

Earthbound Expeditions

Mardi Himal Trek

10 days, from US$965 per person

Duration **10 days**	Grade **Moderate**	Max altitude **4,500 m**
Start and end **Kathmandu**	On the trail **4 to 6 hours a day**	Best season **Mar to May, Oct to Nov**
Accommodation **Hotels and lodges**	Meals **All meals on the trek**	Group size **Up to 10**
Getting there **Fly to Pokhara**		

Mardi Himal Trek Overview

A short, steep ridge trek beneath Machhapuchhre (Fishtail): two days in mossy forest, a night at 3,580 m, and an early-morning climb to 4,500 m with Machhapuchhre directly above.

Trek overview

The trek is six days of walking up a single ridge that leads directly towards Machhapuchhre. You start at Kande on the road from Pokhara, climb through Gurung villages to Australian Camp, then turn north into forest, where you stay for two days. Above Low Camp the trees end, the ridge narrows, and you sleep at High Camp at 3,580 m with the mountain in view from your window. On the last morning you climb along the crest to 4,500 m and descend again.

Who this trip is for

This trek suits travellers who want to see the high Annapurnas without two weeks of walking or a night above 4,000 m. You walk four to six hours a day for most of the trek, with one long day of eight to nine hours, and nothing technical at any point. It is a good first Himalayan trek that is not a beginners' route, and many experienced Nepal trekkers choose it when they have one week rather than two.

A quieter trail

The trail was only opened to teahouse trekking in 2012, half a century after Jimmy Roberts' party made the first ascent of Mardi Himal in 1961. Everything on the ridge has been built since 2012, which is why the lodges are small and few in number. The trail becomes busier every year, and in October you will meet many other trekkers, but it is much quieter than Poon Hill.

The upper ridge

Above High Camp the ridge is narrow, exposed on both sides, and difficult in cloud or fresh snow. This section causes some trekkers to turn back every week of the season. Cloud rises up the valley most days from about 11 a.m., so we start before dawn. If the weather is unsuitable on your morning, your guide will tell you and the day will be shortened.

Key highlights of the Mardi Himal Trek

- Dawn on the ridge at Mardi Himal Base Camp (4,500 m)
- Machhapuchhre, Annapurna South and Hiunchuli directly overhead
- A night at High Camp (3,580 m), the highest lodges on the trail
- Two days of moss-hung rhododendron and oak forest
- Gurung villages on the way in, and an exit through Siding

Itinerary

Day	Route	Hours	Distance	Altitude
1	Arrive Kathmandu	-	-	1,400 m
2	Fly to Pokhara	-	-	830 m
3	Drive to Kande, walk to Pitam Deurali	4–5 hrs	7 km	2,100 m

4	Pitam Deurali to Forest Camp	5–6 hrs	9 km	2,550 m
5	Forest Camp to Low Camp	3–4 hrs	6 km	2,970 m
6	Low Camp to High Camp	4–5 hrs	6 km	3,580 m
7	Base Camp at dawn, down to Low Camp	8–9 hrs	16 km	4,500 m
8	Low Camp to Siding, drive to Pokhara	5–6 hrs	13 km	830 m
9	Fly or drive to Kathmandu	-	-	1,400 m
10	Fly home	-	-	n/a

Day 1

Arrive in Kathmandu

We meet you in the arrivals hall and drive you to your hotel. The trek starts the day after tomorrow, so the afternoon is free: you can rest after your flight or walk into the old city to see the temples. Over dinner we go through the route, the equipment and the expected weather for your dates.

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

Day 2

Fly to Pokhara

A 25-minute flight over the middle hills takes you to Pokhara, a lakeside town at 830 m with the Annapurnas rising behind it. The rest of the day is free. On a clear afternoon Machhapuchhre is visible from the lake, and it is worth taking time to view it before you trek beneath it.

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

Day 3

Drive to Kande and trek to Pitam Deurali

Drive for an hour to Kande, then walk uphill from the start through pine forest to Australian Camp, where the full mountain range comes into view. The path descends to the village of Pothana and climbs gently on stone steps to Pitam Deurali, a junction on a saddle with two lodges. It is a short first afternoon, steep in places.

Altitude: 2,100 m On foot: 7 km, 4–5 hrs Night: Teahouse, Pitam Deurali Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 4

Trek to Forest Camp

Today you leave the villages behind. The trail turns north onto the main ridge and into old rhododendron and oak forest, covered in moss and rich in birdlife, and stays under the trees for several hours. There are no views and very few buildings. Forest Camp is a clearing with a small number of teahouses.

Altitude: 2,550 m On foot: 9 km, 5–6 hrs Night: Teahouse, Forest Camp Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 5

Trek to Low Camp

The trail continues through forest, climbing steadily, until the trees become smaller and then end, and the ridge opens out. Low Camp is just above the tree line, with Machhapuchhre filling the head of the valley ahead. This is a deliberately short day: you gain 400 m and sleep at that altitude to acclimatise.

Altitude: 2,970 m On foot: 6 km, 3–4 hrs Night: Teahouse, Low Camp Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 6

Trek to High Camp

The trail now leaves the trees behind and crosses open grass and low scrub, passing Badal Danda with its long view down the Mardi Khola valley. The last hour is a bare, stony climb onto the shoulder where High Camp stands. Beds are limited here, so we start early. Cloud usually arrives in the afternoon, before we reach High Camp.

Altitude: 3,580 m On foot: 6 km, 4–5 hrs Night: Teahouse, High Camp Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 7

Hike to Mardi Himal Base Camp and trek to Low Camp

We set off before first light with head torches, climbing a narrowing ridge with the ground dropping away on both sides. The Upper Viewpoint at 4,200 m is reached after about three hours, and Base Camp at 4,500 m is an hour further, with Machhapuchhre very close. We then descend past High Camp to Low Camp.

Altitude: 4,500 m at Base Camp On foot: 16 km, 8–9 hrs Night: Teahouse, Low Camp Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 8

Trek to Siding and drive to Pokhara

A long descent on a new trail, leaving the ridge at Low Camp and descending through forest and terraced fields to the Gurung village of Siding at 1,700 m. A jeep meets us for the rough two to three hour drive to Pokhara, where you have a hot shower and a comfortable hotel bed.

Altitude: 830 m On foot: 13 km, 5–6 hrs Night: Hotel, Pokhara Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 9

Return to Kathmandu

Fly or drive to Kathmandu, as chosen when you booked. The afternoon is free for exploring Thamel and shopping for gifts. In the evening we have a farewell dinner together with your guide.

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

Day 10

Departure

We drive you to the airport in good time for your flight. If you have a spare day or two at the end of the trip, Pokhara is worth revisiting, and Chitwan is a few hours by road from there. Tell us before you book and we will add either to the end of your trip.

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

What's included

- Airport transfers & ground transport
- Licensed English-speaking guide
- Accommodation throughout the trip
- All permits & conservation area fees
- Meals as per the itinerary

Not included

- International flights
- Travel & rescue insurance
- Personal trekking gear
- Tips & personal expenses
- Nepal entry visa (on arrival)

Permits and other costs

Permit	Fee	Issued by
Annapurna Conservation Area permit (ACAP). SAARC nationals pay NPR 1,000 and children under ten are free. The permit is checked at the post below Forest Camp and again on the way out.	NPR 3,000, about $22	By the National Trust for Nature Conservation, in Kathmandu or Pokhara, or online before you arrive
TIMS card. Checkpoints on this trail often ask only for the ACAP permit. We buy the TIMS card anyway, so that you have it if it is requested on the ridge.	NPR 2,000, about $15	Only through a registered trekking agency
Licensed guide. Since April 2023, no foreign trekker may enter this conservation area without a licensed guide. This is a legal requirement, and on the ridge above High Camp in cloud it is also the safe arrangement.	Inside the trek price	Not needed separately

Other cost	Amount	Note
Flight to Pokhara and back	$120–180	Or $25 by tourist coach, six to eight hours each way
ACAP permit	$22	NPR 3,000. NPR 1,000 for SAARC nationals
TIMS card	$15	NPR 2,000, issued only through a registered agency
Jeeps to Kande and from Siding	$70–120	Per vehicle both ways, not per person
Teahouse bed	$4–10 a night	Most expensive at High Camp, where all supplies are carried up by porters
Meals on the trek	$20–28 a day	Three meals and tea. Prices rise with altitude
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, four nights across the two cities
Travel insurance to 5,000 m	$90–150	Must cover helicopter rescue

Hot water, charging, wifi	$2–6 each, each time	Not included, cash only, more expensive at higher altitude
Tips for guide and porter	$90–140	Per trekker, paid at the end of the trek

Packing list

Pack light, as everything on this ridge is carried by hand

Your porter carries 15 kg shared between two trekkers, which is generous for a six-day trek and more than you should need. There is no flight weight limit on this trek, so the limit is set by the trail rather than an aircraft. Above Low Camp the lodges have no road, mule or cable access: gas, rice and washing water are all carried up by porters, which is a good reason to pack less. We provide a duffel bag in Pokhara, and we also supply the sleeping bag and down jacket, so you do not need to bring these from home.

Head

- A brimmed sun hat and a wool hat that covers your ears
- Two buffs, or a buff and a neck gaiter
- Category 3 sunglasses. The ridge is bright even under cloud
- Head torch and spare batteries. The Base Camp day starts in the dark
- SPF 50 sunscreen and a lip balm with sun protection

Clothing

- Three merino or synthetic base layers, no cotton
- A fleece and one light insulated jacket
- Down jacket for High Camp and the early start. We provide one
- Waterproof jacket and trousers that pack small. Afternoon cloud often brings rain
- Two pairs of trekking trousers
- Underwear for four days, with laundry in Pokhara

Hands and feet

- Liner gloves and a warmer pair to wear over them
- Broken-in boots with ankle support. The descent to Siding is hard on feet and boots
- Four pairs of wool trekking socks
- Camp shoes for the evenings
- A pair of trekking poles, which we strongly recommend on this trek

Bags

- A porter duffel bag, 15 kg maximum. We provide it in Pokhara
- Daypack of 25 to 30 litres with a rain cover
- Dry bags or a thick pack liner. Forest Camp is damp in every season

Sleeping

- A sleeping bag rated to -10°C, which we supply
- Silk or cotton liner, for warmth and hygiene
- Earplugs. Walls at High Camp are a single sheet of plywood

Health

- Blister plasters, tape, painkillers and rehydration salts
- Any regular medication, in your daypack rather than your duffel
- Water purification tablets or a filter, because water is scarce above Low Camp
- Hand sanitiser and wet wipes for the two days without a shower
- Leeches are common in the weeks either side of the monsoon: take a small bottle of salt if you trek in June or September

Papers and money

- Passport valid for six months, plus a photocopy
- Two passport photographs for the permits
- Insurance certificate showing helicopter cover to 5,000 m
- $150 to $250 in rupees, in small notes. Pokhara has the last cash machine

Altitude profile

Day	Place	Sleep at	Highest point
1	Kathmandu	1,400 m	-
2	Pokhara	830 m	-
3	Pitam Deurali	2,100 m	-
4	Forest Camp	2,550 m	-
5	Low Camp	2,970 m	-
6	High Camp	3,580 m	-
7	Low Camp	2,970 m	4,500 m
8	Pokhara	830 m	-
9	Kathmandu	1,400 m	-

Getting to the trailhead

There is no mountain airstrip and no risk of a week-long weather delay, and the road reaches to within an hour of the start of the trail.

Flying to Pokhara

The flight from Kathmandu takes 25 minutes and lands at an airport on flat ground at 830 m, with the Annapurna range visible from the left-hand windows. Delays here are usually a matter of hours, not days, and nothing on this itinerary depends on a mountain airstrip. This is the main practical difference between planning an Annapurna trek and an Everest trek.

Travelling by coach

The coach takes six to eight hours along the Prithvi Highway beside the Trishuli River and costs about $25. The journey takes longer when roadworks are under way. Some travellers prefer to see the countryside, and as nothing on this trek is time-critical, it is a reasonable choice. Tell us which option you prefer when you book.

Drive to the trailhead

Kande is 27 km from Pokhara on the Baglung highway, about an hour by car and slightly longer by bus. That is the only transfer. The trek begins at the roadside and climbs from the start, which is why day 3 feels steeper than its four hours suggest.

Return via Siding

The exit is a jeep track from the Gurung village of Siding, and the drive back to Pokhara takes two to three hours on a very rough road. It is not comfortable, but it is much easier than two more days of walking downhill. In heavy rain the track can close, in which case we walk on to Lwang and drive from there.

Lodges on the ridge

Lodges here are smaller and fewer than on the Poon Hill side, and at the top all food and water supplies are carried up by porters.

Teahouse accommodation

Nights on the ridge are spent in small teahouses: family-run lodges with one heated dining room and simple twin rooms with foam mattresses and thin walls. Bring a sleeping bag. At Pitam Deurali you stay in one of two lodges at the junction, with mostly shared bathrooms and a hot shower for a fee. Forest Camp is a teahouse in a clearing, with plywood walls.

Facilities at higher altitude

You spend two nights at Low Camp, just above the tree line, with shared bathrooms and a bucket of hot water. High Camp has five or six teahouses on the ridge at 3,580 m. Rooms are twin, with dormitory beds when the lodges are full, and there is no proper shower. It is the coldest night of the trek.

Where	Nights	Type	Room	Bathroom
Kathmandu	2	Three-star hotel	Twin or double	Private, hot water
Pokhara	2	Three-star hotel by the lake	Twin or double	Private, hot water

Pitam Deurali	1	Teahouse, one of two at the junction	Twin	Mostly shared, hot shower for a fee
Forest Camp	1	Teahouse in a forest clearing	Twin rooms with plywood walls	Shared
Low Camp	2	Teahouse just above the tree line	Twin	Shared, bucket hot water
High Camp	1	Teahouses on the ridge, five or six in total	Twin rooms, and dormitory beds when full	Shared, with little or no shower

Heating
A stove in the dining room at Low Camp and High Camp, lit at sunset. Bedrooms are not heated.

Hot shower
Plumbed and reliable as far as Deurali, $2 to $4. Above Forest Camp it is a bucket of hot water, $2 to $5, and at High Camp it may not be available.

Charging
$2 to $4 per device. Everything above Low Camp runs on solar power, so after two cloudy days in a row charging may not be available. Bring a power bank.

Wifi
Free or a few dollars in the villages, patchy at Forest Camp, and not to be relied on above Low Camp.

Phone signal
NTC has better coverage on this ridge and reaches High Camp in good conditions. Ncell is weak above the forest. Buy a SIM card in Pokhara.

Water
Boiled or filtered water costs $1 to $3 per litre, and the price rises with altitude because above Low Camp it is carried uphill by hand.

Sleeping bag
Provided, rated to -10°C, which is sufficient for High Camp in the trekking seasons. Lent for the trek and returned a t the end.

Bedding
A mattress, a pillow and one or two blankets. Use your sleeping bag on top of them, not instead of them.

Meals

Meal	Time	What it is like
Breakfast	6:30–7:30	Porridge, eggs cooked to order, Tibetan bread, chapati, pancakes, tea or coffee
Lunch	11:30–13:00	Dal bhat, fried rice, noodles, thukpa, momo, potatoes cooked in various ways
Dinner	18:30–19:30	Dal bhat, pasta, curry and rice, garlic soup to start
Tea	on arrival	Ginger, lemon, masala, milk or plain black tea. Served at every stop.

Diet	How we manage it

Vegetarian	Easy everywhere. Dal bhat is vegetarian, freshly cooked, and second helpings are free.
Vegan	Possible with notice, although butter and curd are used in more dishes than the menu shows. Tell us when you book and your guide will order ahead.
Gluten free	Rice, dal, potatoes and eggs are suitable. Bread, noodles, momo and most soups are not, and small teahouse kitchens with two burners cannot prevent cross-contamination.
Halal	There are no certified kitchens on this trail. Choosing vegetarian meals is the practical option and is common.
Meat	Available on the menu, but we advise avoiding it above Forest Camp. There is no refrigeration there and meat is carried in on foot.

A typical day

Time	What happens
6:00	Tea brought to your room, and a bowl of warm water when available
6:30	Pack, and leave your duffel bag by the door for the porter
7:00	Breakfast together in the dining room, the only heated room in the lodge
8:00	On the trail. The guide sets a deliberately slow, steady pace
11:30	Lunch at a lodge on the route, about an hour
13:00	One to three more hours of walking. Cloud usually arrives before we reach the lodge
15:00	Arrive at the lodge, tea, room allocation, and time to rest
17:00	From Low Camp upward, the guide measures and records your oxygen saturation
18:30	Dinner, and the guide explains the next day's route and weather
20:30	Bed. In November on the ridge, an early night is essential

Difficulty and preparation

Difficulty 3 of 5

Steady walking with one demanding day.

- Four to six hours a day for five days, and one day of eight to nine hours on the ridge.
- Steep sections in three places: the climb from Kande, the forest above Deurali, and the whole descent to Siding.
- The highest overnight stop is 3,580 m, low enough that most people notice the altitude only as slower walking.
- No ropes, no crampons and no pass. The ridge above High Camp is exposed, but it is a footpath throughout.
- The last day is hard on the knees. The descent from Low Camp to Siding is 1,270 m in one day.

Getting ready

10 weeks before: Build endurance
Do three 40-minute sessions a week, hard enough to raise your breathing but easy enough to talk. Walking, cycling, rowing or swimming are all suitable. If you follow only one part of this plan, make it this one.

8 weeks before: Add hill walking
Replace one session with a one-hour hill walk with 250 m of ascent. Add squats, step-ups and calf raises once a week. On this trek the descents are harder on the legs than the climbs, and these exercises help prepare for that.

6 weeks before: Train in your boots
From now on, do every walk in the boots you will wear in Nepal, carrying the pack you will bring, weighted to 5 kg. Blisters cause more problems on this trail than altitude, and they can be prevented at home.

4 weeks before: Walk on consecutive days
Walk for four hours on Saturday, then two more hours on Sunday morning. A trek consists of walking on consecutive days, and a single long walk once a month does not prepare you for that.

3 weeks before: A long training walk
Walk for five hours with 700 m of ascent and 700 m of descent, using trekking poles. If you complete this and can still eat and sleep well, the day on the ridge will require an early start rather than extra fitness.

10 days before: Reduce training
Halve the distance but keep the same number of sessions. Training at this stage no longer adds fitness and increases the risk of injury. Rest, and check your equipment instead.

Altitude and safety

You sleep no higher than 3,580 m on this trek, which is why serious altitude illness is uncommon. However, the last two days involve a rapid gain in height: from Low Camp to High Camp you climb 600 m, and the following morning you climb a further 920 m in three to four hours. This is a fast ascent, so please tell your guide about any headache at High Camp during dinner rather than waiting until the morning. Descending again on the same day is what makes the climb safe.

What to watch for

- A headache that continues after drinking water and taking paracetamol
- Loss of appetite at dinner after a full day of walking
- Nausea, or feeling light-headed or unsteady
- Breathlessness at rest, not only when climbing
- Disturbed sleep, or waking up gasping for breath
- A cough that is worse at bedtime than earlier in the day
- Stumbling or loss of balance, which requires immediate descent

How to prevent it

- Let the guide set the pace on day 6. It will feel slow, and that is intentional.
- Drink about three litres a day. Thirst is not a reliable guide at altitude.
- Eat dinner at High Camp even if you would prefer to go to bed. Loss of appetite is an early sign of altitude illness.

- Do not drink alcohol at High Camp and do not take sleeping tablets anywhere on the ridge.
- Sleep at Low Camp on the way up rather than climbing to High Camp in one day.
- If you have a headache at 5 a.m., stop at the Upper Viewpoint or do not climb at all.

What we do

1. Daily health checks
The guide carries an oximeter, and from 2,970 m onward your oxygen saturation and pulse are recorded in a notebook every evening. Two nights of readings give a clear basis for decisions.

2. Mild symptoms
The ridge day is easy to shorten: turn back at the Lower Viewpoint just below Base Camp, or stop at 4,200 m. Both give a view of the same mountain at the same distance.

3. Serious symptoms
Descent is the treatment, and on this route it is unusually quick. Low Camp is two hours below High Camp and Forest Camp is two hours below that, giving a descent of 1,000 m within an afternoon.

4. Helicopter evacuation
Helicopters can land at High Camp and Low Camp, and Pokhara, which has a full hospital, is 15 minutes away by air. The cost starts at $2,500, which is why we check your insurance policy before you leave Pokhara.

5. Medical facilities
Unlike the Khumbu, this trail has no aid post. The nearest proper medical care is in Pokhara. This is a reason for caution at High Camp rather than a reason to avoid the trek.

Weather by month

We do not run this trek in two months of the year, and in two further months we run it with a warning about conditions on the ridge in snow.

Month	Day on the trail	Night on the trail	Night at High Camp	Conditions	Note
January	7°C	-4°C	-12°C	Hard	Very cold and very clear. There is snow on the upper ridge and some High Camp lodges are closed.
February	9°C	-3°C	-10°C	Hard	Cold and quiet, with old snow above Badal Danda well into the month.
March	13°C	0°C	-6°C	Best	The season opens and the rhododendron below Forest Camp begins to flower. An excellent month.
April	16°C	4°C	-2°C	Best	Warm walking conditions, flowering forest, and the ridge is clear most mornings before cloud builds.
May	18°C	7°C	1°C	Good	Pleasant and hazy. Cloud builds earlier each week, and afternoon views are lost first.

June	19°C	10°C	4°C	Hard	Monsoon. There are leeches in the forest section, rain most afternoons, and Machhapuchhre is usually hidden by cloud.
July	18°C	11°C	5°C	We do not run it	We do not run this trek in this month. You would walk for six days in cloud and might see the mountain once.
August	18°C	11°C	5°C	We do not run it	Similar to July, and the jeep track from Siding is often washed out.
September	16°C	9°C	3°C	Good	Skies clear through the month. The last ten days are green and very quiet.
October	14°C	5°C	-2°C	Best	The most reliable month and by far the busiest. High Camp beds are usually full by early afternoon.
November	11°C	1°C	-7°C	Best	Cold after dark, with the clearest visibility of any month and fewer trekkers on the ridge each week.
December	8°C	-2°C	-10°C	Hard	Clear, bright and very quiet. Suitable with the right equipment, but the ridge becomes icy after any snowfall.

Built from Pokhara station averages adjusted for height, and checked against what our guides record on the ridge. Any week runs several degrees either side, and the wind above High Camp does more to how cold it feels than the thermometer.

Guides and porters

Your guide

Your guide holds a government licence and current wilderness first aid training, and there is one porter for every two trekkers. For groups of more than ten trekkers, a second guide joins so that both the front and the back of the group are supervised. Our guides live in this district, and several grew up in the villages below Low Camp.

Porters and luggage

Each porter carries 15 kg, which is two duffel bags. This is well below the 25 kg limit set by the trekking association, deliberately, because the climb to High Camp is steep and the descent to Siding is long. If your bag is over the limit, we divide the load rather than add to it. You carry your water, camera and jacket in a daypack.

Staff pay and insurance

Wages, insurance, meals and accommodation for the whole crew are included in the price on this page. You will not be asked for a collection on the trail. Each guide and porter is insured for altitude illness and helicopter evacuation to the same standard we require from you, with no lower level of cover for porters. Including this in the price is the only way to guarantee it.

Tipping

Tipping is customary but not compulsory, and it never replaces wages. For a trek of this length, $90 to $140 per trekker for the whole team is appropriate, given together on the last evening. No one will ask you for a tip, and please do not ask your guide what amount is appropriate, as this can cause embarrassment.

Responsible travel

Drinking water

Above Low Camp there is no spring or piped water at the lodges. Every litre you drink and every bucket you wash in is carried uphill by a person. Buy boiled or filtered water by the litre, carry a filter or purification tablets as a backup, and consider using a flannel rather than a hot bucket at High Camp.

Waste

We carry out everything we carry in, apart from food. This trail is only about ten years old and is still in good condition, which is uncommon in Nepal and worth protecting. Wrappers, batteries and other waste come back down in our bags.

Supporting local communities

The lodges on this ridge are family businesses, most of them opened since 2012 by households from Siding, Lwang and Ghalel. The permit fee funds the conservation area, which is run by a national trust rather than a government ministry. Almost everything you spend here stays within a day's drive of where you spend it.

Local customs

Always ask before photographing anyone. Step to the uphill side of the trail to let mule trains pass. Machhapuchhre has never been climbed and climbing it is not permitted, because it is sacred to the local people whose fields you walk through.

Booking and payment

How to book

Send us a message or a WhatsApp with your preferred month. You will receive a reply, usually the same day, from someone who has trekked this ridge. Nothing is payable until you decide to reserve dates.

Deposit

A deposit of 30 per cent reserves your dates, and the balance is due when you arrive in Kathmandu or Pokhara, by card or in cash. Please send a copy of your passport, proof of insurance and any medical or dietary information we should know about.

Payment

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

Cancellation

If you cancel more than 30 days before departure, your deposit can be moved to any other date or any other trek we run, with no expiry. Within 30 days we keep the deposit, because permits, crew and lodges have been committed by then. If we cancel for any reason other than weather, you receive a full refund.

Private and group departures

From five people, private and group trips cost the same. A private booking means you choose the dates, pace and group, for as few as one trekker. On a group departure you travel on the dates in the table above, with a maximum of ten people. As the price is the same, most travellers choose a private trip.

Late bookings

Outside October, a week's notice is enough, because there are no mountain flights to arrange. In October, beds at High Camp are limited, so we need three to four weeks' notice.

Optional extras

Paragliding over Pokhara
$95, 1 morning
A 30-minute flight from Sarangkot with the Annapurnas across the valley. Day 9 is free if you fly to Kathmandu in the afternoon.

Poon Hill first
from $340, +4 days
Visit Ghorepani and the 3,210 m sunrise viewpoint before starting the ridge. This also helps acclimatisation and makes High Camp noticeably easier.

Two more nights in Pokhara
$110, +2 days
Two extra nights by the lake at the end of the trek, with time for a boat trip and rest. Most travellers who add these nights are glad they did.

Walk out through Landruk
no change, +1 day
Leave the ridge at Low Camp towards the Modi Khola instead of Siding, for one more night in a village and a gentler descent. Recommended if you have concerns about your knees.

Chitwan jungle safari
from $390, +3 days
Rhinos, gharials and a warm climate, a few hours by road from Pokhara. It fits between the trek and your flight home without retracing your route.

Single room
$95
Applies to the four hotel nights in Kathmandu and Pokhara only. Lodges on the ridge are twin share throughout, and when High Camp is full in October you may be placed in a dormitory regardless of any request.

Frequently asked questions

Answers to the 21 questions travellers ask us most often. If your question is not here, contact us and we will answer it.

Is there any climbing on this trek?

No. There are no ropes, no crampons and no glacier anywhere on this route. The upper ridge is a footpath with steep drops on either side. If exposure concerns you, the Upper Viewpoint at 4,200 m is a good place to stop.

How fit do I need to be?

You need to be fit enough to walk for four to six hours on consecutive days, plus one day of eight to nine hours. If you can complete a five-hour hill walk and then walk for two hours the following day, you are ready for this trek.

Is this a good first trek in Nepal?

Yes, it is one of the best choices for a first trek. It is short, the highest overnight stop is only 3,580 m, and you get close views of a 6,993 m mountain. It requires six days of steady walking rather than any technical skill.

How likely am I to reach Base Camp?

Most people reach the Upper Viewpoint at 4,200 m. Fewer continue for the last hour to Base Camp at 4,500 m, and the reason is almost always weather or time rather than fitness. On a clear morning, both places offer views of the same mountains at slightly different distances.

Is there an age limit?

There is no upper age limit. We accept children from the age of ten with a parent. This is younger than we would accept on an Everest trek, because the altitude here is modest and you can descend from the ridge in an afternoon. Your walking experience matters far more than your age.

How exposed is the ridge above High Camp?

The ridge is narrow in places, with the ground falling away on both sides, but it is a footpath throughout. In clear weather most people find it enjoyable. In cloud or on fresh snow it is much more difficult, and in those conditions your guide may decide to turn the group back.

Will I get altitude sickness?

It is uncommon on this trek because you sleep no higher than 3,580 m. However, the climb from Low Camp to Base Camp is fast, and mild symptoms do occur at High Camp. We measure your oxygen saturation every evening from Low Camp onward. Descent is quick on this route, which is its main safety advantage.

How cold does it get at High Camp?

At night it is between -2°C and -7°C in the trekking seasons, and close to -12°C in January. Daytime tem peratures on the trail are between 11°C and 18°C and feel warm in the sun. No bedrooms on this trail are hea ted, at any altitude, so a warm sleeping bag is essential.

What insurance do I need?

You need a policy that covers trekking to 5,000 m, including helicopter rescue and repatriation. Please show us the certificate before we leave Pokhara. A rescue from this ridge costs from $2,500, and no helicopter will take off without a guarantee of payment.

What are the lodges like?

The lodges are small, plain and fewer in number than you may expect. Rooms are plywood with twin beds, there is a dining room with one stove, and toilets are shared. At High Camp there are five or six lodges in total. They are simpler than the lodges on the Poon Hill side, which is the result of this trail being quieter.

Is there a shower every night?

As far as Deurali, yes, with proper plumbing. Above Forest Camp a shower is a bucket of hot water for a few dollars, and at High Camp there may be none, because all water there is carried up by porters. Wet wipes are sufficient for the two days without a shower.

Is there mobile signal or wifi on the trek?

NTC reaches High Camp in good conditions, and Ncell coverage is weak above the forest. Wifi is free or costs a few dollars in the villages, is patchy at Forest Camp and is unreliable above it. Buy a SIM card in Pokhara, as you cannot register one on the trail.

Can I charge my camera?

Yes, for $2 to $4 per device. Everything above Low Camp runs on solar panels, so after two overcast days in a row there may be no power available. Carry a power bank of at least 10,000 mAh and keep it in your sleeping bag at night rather than leaving it out in the cold.

Is the trail crowded?

It is much quieter than Poon Hill or the Annapurna Sanctuary, although it becomes busier every year. In October the ridge is busy and High Camp fills by mid-afternoon, so we start early in that month. In late November or March the forest is often very quiet.

Who carries my bag, and how heavy can it be?

Your duffel bag is carried by a porter shared with one other trekker, with a limit of 15 kg between you. You carry a daypack of 5 to 7 kg with water, a warm layer, waterproofs and snacks for the day. There is no flight baggage allowance on this trek.

What permits do I need and what do they cost?

You need an ACAP permit, which costs NPR 3,000 (about $22) from the National Trust for Nature Conservation, and a TIMS card, which costs NPR 2,000 (about $15) through a registered agency. Both are included in your trek price. A licensed guide has been compulsory in this conservation area since April 2023.

How do I get a Nepal visa?

Most nationalities can buy a visa on arrival at Kathmandu airport: $30 for 15 days and $50 for 30 days, cash only. Completing the online form in the two weeks before you fly shortens the queue. Bring a passport photograph, and make sure your passport is valid for at least six months.

How much cash do I need on the trek?

Bring $150 to $250 changed into rupees, in small notes. This covers drinks, charging, hot water, wifi and tips for six days. The last ATM is in Pokhara. No lodge on the ridge accepts cards, and lodges cannot give change for large notes.

How do I reach the trailhead?

Fly from Kathmandu to Pokhara in 25 minutes, or take the coach along the Prithvi Highway in six to eight hours. From Pokhara it is 27 km, about an hour by road, to Kande, where the trek starts. There are no mountain airstrip flights on this trek.

When should I book?

For October, book four to six weeks ahead, because beds at High Camp fill up first. For every other month, ten days' notice is comfortable, and we have arranged this trek with three days' notice.

Can you change the itinerary?

Yes, and it is easy to do on a trek of this length. You can start from Pokhara and leave out Kathmandu, add a night at Badal Danda to make the Base Camp day shorter, walk out through Landruk instead of Siding, or add Poon Hill at the start. From five people, your own dates cost the same as a group departure.

Photos, videos and reviews of this trip: earthbound.rajansimkhada.com/mardi-himal-trek