

Earthbound Expeditions

Panchase Hill Trek

8 days, from US$725 per person

Duration **8 days**	Grade **Easy**	Max altitude **2,517 m**
Start and end **Kathmandu**	On the trail **3 to 5 hours a day**	Best season **Oct to Apr**
Accommodation **Teahouses and homestays**	Meals **All meals on the trek**	Group size **Up to 12**
Getting there **Fly to Pokhara**		

Panchase Hill Trek Overview

Four easy days in a protected forest above Pokhara, ending at dawn on a sacred summit with views from Dhaulagiri to Manaslu on one side and Phewa Lake on the other, and very few other trekkers.

Trek overview

This eight-day trip includes four days of walking in the wooded hills on the south-west side of the Pokhara valley. You start on the ridge at Naudanda, cross farmland to Bhadaure, climb through oak and rhododendron forest to the saddle at Panchase Bhanjyang, and walk up in the dark to the summit at 2,517 m. You then descend the other side to Phewa Lake and cross it by boat.

Who this trip is for

Anyone who can walk for four to six hours on a hill path and is comfortable with simple accommodation. There is no altitude problem, no pass, no snow in the walking seasons and nothing technical. It suits families, travellers with one week rather than two, and anyone who has walked a busy trail and would prefer a quieter one.

Panchase compared with Poon Hill

The mountains are forty kilometres away rather than directly above you, so if you want to be close to glaciers, this is not the right trek. Instead, you walk through a forest with around 120 species of orchid and about 260 species of bird, visit a sacred summit that Nepali pilgrims climb but few foreign visitors know about, and spend whole days without meeting other trekkers. Ghorepani is no longer this quiet.

Permits

Sources disagree on this. Several detailed independent guides state that no permit is needed, because the hill is a Protected Forest managed by the Division Forest Office rather than part of the Annapurna Conservation Area, and there is no staffed ACAP counter on the Bhadaure approach. Other operators list the ACAP permit and a TIMS card as required. We buy the ACAP permit for every trekker in any case, and it is included in your price.

Key highlights of the Panchase Hill Trek

- Sunrise on Panchase Hill (2,517 m), with views from Dhaulagiri to Manaslu
- A Shiva temple and a holy pond on a summit still visited by pilgrims
- Around 120 orchid species and 260 bird species in the Panchase Protected Forest
- Nights in Gurung homestays, with vegetables from the family garden
- The walk out past the World Peace Pagoda and across Phewa Lake by boat

Itinerary

Day	Route	Hours	Distance	Altitude
1	Arrive Kathmandu	-	-	1,400 m
2	Fly to Pokhara, afternoon by the lake	-	-	830 m
3	Drive to Naudanda, walk to Bhadaure	3–4 hrs	8 km	1,670 m

4	Bhadaure to Panchase Bhanjyang	3–4 hrs	7 km	2,065 m
5	Panchase Hill at dawn, down to Bhumdi	6–7 hrs	14 km	2,517 m
6	Bhumdi, Peace Pagoda, boat across Phewa	3–4 hrs	10 km	830 m
7	Fly or drive to Kathmandu	-	-	1,400 m
8	Fly home	-	-	1,400 m

Day 1

Arrive in Kathmandu

We meet you at Kathmandu airport and drive you to your hotel. The rest of the day is free to rest after the flight or walk into the old city. In the evening we have dinner together and brief you on the week, the equipment you need and the weather in the hills above Pokhara.

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

Day 2

Fly to Pokhara

A twenty-five-minute flight west to Pokhara, with the Annapurna range visible from the right-hand windows on a clear morning. The afternoon is free beside Phewa Lake, where you will finish the walk on day six. We arrange the permits, introduce you to your guide, and you can see the ridge you will climb.

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

Day 3

Drive to Naudanda and trek to Bhadaure

A forty-five-minute drive up the Baglung highway to Naudanda at 1,515 m, then onto a ridge of terraced fields and scattered farms. The walking is gentle, mostly on stone-paved paths between villages, and you finish at Bhadaure, a Gurung village with homestays and views of the Annapurnas to the north.

Altitude: 1,670 m On foot: 8 km, 3–4 hrs Night: Homestay, Bhadaure Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 4

Trek through the forest to Panchase Bhanjyang

This is the best forest day of the trek. The trail leaves the farmland and climbs through oak and rhododendron forest with orchids, passing Sidhane, where the community runs the homestays and knows where to find birds. Panchase Bhanjyang lies in a saddle at 2,065 m, with about seven teahouses and no road.

Altitude: 2,065 m On foot: 7 km, 3–4 hrs Night: Teahouse, Panchase Bhanjyang Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 5

Sunrise on Panchase Hill and trek to Bhumdi

We set off in the dark for the final 450 m to the summit at 2,517 m, where there is a small Shiva temple, a holy pond and a viewing tower. On a clear morning, Dhaulagiri, Annapurna, Machhapuchhre and Manaslu appear one by one. We return for breakfast and then make a long descent to Bhumdi.

Altitude: 2,517 m at the summit On foot: 14 km, 6–7 hrs Night: Lodge, Bhumdi Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 6

Walk to the World Peace Pagoda and cross Phewa Lake by boat

A short morning walk through the forest along the ridge above Phewa Lake to the white World Peace Pagoda on its hilltop, then down through the trees to the water. A wooden boat takes you across to Lakeside. The afternoon and evening are free.

Altitude: 830 m On foot: 10 km, 3–4 hrs Night: Hotel, Pokhara Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Day 7

Return to Kathmandu

A morning flight back to Kathmandu, or a six-hour drive if you would like to see the Trisuli river. The afternoon is free for Thamel, Patan or rest, and in the evening we have dinner together with the guide. If your onward flight allows, stay an extra night to visit Bhaktapur.

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

Day 8

Departure

We drive you to the airport for your flight home. Nothing on this trip depends on mountain weather or a mountain airstrip, so unlike on our Everest itineraries, you do not need a spare day at the end. If you have one, Nagarkot or Bhaktapur are good options.

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 conservation area fees
- Meals as per the itinerary

Not included

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

Permits and other costs

Permit	Fee	Issued by
Annapurna Conservation Area permit (ACAP). Sources disagree on whether this route requires one: Panchase is Protected Forest rather than conservation area land, and there are no staffed checkpoints on the Bhadaure side. We buy it for you in any case. SAARC nationals pay NPR 1,000.	NPR 3,000, about $22	Pokhara or Kathmandu, or online through the NTNC portal

Panchase Protected Forest. The forest was declared protected in 2011 and covers 5,776 hectares across Kaski, Parbat and Syangja. It is managed by the Division Forest Office, not by the conservation area, and there is no gate on the trail.	No entry fee	Nothing to buy and nowhere to buy it
TIMS card. Not checked anywhere on this route, and in practice checkpoints across the Annapurna region now check only the ACAP permit.	NPR 2,000, about $15	Through a registered trekking agency only
Licensed guide. Required for foreign trekkers in Nepal's national parks and conservation areas since April 2023. It is also useful on this lightly marked trail: the route up is signposted, but the route down is not.	Inside the trek price	Registered agency, which is us

Other cost	Amount	Note
Kathmandu to Pokhara flight, both ways	$150–210	Or $30 by tourist bus, which takes seven hours each way
ACAP permit	NPR 3,000, about $22	SAARC nationals pay NPR 1,000. See the permits section on whether it is required
Teahouse or homestay accommodation	$4–9 a night	NPR 600 is the usual rate at Panchase Bhanjyang
Food on the trail	$12–18 a day	Three meals and tea. Dal bhat costs about NPR 450
Licensed guide	$25–35 a day	Including their accommodation and meals
Porter, one for every two trekkers	$18–24 a day	Optional on this trek, and most people do without one
Kathmandu and Pokhara hotels	$35–60 a night	Three-star, four nights in total
Transport to Naudanda	$25–40 for the vehicle	Shared by the group, 45 minutes each way
Boat across Phewa Lake	$5–9	NPR 650 to 1,200, depending on the boat and negotiation
Travel insurance to 3,000 m	$50–90	Standard trekking cover. Helicopter cover is not needed
Hot showers, charging and wifi	$0–3 each	Charging is usually free. There is no wifi on the hill
Tips for the guide and any porter	$60–100	Per trekker, given at the end

Packing list

Pack light, as you will probably carry your own bag

Most people walk this trek with a daypack and no porter, which works well: the days are short, the climbs are modest and 7 kg is a comfortable load. If you prefer not to carry anything, we can arrange a porter for $18 to $24 a day, with a 20 kg limit shared between two trekkers. We provide the duffel and the sleeping bag, and anything you leave behind is stored free of charge at your Pokhara hotel.

Headwear and eyewear

- Sun hat with a brim. The ridge is exposed and the sun is strong from March
- A warm hat for the early start on day 5, from October to March
- Sunglasses, category 2 or 3
- Head torch and spare batteries. The summit climb starts before five
- Sun cream, SPF 30 or higher, and lip balm

Clothing

- Two or three base layers, merino or synthetic, not cotton
- One fleece, and a light insulated jacket for dawn on the summit
- A waterproof jacket. Even in the dry season, there are showers on this green hill
- Two pairs of long trekking trousers, for protection from leeches and nettles
- Underwear and socks for four days

Footwear and hands

- Trekking boots or sturdy trail shoes with good grip. The stone steps are polished and slippery
- Four pairs of walking socks
- Light gloves, for the winter months only
- Camp shoes or sandals for the evenings
- Leech socks if you are travelling close to the monsoon, available cheaply in Pokhara

Bags

- A 30 to 35 litre daypack. Most people carry their own bag on this trek
- A duffel if you would like a porter. We provide one
- A rain cover and a dry bag for electronics

Sleeping

- Sleeping bag rated to 0°C. We provide one, and from March to May you may not need it
- A silk or cotton liner, for hygiene rather than warmth
- Earplugs. Village houses have thin walls, and there are roosters

Health

- Blister plasters, tape, painkillers and rehydration salts
- Insect repellent with DEET, which also deters leeches
- A small tub of salt if you are walking during or near the monsoon
- Water purification as a backup to the boiled water at the lodges
- Hand sanitiser and wet wipes

Documents and money

- Passport valid for six months, plus a photocopy
- Two passport photographs for the permit
- Travel insurance certificate covering trekking to 3,000 m
- $100 to $150 in small notes, changed into rupees in Pokhara. No village on the hill accepts cards

Useful extras

- Binoculars. With 260 bird species on this hill, they are the most useful item you can bring
- A macro lens, or a phone with one, for the orchids from March to June
- Trekking poles, mainly for the descent on day 5
- A book. The evenings are long and there is no wifi

Altitude profile

Day	Place	Sleep at	Highest point
1	Kathmandu	1,400 m	-
2	Pokhara	830 m	-
3	Bhadaure	1,670 m	-
4	Panchase Bhanjyang	2,065 m	-
5	Bhumdi	1,520 m	2,517 m
6	Pokhara	830 m	-
7	Kathmandu	1,400 m	-

Getting to the trailhead

A domestic flight and a forty-five-minute drive. There is no mountain airstrip and no weather-dependent flight that could delay you for several days.

Kathmandu to Pokhara and back

The flight takes twenty-five to thirty minutes in an ATR turboprop, with the Himalaya on the right-hand side on the way out and on the left on the way back. Buddha Air and Yeti fly the route many times a day to the new Pokhara airport, so a cancellation means waiting for the next departure rather than several days. Fares are about $75 to $105 each way and are included in your price.

Travelling by road

The tourist bus takes seven to eight hours along the Trisuli river and costs about $15 to $25, and a private car takes six hours. Tell us when you book and we will replace the flight with the drive and refund the difference. In heavy monsoon rain the road journey can take several hours longer, which is another reason to fly.

Forty-five minutes to the trailhead

Naudanda lies at 1,515 m on the Baglung highway, about eighteen kilometres from Pokhara, and the road is paved all the way. Unlike treks in the Everest region, the start of this trek does not depend on the weather, and the road is open every day of the year.

No spare day needed

Every Everest itinerary we offer includes a reserve day for weather delays at Lukla. This one does not, because nothing on the route can be cancelled by weather. You can book your international flight for the day after you return to Kathmandu, although we still recommend a free day for peace of mind.

Accommodation

You stay in two hotels and three simple village houses. This section explains what to expect on the trail.

Accommodation on the trek

At Bhadaure you stay in a community homestay: a twin room in a family house, a shared bathroom and hot water by the bucket, with dinner eaten with the family. Panchase Bhanjyang is a saddle with about seven teahouses; the rooms are plain, with plywood walls, and the shared shower is solar-heated, so it is hot when the sun has been out. At Bhumdi you stay in a small lodge or guest house, with a private bathroom in the better rooms.

Hotels in Kathmandu and Pokhara

In Kathmandu and Pokhara you stay in three-star hotels, by the lake in Pokhara, with twin or double rooms and a private bathroom.

Where	Nights	Type	Room	Bathroom
Kathmandu	2	Three-star hotel	Twin or double	Private, hot water
Pokhara	2	Three-star hotel, Lakeside	Twin or double	Private, hot water
Bhadaure	1	Community homestay	Twin, in a family house	Shared, hot water by bucket
Panchase Bhanjyang	1	Teahouse, one of about seven in the saddle	Plain twin room with plywood walls	Shared, with a solar shower that is hot after sunny weather
Bhumdi	1	Small lodge or guest house	Twin, some with private bath	Private in the better rooms, otherwise shared

Heating

A wood stove in the dining room on cold nights. Bedrooms are not heated, and heating is not needed below 2,100 m.

Hot shower
Solar or gas-heated showers at most houses, free or for a dollar or two. On a cloudy day, the water may be cold.

Charging
Mains electricity at every stop, and charging is usually free. Bring a plug adaptor rather than a power bank.

Wifi
None at Panchase Bhanjyang or elsewhere on the hill. Your hotels in Pokhara and Kathmandu have wifi.

Phone signal
Ncell and NTC cover most of the ridge, and the summit has good signal. Buy a SIM card in Kathmandu or Pokhara.

Water
Boiled or filtered water is available at every house for well under a dollar a litre. Please use it rather than buying plastic bottles.

Sleeping bag
Provided, rated to 0°C, and often not needed from March to May. Every bed has blankets.

Bedding
A mattress, a pillow and thick quilts. Rooms are twin and the walls are thin.

Toilets
Mostly squat toilets, usually outside the room, and kept much cleaner than those at high altitude in the Khumbu.

Meals

Meal	Time	What it is like
Breakfast	7:30–8:00	Eggs, roti, porridge, local buckwheat pancakes with honey, and tea or coffee
Lunch	12:00–13:00	Dal bhat, fried rice, noodle soup, potatoes and seasonal greens from the garden
Dinner	19:00–19:30	Dal bhat with two or three curries, chow mein, thukpa, and curd where the family keeps a buffalo
Tea	on arrival, and again at dusk	Black, milk, lemon, ginger, or masala. Included at every stop.

Diet	How we manage it
Vegetarian	Easy everywhere, and better here than on the major trails because the vegetables are grown behind the house.
Vegan	Manageable with notice. Ghee and curd are used in many dishes, so we tell the kitchen a day in advance.
Gluten free	Dal bhat, rice, potatoes, eggs and curry are all safe. Roti, noodles and the local pancakes are not.
Halal	There is no certified halal kitchen on the hill. Vegetarian food is the practical option, as it is throughout rural Nepal.
Meat	Available and safe at this altitude, as nothing has to be carried up for two days to get here. Freshly killed chicken is the usual option.

A typical day

Time	What happens
6:30	Tea brought to your room, with a bowl of hot water for washing
7:00	Go out to see the first light on the mountains
7:30	Breakfast together, cooked to order, so it takes some time
8:30	Walking. The guide sets the pace of the slowest walker
10:30	Stops for birds, orchids and views, which are the main attractions of this trek
12:30	Lunch at a village house on the route, for just over an hour
15:00	Arrive, have tea, choose a bed, wash and relax in the sun
17:30	Sunset on the ridge, which is well worth seeing
19:00	Dinner by the stove, and a briefing from the guide on the next day
21:00	Bed. There is no wifi, and most people sleep early

Difficulty and preparation

Difficulty 2 of 5

Easy walking, one long descent and no altitude concerns.

- Three to five hours of walking a day for four days, with one day of six to seven hours.
- About 900 m of ascent over two days, mostly on stone-paved paths.
- You sleep at 2,065 m, about the altitude of a small Alpine village.
- The hardest hour is the stone staircase down from the summit, which is more difficult when wet.
- Nobody turns back on this trek. Those who find it hard mainly feel it in their thigh muscles.

Getting ready

8 weeks before: Start walking
Walk two or three times a week, for an hour each time, on any terrain. If you already walk at weekends, you are well prepared, and this is the most important part of your training.

6 weeks before: Add hills
Replace one walk with a route that includes 250 to 300 m of ascent. The trek involves about 900 m of ascent over two days, so one hill walk at home covers a third of it.

4 weeks before: Practise descending
Descending is the hardest part of this trek, because day 5 loses 1,000 m on stone steps. Walk down hills deliberately, use poles, and prepare your thigh muscles for the descent.

3 weeks before: Wear your boots
Do every walk from now on in the footwear you are bringing. Blisters are the most likely problem on this trek, and they are avoidable.

2 weeks before: One longer day
Walk for four to five hours on hills, with lunch halfway. If you finish comfortably, you are ready for this itinerary.

1 week before: Rest
Rest, sleep well and do not wear new boots. Nothing you do in the final week will improve your fitness for a trek of this length.

Altitude and safety

The highest point is 2,517 m, where you spend about an hour. On this trek, altitude is not a risk.

Altitude is not a concern on this trek. You sleep no higher than 2,065 m and spend about an hour at 2,517 m at dawn. Altitude sickness is extremely rare below 2,500 m, and nothing on this route is more demanding for your body than a hill walk at home. There is no acclimatisation day because none is needed. If you have been advised not to go to high altitude for medical reasons, this is often a trek your doctor will approve.

What to watch for

- Mild breathlessness on the steep section above Bhadaure, which is due to fitness rather than altitude
- A headache, which at this altitude is nearly always caused by dehydration or too much sun
- Tired legs on the long stone descent from the summit, which is normal
- If you feel unwell, tell your guide, as the causes here are common ones and all are treatable

How to prevent it

- Drink two to three litres a day. The middle hills are warmer than many people expect.
- Wear a hat. At 2,000 m in April, the sun is a greater risk than the cold.
- Eat a proper lunch. The descent on day 5 is long and tiring on an empty stomach.
- Climb slowly to the summit in the dark. The steps are uneven, and a twisted ankle is the main risk on this trek.

What we do

1. No oxygen monitoring
We do not carry a pulse oximeter on this trek because it is not needed. At 2,065 m, your oxygen saturation will be much the same as at home.

2. Common hazards
The main risks are slipping on wet stone steps, twisting an ankle, sunburn and stomach upsets. Your guide carries a first aid kit stocked for these and has wilderness first aid training.

3. Access to medical help
The furthest point on this route is about three hours' walk from a road and about two hours by vehicle from a good hospital in Pokhara. Evacuation here is by jeep, arranged by phone, and does not require a helicopter or an insurance claim.

4. If someone cannot continue
There are villages and roads on both sides of the ridge, so a trekker can leave the route at Bhadaure, Bhanjyang or Bhumdi and be back at the hotel in Pokhara the same afternoon while the rest of the group continues.

Weather by month

The hill can be walked in every month. The months we do not offer are ruled out by leeches and cloud rather than cold, because the view is hidden.

Month	Day on the ridge	Night at Panchase Bhanjyang	Dawn on Panchase Hill	Conditions	Note
January	10°C	-2°C	-5°C	Good	Cold at dawn, bright by nine, and the clearest air of the year. Bring a warm hat.
February	12°C	0°C	-3°C	Best	Cold, clear and very quiet. The first orchids appear in the lower forest.
March	17°C	3°C	0°C	Best	Rhododendrons along the ridge and pilgrims on the summit for Shiva Ratri. Our preferred month for this trek.
April	21°C	7°C	4°C	Best	Warm walking conditions, with the forest at its best for orchids and birdsong. Hazier in the afternoons.
May	22°C	10°C	7°C	Good	Hot on the open ridge and often cloudy by midday. Start early, as the mornings are still clear.
June	22°C	13°C	10°C	Hard	The monsoon and the leeches arrive. Green and humid, with no mountain views.
July	21°C	14°C	11°C	We do not run it	We do not run this trek. The forest is full of leeches and the trail is in cloud for four days.
August	21°C	14°C	11°C	We do not run it	Similar to July, with the wettest trail of the year and overgrown paths on the descent.
September	20°C	12°C	9°C	Good	The rain clears during the month. From the last week the air is clear and the landscape very green.
October	17°C	7°C	4°C	Best	The most reliable month. Warm days, cold dawns, and mountain views on most mornings.
November	14°C	2°C	-1°C	Best	Cold nights, excellent visibility and very few people on the trail. The best month of the year.
December	11°C	-1°C	-4°C	Good	Cold and clear. Occasional frost on the ridge at dawn, and pilgrims for Bala Chaturdashi.

Worked up from Pokhara station averages and the usual drop of six degrees per thousand metres, since there is no station on the ridge. Treat them as a guide rather than a forecast, and expect any week to sit several degrees either side.

Guides and porters

Your guide

A government-licensed guide with wilderness first aid training leads every departure, and a second guide joins for groups of thirteen or more. Our guides on this route come from the hills around Pokhara, and several grew up in the villages where you stay, so they know the local birds and plants well, often by name in three languages.

Porters and luggage

On most of our treks a porter is included as standard. On this trek the days are short enough that most people carry their own daypack, so a porter is offered as an extra. If you would like one, the cost is $18 to $24 a day, with a load limit of 20 kg shared between two trekkers, which is below the limit set by the trekking association.

Staff pay and insurance

The salary, insurance, food and accommodation of every guide and porter are included in the price you pay, not paid separately on the trail. All staff are insured. The trekking industry has a long history of porters carrying too much for too little pay, and we avoid this by including fair pay in the package price.

Tipping

Tipping is customary rather than compulsory and never replaces wages. On a trek of this length, $60 to $100 per trekker for the whole team is usual, given together on the last evening rather than daily. Your guide will not ask for tips and would prefer you did not give them in front of the group.

Responsible travel

Supporting local communities

Bhadaure, Sidhane and Panchase Bhanjyang run community homestays and small family teahouses, and the money you spend on accommodation and meals goes directly to the household that provides them. This is one of the main benefits of walking here rather than on a trail where lodges are owned by companies from outside the area.

Protecting the forest

Panchase has around 120 orchid species, several of which grow nowhere else in the world, and research identifies over-collection as one of the main threats to them. Please photograph them and leave them where they grow. For the same reason, please do not buy the ferns and wild orchids sold at the roadside.

Drinking water

Every house on the hill will boil or filter water for a fraction of the price of a plastic bottle, and there is no rubbish collection here. Bring a refillable bottle and a backup purification method. We carry out everything we bring in, and any other rubbish we find.

Local customs

The summit is a pilgrimage site with a Shiva temple and a sacred pond, and Nepali families climb it at Shiva Ratri and Bala Chaturdashi to remember relatives who have died. Remove your shoes at the shrine, do not put anything in the pond, and ask before photographing people at prayer. Please treat it as you would any place of worship.

Booking and payment

How to book

Email us or send a WhatsApp message with your approximate dates. You will receive a personal reply from someone who has walked this route. There is no payment or obligation at this stage, or at any point before you pay a deposit.

Deposit

A twenty per cent deposit secures your dates, and the balance is paid on arrival 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 requirements, so that the homestay at Bhadaure can plan meals.

Payment

Bank transfer, or card payment 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 Nepal can be paid in US dollars, pounds, euros or Nepali rupees.

Cancellation

If you cancel more than 14 days before departure, the deposit can be transferred to any other date or trip we run, with no time limit. Within 14 days we retain it, because the guide and hotels have been committed. If we cancel for any reason other than weather, you receive a full refund.

Private and group departures

For five or more people, both options 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 above with a maximum of twelve people. On a trek of this length, most people choose a private departure because it is easy to arrange.

Late bookings

Four days' notice is enough, and if you are already in Pokhara we can sometimes start the trek the next morning. There are no flights to secure, no lodges that sell out and no permits that take a week to issue. This is the easiest trek in Nepal to arrange at short notice.

Optional extras

Paragliding over Pokhara

$95, 1 morning

A thirty-minute flight from Sarangkot with views of the Annapurnas across the valley. The afternoon of day 6 is free and this is a popular way to spend it.

Sarangkot sunrise

$35, 1 morning

An early drive up the opposite ridge for the classic view over Pokhara. It offers a different angle with less walking, and a second chance if day 5 was cloudy.

Two more nights in Pokhara

$110, +2 days

Two extra nights at Lakeside at the end of the trek, with boats, bookshops and swimming in the lake. This is a very popular addition.

Birdwatching day with a specialist

$140, +1 day

An extra night at Panchase Bhanjyang with a naturalist guide who knows the bird calls, to look for sunbirds, laughingthrushes and possibly the spiny babbler, Nepal's only endemic bird.

Chitwan jungle safari

from $390, +3 days

A visit to the lowlands to see rhinos and crocodiles, easily added between Pokhara and Kathmandu on the return journey.

Ghandruk, three more days

from $290, +3 days

Continue north to the large Gurung village of Ghandruk, much closer to Annapurna South. This is a natural extension if one week feels too short.

Single room

$90

A room to yourself for the four hotel nights. On the hill, the houses offer twin-share rooms only.

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.

How fit do I need to be?

You need to be able to walk for three to five hours on hills on four consecutive days, with one longer day of six to seven hours. If you walk at weekends at home, you are fit enough. There is no altitude to deal with, and the only day that starts before dawn is the summit morning.

Is this suitable for children or for older walkers?

Yes, for both, and it is the trek we most often recommend for families. We have taken children aged eight and walkers in their late seventies over Panchase. The only demanding hour is the stone descent from the summit, and there is an easier route down for anyone who prefers it.

Will I see the high mountains?

From the summit on a clear morning, yes: Dhaulagiri, the Annapurnas, Machhapuchhre and Manaslu in one long line, with Phewa Lake and the Pokhara valley below. They are about forty kilometres away, so this is a panoramic view rather than a close-up one. For a close view of the mountains, we recommend the trek to Annapurna Base Camp.

How busy is the trail?

Very quiet. You will pass local people travelling between villages and occasional Nepali pilgrims, and on many days you will see no other foreign trekkers. There is no need to book ahead at Panchase Bhanjyang.

Do I need to worry about altitude sickness?

No. You sleep at 2,065 m and reach 2,517 m for about an hour. Altitude sickness is extremely rare below 2,500 m. There is no acclimatisation day on this itinerary because none is needed.

What are the main risks on this trek?

Slipping on wet stone. The steps down from the summit are old, polished and steep, and after rain they are the only difficult section of the route. Poles help, footwear with good grip helps more, and your guide will slow the group down. Otherwise, the main risks are sunburn and blisters.

What happens if someone is injured or ill?

No point on this route is more than about three hours' walk from a road, and Pokhara has good hospitals about two hours away by vehicle. Evacuation here is by jeep rather than helicopter and can be arranged within an afternoon. Standard trekking insurance is sufficient; you do not need a policy with helicopter cover.

Are there leeches on the trail?

From June to early September there are many, and we recommend travelling at another time of year. They live in the damp forest between Bhadaure and the saddle, drop from wet leaves and get inside boots. Leech socks, long trousers, DEET on your footwear and a tub of salt are all effective. Outside the monsoon you will not see any.

Do I need an ACAP permit?

Sources disagree. Several detailed independent guides report that no permit is required, because Panchase is a Protected Forest rather than conservation area land and there is no checkpoint on the Bhadaure approach. Other sources list it as required. We buy it for every trekker at NPR 3,000, about $22, and it is included in your price.

Do I need a TIMS card?

No. No checkpoint on this route inspects one, and checkpoints across the Annapurna region now check only the ACAP permit.

How do I get a visa?

Most nationalities can obtain a visa on arrival at Kathmandu airport: $30 for 15 days or $50 for 30 days, payable in cash. Completing the online form within 15 days of arrival shortens the queue. Bring a passport photo and a passport valid for six months.

How much cash should I carry?

$100 to $150, changed into rupees in Pokhara, in small notes. This covers drinks, snacks, the boat across the lake, any paid showers and your tips. No village on the hill accepts cards and there is no cash machine after Naudanda.

How basic is the accommodation?

Basic. A plain twin room with plywood walls and thick quilts, a squat toilet along the corridor and a shower that is hot when the sun has been out. It is clean, the food is grown behind the house and the welcome is warm, but it is not comparable with the lodges of the Khumbu.

Will I stay in teahouses or homestays?

Both. Panchase Bhanjyang has around seven small teahouses in the saddle, and we use one of them. Bhadaure and the villages around Sidhane run community homestays, where you eat with the family in their kitchen. Most people find the homestay night the most memorable.

Is there wifi and phone signal?

There is mobile signal along most of the ridge, and good signal on the summit. There is no wifi at Panchase Bhanjyang. Your hotels in Pokhara and Kathmandu have wifi.

Can I charge my camera?

Yes. Every stop on this route has mains electricity and charging is normally free, unlike on our high-altitude treks. Bring a plug adaptor for the Indian-style round-pin sockets.

Do I have to carry my own bag?

Most people do, and on days this short it is manageable: a daypack of about 7 kg. If you prefer not to, a porter costs $18 to $24 a day, shared between two trekkers with a 20 kg limit. Tell us when you book and we will arrange it.

When is the best time to come?

Late October and November have the clearest mountain views and the quietest trail, and March brings rhododendrons and orchids. February, April and December are also good. We do not run this trek from June to early September, because of leeches and because the trail is in cloud for most of the four days.

How far ahead should I book?

Two or three weeks is comfortable and four days is possible. There are no Lukla flights to secure and no lodges that sell out. If you are already in Pokhara and the forecast is good, visit our office and we can often have you walking the following morning.

Can you change the itinerary?

Yes, and it is easy on a trek of this length. You can start from Phedi instead of Naudanda, add a night at Panchase Bhanjyang for birdwatching, finish over Sarangkot rather than at the lake, or add three days to Ghandruk at the end. For groups of five or more, a private departure costs the same as joining a group.

Can I do this without going to Kathmandu?

Yes. If you are already in Pokhara, or flying into the new airport there, we offer a five-day version for $447 without the Kathmandu nights and domestic flights. It includes the same three days on the hill and much less time travelling.

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