses, category 3 or 4. Snow glare at this altitude is strong
- Head torch and spare batteries
- Sunscreen SPF 50 and lip balm with sun protection

Clothing

- Three or four merino or synthetic base layers, not cotton
- Two mid layers: one fleece and one light insulated jacket
- Down jacket. We provide one; bring your own if you feel the cold at night
- 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

Gloves and footwear

- Liner gloves and insulated outer gloves or mittens
- Trekking boots with ankle support, worn in before the trek. This is essential
- Four pairs of wool trekking socks
- Camp shoes or trainers for the evenings
- Gaiters, if you are travelling 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. Nothing stays waterproof for long on a Himalayan trail

Sleeping

- Sleeping bag rated to -15°C. We provide one
- Silk or cotton liner, for warmth and hygiene
- Earplugs. Teahouse walls are made of plywood

Health

- Personal first aid kit: blister plasters, tape, painkillers and rehydration salts
- Diamox, if your doctor agrees, plus any regular medication
- Water purification: tablets, a filter or a SteriPen
- Hand sanitiser and wet wipes
- Throat lozenges. A dry cough at high altitude is very common

Documents and money

- Passport valid for six months, plus two photocopies
- Four passport photographs for permits
- Travel insurance certificate showing helicopter cover to 6,000 m
- $300 to $500 in small notes. The last cash machine is at Namche Bazaar

Items you do not need to bring

- A towel. The upgraded lodges provide one, and at the two lodges that do not, you will not be able to wash
- Clothes for more than four days. Same-day laundry at Namche and Dingboche is included
- A power bank for the lower part of the trek. There are sockets by the bed as far as Dingboche, but bring one anyway for Lobuche and Gorak Shep
- Otherwise, the packing list is the same as for the classic Everest trek, because conditions above Dingboche are the same

Altitude profile

Day	Place	Sleep at	Highest point
1	Kathmandu	1,400 m	-
2	Kathmandu	1,400 m	-
3	Phakding	2,610 m	2,840 m
4	Namche Bazaar	3,440 m	-
5	Namche Bazaar	3,440 m	3,880 m
6	Tengboche	3,820 m	-
7	Dingboche	4,410 m	-
8	Dingboche	4,410 m	4,900 m
9	Lobuche	4,910 m	-
10	Gorak Shep	5,164 m	5,364 m
11	Kathmandu	1,400 m	5,545 m

Lukla flights and the helicopter return

This trip depends on two weather-sensitive flights rather than one. The helicopter return is the flight the whole itinerary is planned around.

Kathmandu or Ramechhap, depending on the month

Outside the two busiest periods of the year, the flight leaves Kathmandu and takes about 35 minutes. For most of March to May and late September to November, air traffic control moves Lukla departures to Manthali airport at Ramechhap to reduce congestion at Kathmandu. This means a four to five hour drive leaving Kathmandu at around two in the morning, followed by a twenty-minute flight. The trek is the same, but the night before is much shorter. We tell you which applies to your dates before you book.

Baggage allowance of 15 kg

The allowance is 15 kg in total: 10 kg checked and 5 kg of hand baggage. Excess baggage is charged at about $1.50 a kilo, and the limit is enforced because the aircraft is a nineteen-seat Twin Otter or Dornier and the runway is 527 metres long and sloping. Anything you do not need on the trek can be stored free of charge at our office in Kathmandu.

Flight delays

Lukla is closed by cloud several times a month in every season. Losing a day is common and losing two is not unusual. This itinerary has no spare day, which is a consequence of the twelve-day format. If the flight is cancelled for more than three days, we change the itinerary to an equally good trek at a lower altitude rather than shorten this one, at no extra charge. For this reason we strongly recommend booking your international flight home to leave two clear days after this trek rather than one.

Book your flight home with a day to spare

Whatever your itinerary, book an international flight that leaves at least one clear day after your scheduled return to Kathmandu. It is the least expensive way to protect your trip, and we often wish travellers had done so.

The helicopter return

A single-engine helicopter takes off from Gorak Shep at 5,164 m, which is close to the practical limit for carrying a useful load. It therefore flies early in the morning, when the air is coldest and densest, and carries fewer people than it would at sea level. It needs clear weather at Gorak Shep and at Lukla, where it usually refuels. In good weather it takes off within a couple of hours of your descent from Kala Patthar, and you reach Kathmandu by lunchtime.

If the helicopter cannot fly

You walk down, which is why the guides on this trip are prepared for the classic itinerary as well. If the weather closes in at Gorak Shep, we descend on foot to Pheriche or Namche, where the helicopter can often land when it cannot reach 5,164 m, and fly from there. If no flights are possible, the walk out to Lukla takes three days and we pay for the extra lodge nights. We cannot give you back the extra days, which is the limit of what a helicopter itinerary can guarantee.

Baggage weight on the helicopter

The same 15 kg allowance applies on the flight in, and the helicopter flight out has its own load limit, which is stricter than the aeroplane's. Small purchases in Namche are not a problem, but a second duffel of items bought in Kathmandu on day 2 and carried up the trail is.

Accommodation

The lodges

At Phakding, Namche Bazaar and Dingboche you stay in the best lodges in the Khumbu. Rooms are twin or double and heated, with a private bathroom, a reliable hot shower and a duvet on the bed. The dining rooms are warm and the food is of a higher standard than in standard teahouses. In Kathmandu the hotel is four-star.

Standard teahouse nights

At Tengboche we book the best room in the village, in a good standard teahouse with its own bathroom. Above Dingboche there is no better accommodation, so at Lobuche and Gorak Shep you stay in basic teahouses: unheated twin rooms, thin walls, shared toilets and no shower at Gorak Shep. You spend one night at each, and the helicopter flight from Gorak Shep means you do not sleep at that altitude again.

Where	Nights	Type	Room	Bathroom
Kathmandu	3	Four-star hotel	Deluxe double or twin	Private, with hot water and a bath
Phakding	1	Luxury lodge	Twin or double, heated	Private, hot shower
Namche Bazaar	2	Luxury lodge	Twin or double, heated	Private, hot shower

Tengboche	1	The best teahouse in the village, a good standard teahouse	Twin	Private in the room we book
Dingboche	2	Luxury lodge	Twin or double, heated	Private, hot shower
Lobuche	1	Standard teahouse, the only option available	Twin	Shared
Gorak Shep	1	Standard teahouse, the highest on the route	Twin, basic	Shared, no shower

Heating
In your room at Phakding, Namche and Dingboche, which is the most important difference on this trek. At Tengboche, Lobuche and Gorak Shep there is one stove in the dining room, as in all teahouses.

Hot shower
Included and en suite as far as Dingboche. There are no showers above Lobuche for any trekker.

Charging
Free in your room at the upgraded lodges. $3 to $5 per device at Lobuche and Gorak Shep.

Wifi
Included in the upgraded lodges and reliable. Above them, Everest Link cards cost about $20 for 10 GB and work as far as Gorak Shep, though the connection is poor.

Phone signal
Ncell and NTC cover most of the route as far as Lobuche. Buy a SIM card in Kathmandu.

Water
Filtered water is provided free in the upgraded lodges. Higher up, boiled water costs $1 to $4 a litre. Please use either rather than buying bottled water.

Bedding
Duvets and proper mattresses as far as Dingboche. A sleeping bag rated to -15°C for Lobuche and Gorak S hep, which we provide.

Laundry
Same-day laundry at Namche and Dingboche, included. After five days of trekking this is very useful.

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, potatoes in every form
Dinner	18:30–19:30	Dal bhat, pasta, thukpa, curry and rice, soup to start
Tea	on arrival	Black, milk, lemon, ginger or masala tea. Included at every stop.

Diet	How we manage it

Vegetarian	Easily catered for throughout. Dal bhat is vegetarian and is the best dish on the menu.
Vegan	Manageable with notice. Tell us when you book so that 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 eating meat above Namche, as it is carried up without refrigeration for two days.

A typical day

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

Difficulty and preparation

Difficulty 4 of 5

The same difficulty as the classic trek, but for eight days of walking instead of eleven.

- Five to seven hours of walking a day for eight days, with one day of seven to eight hours. The trail and walking hours are the same as on the classic trek.
- You still sleep at 5,164 m at Gorak Shep in a standard lodge, as no other accommodation exists there.
- Both acclimatisation days are kept. The days removed are four days of walking downhill below 3,500 m.
- No ropes, crampons or exposed sections. The extra comfort is in the evenings, not on the trail.
- The helicopter replaces the descent, which is the easier part of the trek.

Getting ready

12 weeks before: Build endurance
Do three cardio sessions a week, 45 minutes each, at a pace at which you can still hold a conversation. Walking, cycling, swimming or rowing are all suitable. This is the most important part of the plan.

10 weeks before: Add hill walking
Replace one session with a one-hour hill walk with 300 m of ascent. Add a second strength session: squats, step-ups, lunges and calf raises. Your thigh muscles work harder on the descents than on the climbs.

8 weeks before: Walk with a loaded pack
Start walking with the daypack you will use, loaded to 6 kg. Wear your trekking boots on every one of these walks. Blisters are the second most common cause of difficulty on the trek, and they can be prevented.

6 weeks before: Walk on consecutive days
Do one long walk of four to five hours at the weekend, then a second walk of two to three hours the next morning on tired legs. This is the most useful part of the plan, because the trek consists of consecutive walking days.

4 weeks before: Longest training day
Walk for six to seven hours with 800 m of ascent and the same descent. If you finish able to eat a meal and sleep normally, you are ready.

2 weeks before: Reduce training
Halve the amount of training but keep the same frequency. Training in the last two weeks will not improve your fitness and increases the risk of injury. Rest and sleep well instead.

Altitude and safety

Everest Base Camp is at 5,364 m, and you sleep one night at 5,164 m. At that altitude each breath contains roughly half the oxygen available at sea level, and training at home does not change how your body responds to it. Fitness and altitude tolerance are unrelated: strong young trekkers can get altitude sickness, while less fit older trekkers often do not. What helps is ascending slowly, which is the purpose of the two rest days, and telling someone early if you feel unwell.

What to watch for

- A headache that does not improve with water and paracetamol
- Nausea, or no appetite when you would expect to be hungry
- Dizziness, or feeling drunk without having had alcohol
- Breathlessness at rest, not only when climbing
- Poor sleep, or waking up short of breath
- A dry cough that gets worse over a day
- Loss of coordination, which requires immediate descent

How to prevent it

- Walk more slowly than you would like. Your guide will set a slow pace, and this is important.
- Drink three to four litres of water a day, even if you do not feel thirsty.
- Eat, even when you have no appetite. Loss of appetite is often the first effect of altitude.
- No alcohol above Namche, and no sleeping pills at any altitude.

- Climb high and sleep low: on the rest days you climb 400 to 500 m and return to sleep.
- Diamox is effective and worth discussing with your doctor before you travel.

What we do

1. Daily health checks
Your guide carries a pulse oximeter and measures your oxygen saturation and pulse every evening, and again on any morning you feel unwell. The readings are recorded, so any decline over three days is clear from the records.

2. Mild symptoms
You rest for a day where you are, or descend a short distance to the previous village and climb back the following day. Most cases are resolved at this stage and the trek continues.

3. Serious symptoms
Descent is the only effective treatment, and 500 m of descent is usually enough. This is not negotiable, and the decision rests with the guide.

4. Helicopter evacuation
Helicopter evacuation is available from anywhere on this route and can be arranged by phone. In daylight the helicopter is usually in the air within the hour. This is why your insurance must cover it and why we ask to see your policy: the cost is $3,000 to $5,000, and the helicopter will not fly without a payment guarantee.

5. Medical care on the route
The Himalayan Rescue Association clinic at Pheriche, at 4,371 m, is staffed by volunteer doctors during both trekking seasons and is on our route on day 11.

Weather by month

The weather in the Khumbu is the same as for the classic trek, with one extra consideration: the helicopter needs a clear morning window at 5,100 m, which makes the shoulder months less reliable for this trip.

Month	Daytime on the trail	Night-time on the trail	Night-time at Gorak Shep	Conditions	Note
January	4°C	-10°C	-20°C	Hard	Clear and extremely cold. Most lodges above Dingboche are closed.
February	6°C	-8°C	-18°C	Hard	Cold and quiet, with the clearest air of the year.
March	10°C	-5°C	-15°C	Good	The season opens. Cold at night, few trekkers, and rhododendrons starting to flower at lower altitudes.
April	13°C	-2°C	-12°C	Best	The best month. Warm days, stable weather, and the forests below Namche are in flower.
May	15°C	1°C	-10°C	Best	The warmest trekking weather of the year. Hazier by late May as the monsoon approaches.
June	16°C	4°C	-6°C	Hard	The monsoon arrives, with cloud, leeches at lower altitudes and increasing flight cancellations.

July	16°C	5°C	-5°C	We do not run it	We do not run this trek. There are no views and flights are unlikely to operate.
August	16°C	5°C	-5°C	We do not run it	As in July. The mountains are hidden by cloud.
September	14°C	2°C	-8°C	Good	The monsoon clears during the month. Late September is green and clear after the rains.
October	12°C	-3°C	-14°C	Best	The busiest and most reliable month. Book several months ahead.
November	9°C	-7°C	-17°C	Best	Cold and quiet by the end of the month, with the clearest skies of the autumn.
December	6°C	-9°C	-19°C	Hard	Clear and very cold. Possible with the right equipment, and few other trekkers.

Averages from Nepal DHM station data for the Khumbu. Any given week can be ten degrees either side of these, and the helicopter needs a clear morning at 5,164 m as well as a mild one.

Guides and porters

Your guide

A senior government-licensed guide with wilderness first aid training leads every departure, and on this trip there is one porter per traveller rather than one between two. This means your duffel is not shared and the group moves at the pace of its members. Groups of 9 or more have a second guide.

Porters and luggage

Each porter carries twenty kilos, which is your duffel 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 over the limit, it is divided rather than added to another load. Porters carry duffels, not daypacks: your water, camera, jacket and snacks for the day stay with you.

Staff pay and insurance

Salary, insurance, food and accommodation for every guide and porter are included in the price you pay, not collected on the trail. All of them are insured for altitude and helicopter evacuation on the same terms we require of you. Porters in this industry have often carried excessive loads in unsuitable footwear for low pay, and we avoid this by including fair pay and proper equipment in the package price.

Tipping

Tipping is customary but not compulsory, and never replaces wages. For this trip, $200 to $300 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 it not to be given in front of the group.

Responsible travel

Drinking water

A traveller drinking bottled water uses around 30 plastic bottles on this trip, all of which have to be carried in and carried out again. Boiled water is available at every lodge for one or two dollars a litre, and we recommend you buy that instead. Bring water purification as a backup.

Waste

We carry out everything we bring in that is not food. The Khumbu has a rubbish problem that it did not create and cannot solve alone, and we make sure not to add to it.

Supporting local communities

The lodges are family businesses in the villages along the route. The guides and porters live in this district. The permit fees fund Sagarmatha National Park and the Khumbu Pasang Lhamu Rural Municipality. Almost all of what you pay is spent within a few days' walk of the trail, which is a good reason to book with a Nepali operator rather than a foreign company that subcontracts to one.

Local customs

Ask before photographing anyone. When you meet a mule train, stand on the mountain side of the trail, not the side with the drop, and let it pass. Monasteries welcome visitors but 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 WhatsApp message with your dates. For this trek in particular, please include your group size in your first message: the helicopter is chartered per aircraft rather than per seat, so whether there are two or five of you affects the price more than anything else.

Deposit

A 30 per cent deposit 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 a bank 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, the 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, you receive a full refund.

Private and group departures

Both cost the same for a party of five or more. 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 people book privately, at no extra cost.

Late bookings

Three weeks' notice is usually enough. The limiting factor is the upgraded lodges rather than the flights, as there are only a few in the Khumbu and they are full in October. For an October departure we recommend booking three months ahead.

Optional extras

Everest scenic flight
$220, 1 morning
A one-hour flight along the range from Kathmandu, with a guaranteed window seat. It is a good alternative if cloud keeps Lukla closed, and can be added on day 2.

Helicopter landing at Base Camp
from $300 extra, same day
On the flight out, a landing at Base Camp itself or at Kala Patthar rather than a direct flight from Gorak Shep. This depends on the weather and can be arranged on the morning of the flight.

A night at the Everest View Hotel
$260, +1 day
At Syangboche above Namche, at 3,880 m, with a view of Everest from the terrace and oxygen supplied to the rooms. It is an unusual hotel, and the view is the one seen on postcards.

Extended Kathmandu Valley tour
$140, 1 day
Bhaktapur, Patan and Boudhanath with a guide who explains the religious art and symbolism, and a private car. Day 2 includes a shorter version of this tour.

Chitwan luxury safari
from $690, +3 days
Travel south to the lowland jungle to see rhino, staying in a lodge rather than a camp. A good way to recover after eight days above 3,000 m.

Single room throughout
$420
A room to yourself in Kathmandu and in every upgraded lodge. Single rooms are not available at Lobuche and Gorak Shep.

Frequently asked questions

Answers to the 18 questions travellers ask us most often. If your question is not here, contact us and we will answer it.

Does the luxury version make the trek easier?

No, and this is the most important point on this page. Days 3 to 10 follow the same trail, at the same altitudes and on the same schedule as the classic trek. You climb from 2,610 m to 5,545 m on foot and sleep at 5,164 m at Gorak Shep in a standard lodge. The additional cost pays for more comfortable evenings on the way up and a one-hour helicopter flight instead of four days walking down.

How does this trip differ from the classic trek?

Four-star hotels in Kathmandu instead of three-star. Heated rooms with private bathrooms at Phakding, Namche and Dingboche, in the few upgraded lodges in the Khumbu. Better food, included laundry, free filtered water and reliable wifi at those stops. One porter each rather than one between two. And the helicopter flight on day 11.

Are the lodges luxurious for the whole trek?

No. There are no upgraded lodges above Dingboche. Your nights at Lobuche and Gorak Shep are in the same standard teahouses used by all trekkers, with shared bathrooms and no shower, because nothing else has been built at that altitude.

How does this compare with the classic trek, which costs $1,320 less?

If you are short of time, it is very likely worth it: it saves four days, which is most of a working week. If you have concerns about your knees, it is also worth it, because the descent is the hardest part on the knees. Otherwise, we recommend the classic sixteen-day trek, which suits most people better and costs considerably less.

How does the helicopter flight work?

You descend from Kala Patthar in the morning, and the helicopter takes off from Gorak Shep at 5,164 m, usually refuelling at Lukla, and reaches Kathmandu in about an hour. It flies early because the air is coldest and densest then, which is very important at that altitude. In good weather you will be having lunch at your hotel.

What if the helicopter cannot fly?

You walk down. Our guides know the classic itinerary well and are prepared for this. We descend on foot to Pheriche or Namche, where a helicopter can often land when it cannot reach 5,164 m, and fly from there. If no flights are possible, the walk out to Lukla takes three days and we pay for the extra lodge nights. We cannot give you back the extra days.

Why does the price change so much with party size?

Because a helicopter is chartered per aircraft rather than per seat, and at 5,164 m, in thin air, it carries fewer people than it would at sea level. Shared between five people it costs about $500 each. Shared between two it costs well over twice that. This is why the group price table on this page varies more than on any other trek we offer.

Can the helicopter land at Base Camp on the way out?

Sometimes, for around $300 extra, weather permitting. The decision is made on the morning of the flight rather than at booking. A landing at Kala Patthar is more often possible than one at Base Camp itself.

Is a twelve-day itinerary long enough for safe acclimatisation?

Yes, and this is the key point to check on any twelve-day Everest itinerary. Ours keeps both acclimatisation days, at Namche on day 5 and at Dingboche on day 8, and removes four days of walking downhill below 3,500 m, which has no effect on acclimatisation. Some cheaper twelve-day itineraries remove the rest days instead, which makes them a less safe trip of the same length.

How fit do I need to be?

Exactly as fit as for the classic trek: able to walk five to seven hours a day, on consecutive days, on rough ground, with about half the oxygen you are used to. The twelve-week training plan on this page is the same as for the classic trek, because the walking is the same.

Can I still be turned back because of altitude?

Yes, on the same terms as any other trekker. The safety procedure is the same as on the classic trek: oximeter readings every evening, recorded, and descent if the readings decline. The higher price pays for a warmer room; it does not change how your body responds to altitude.

Do I need insurance covering helicopter rescue?

Yes. Note that a rescue flight is separate from the flight included in your trip. Your itinerary includes a scheduled helicopter flight out; it does not include an emergency evacuation, for example from Dingboche on day 8. Insurance covering trekking to 6,000 m, including helicopter rescue, is a condition of booking.

Is there a spare day if Lukla is closed?

No. A twelve-day itinerary does not leave room for one. Lukla is closed by cloud several times a month in every season, so for this trek in particular, book your international flight home to leave two clear days after the trek rather than one.

What is the baggage allowance?

Fifteen kilos on the Lukla flight, 10 kg checked and 5 kg hand baggage, and bags are weighed. The helicopter flight out has its own, stricter load limit. Anything you do not need on the trek can be stored free of charge at our office in Kathmandu.

Is the food better than on the classic trek?

In the upgraded lodges, yes, noticeably: a proper kitchen, more variety and fresher vegetables. At Tengboche, Lobuche and Gorak Shep the menu is dal bhat and fried rice, as elsewhere, and at 5,000 m that is usually what you will want.

How far ahead should I book?

Three weeks is usually enough, but for October we recommend three months. The limiting factor is not the flights but the upgraded lodges: there are only a few in the Khumbu, and they are full in the high season.

When should I go?

April and October are the most reliable months. On this trek there is one extra consideration: the helicopter needs a clear morning window at 5,164 m, so the shoulder months are slightly less reliable than for a trek that walks out.

Can we book the trek privately?

Yes, and most people do. On this trek it makes more difference than usual, because the helicopter is chartered per aircraft. A private group of four or five gets the advantages of both: your own dates, and enough people sharing the aircraft that the flight is not the largest cost on the invoice.

Photos, videos and reviews of this trip: earthbound.rajansimkhada.com/luxury-everest-base-camp-trekking-super