

Wanderlust HIMALAYA

gestalten

Hiking On Top of the World

Explored by Cam Honan

THREE PASSES TREK

THE ULTIMATE EVEREST TREK

Everest Region
NEPAL



ABOUT THE TRAIL

→ **DISTANCE** xxx km (xxx mi)

→ **DURATION** xx to xx days

→ **LEVEL** Moderate to Hard

The Three Passes Trek encompasses a complete circuit of the Everest region. One of Nepal's most demanding long-distance hikes, it combines the best of the Gokyo and Everest Base Camp Treks, together with three of the Himalayas' highest passes: Kongma La (5,535 m [18,159 ft]), Cho La (5,420 m [17,782 ft]), and Renjo La (5,360 m [17,585 ft]). The trail's unparalleled alpine views, characterful sherpa villages, and off-the-beaten-path character have gained it a reputation as the ultimate Everest trek.

Beginning and ending in the Himalayan hub of Lukla, the Three Passes Trek is a lollipop-shaped trail that measures anywhere between 120 km (74.6 mi) and 180 km (111.9 mi) depending on route choices and side trips made. Regarding the latter, the trek features numerous worthy detours along its course, including not-to-be-missed excursions to Kala Patthar (5,643 m [18,514 ft]) and Gokyo Ri (5,360 m [17,585 ft])—see Bonus Tracks. Although neither porters nor a guide is obligatory, the

Three Passes is a journey best suited to fit and experienced hikers due to the trail's challenging and sometimes remote nature.

The initial section of the Three Passes Trek from Lukla (2,860 m [9,383 ft]) to the village of Dingboche (4,410 m [14,469 ft]) coincides with the Everest Base Camp Trek. This well-trodden 39 km (24.2 mi) stretch takes most hikers six or seven days to complete (including a couple of acclimatization days) and has been used for decades by hikers and climbers on their way to the foot of the world's highest mountain. Highlights of the segment include the striking natural amphitheater of Namche Bazaar (3,440 m [11,286 ft]) and Tengboche Gompa (3,867 m [12,687 ft]), the largest and most important Buddhist monastery in the Everest region.

Beyond Dingboche, both the air and the crowds become notably thinner. The next stop is the tiny village of Chukhung (4,736 m [15,538 ft]), dramatically situated among glaciers and snow-capped mountains. Most hikers spend one final acclimatization day here (see Acclimatization Days) before tackling the first of the trek's namesake passes, Kongma La (5,535 m [18,159 ft]).

The trail from Chukhung to the high point ascends through a rarefied landscape of moraine ridges, frozen lakes, and boulder-strewn slopes. The going is seldom steep, but even a gentle gradient can be taxing at these altitudes. Upon reaching Kongma La, hikers are greeted by layer-piercing winds and



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BHUMTANG CULTURAL TREK

THE CRADLE OF BHUTANESE BUDDHISM

Central Bhutan
BHUTAN



ANNAPURNA SANCTUARY TREK

THE FROZEN HEART OF THE ANNAPURNA

Annapurna Region
NEPAL



GOOD TO KNOW

START/FINISH

Soti Khola, Nepal
Dharapani, Nepal

SEASON

The best times are March to May and late September to mid-December. The spring sees fewer trekkers and the flora is blooming, but the combination of dry conditions and rising temperatures mean that visibility can sometimes be hazy. The autumn months offer the best chance of clear weather, but the downside is that there will be many more people on the trail. (Note: Roughly 2,000 people hike the Manaslu Circuit per year, and more than half of those are in October alone.)

ACCOMMODATIONS

Although camping is possible, the majority of hikers stay at regularly spaced teahouses along the route. These locally run lodges offer meals and basic accommodation. (Tip: Although bedding is available at the teahouses, hygiene standards are not always the greatest, so it is advisable to bring your own sleeping bag.)

From Soti Khola to Dharapani, the principal teahouse locations are as follows: Machha Kola, Khorlabesi, Jagat, Deng, Ghap, Namrung, Lho, Samagon, Samdo, Dharamsala, Bimtang, and Gho.

HIGHLIGHTS

1. Incredible views of Manaslu (8,163 m 26,782 ft)
2. The subtropical Budhi Gandaki Valley
3. The spectacular snowbound pass of Larkya La
4. Witnessing the traditional Tibetan culture of the Nupri people

HELPFUL HINTS

PERMITS

THREE PERMITS ARE REQUIRED TO HIKE THE MANASLU CIRCUIT:

- Manaslu Restricted Area Permit
- Manaslu Conservation Area Project Permit (ACAP)

Permit (MCAP)

- Annapurna Conservation Area Project Permit (ACAP)

DO I NEED A GUIDE AND PORTERS?

It is not possible to hike the Manaslu Circuit independently, and each group must have a minimum of two hikers. Your guide or trekking agency will help to organize permits, transport to and from the trail, and accommodation along the circuit. Though a guide is obligatory, porters are not, and hikers can carry all



of their own gear if they choose to do so.

WHAT TO BRING

Recommended items include a medium-sized backpack (40–50 L), sleeping bag (rated to at least -5°C [23°F]), trail-running shoes or lightweight hiking boots, water bottle, water filter or purifying drops, small first aid kit, headlamp, sun protection (hat, glasses, sunscreen), toiletries, power bank for electronics, and trekking poles (optional).

Recommended clothing includes puffy jacket (down or synthetic), rain jacket, beanie or neck gaiter, three pairs of socks (one kept clean for sleeping), hiking pants, long-sleeve hiking shirt, medium-weight gloves or mittens, and merino wool long johns and top (for sleeping).

At the time of writing (2021), the

Manaslu Circuit is a cash-only trek and there are no ATMs along the route. Be sure to bring all the money you need from the start of the trail.

BONUS TRACK

MANASLU BASE CAMP

Arguably, the best side trip on the circuit is the challenging hike up to Manaslu Base Camp (4,800 m [15,748 ft]) via beautiful Birendra Lake. The out-and-back journey from the village of Samagon measures 13 km (8.1 mi), takes most hikers six to eight hours to complete, and has an altitude gain of around 1,300 m (4,265 ft).

BACKGROUND

“THE JAPANESE MOUNTAIN”

The initial attempts to summit Manaslu were all undertaken by Japanese expeditions in the early 1950s. The first successful climb was by Toshio Imanishi and Sherpa Gyalzen Norbu, who reached the top on May 9, 1956. The second successful effort was also by the Japanese in 1971. This pioneering history has seen Manaslu continue to hold a special place in the hearts of the Japanese mountaineering community, similar to the attachment that the British—who blazed the earliest routes on the world’s highest peak—feel towards Mount Everest.

FLORA & FAUNA

BLUE SHEEP

The Manaslu Conservation Area is home to 33 types of mammals and 110 species of avifauna. One of the quadrupeds you are most likely to spot on the circuit is the blue sheep, also known as bharal (*Pseudois nayaur*). Despite their colorful moniker, blue sheep are not



WANDERLUST HIMALAYA

Hiking on Top of the World

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Wanderlust Himalaya explores one of the most appealing regions to hikers around the globe.

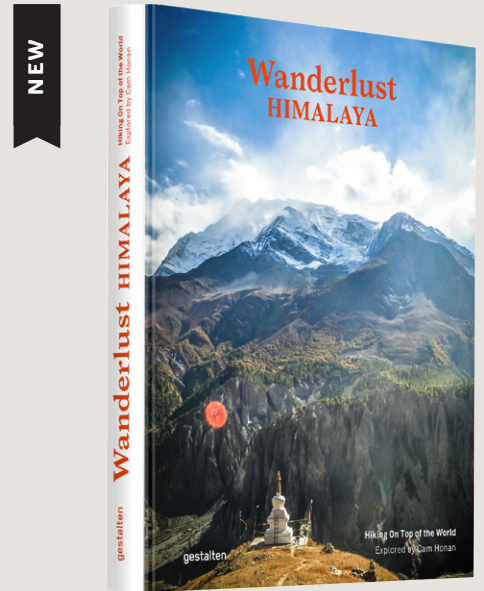
The Himalayas. The legendary mountains, epic and mythical to all who are serious about hiking. Straddling Nepal, India, Pakistan, Tibet, and Bhutan, this area could fill a lifetime of wandering and transcendence. In this, our new release in the *Wanderlust* series, we guide you through breathtaking nature, diverse cultures, and various hikes across the whole region. Spectacular photography, informative maps, first-hand tips, and itineraries for an attractive mix of one-day, multi-day, long-distance trails offer everything you need to plan your own adventure, or to dream from an armchair. *Wanderlust Himalaya* lifts you to the top of the world, literally.

WHAT TO EXPECT

- Informative route-plans alongside practical tips for packing and accommodation for over 50 hikes
- Breathtaking imagery from a selection of leading landscape photographers
- Advice for beginners and seasoned hikers alike, from one-day hikes to longer treks

CAM HONAN

has trekked across 56 countries and six continents, logging over 60,000 mi (96,500 km) in three decades. He has authored three bestselling titles for gestalten—*Wanderlust*, *Wanderlust USA*, and *The Hidden Tracks*. Cam has been described by *Backpacker Magazine* as “the most travelled hiker on Earth”.



SAMPLE COVER



ANNAPURNA SANCTUARY TREK

THE FROZEN HEART OF THE ANNAPURNA

Annapurna Region
 NEPAL

THREE PASSES TREK Everest Region NEPAL

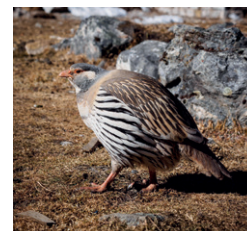
ABOUT THE TRAIL
 → DISTANCE 444 km (276 mi)
 → DURATION 16 to 19 days
 → LEVEL Moderate to Hard

The Three Passes Trek encompasses a complete circuit of the Everest region. One of Nepal's most demanding long-distance hikes, it combines the best of the Gokyo and Everest Base Camp Treks, together with three of the Himalayas' highest passes: Kongma La (5,335 m [17,519 ft]), Cho La (5,420 m [17,782 ft]), and Renjo La (5,360 m [17,585 ft]). The trail's unparalleled alpine views, characterful shepherd villages, and off-the-beaten-path character have gained it a reputation as the ultimate Everest trek.

Beginning and ending in the Himalayan hub of Lukla, the Three Passes Trek is a loop-shaped trail that measures anywhere between 320 km (199 mi) and 380 km (236 mi) depending on route choice and side trips made. Regarding the latter, the trek features numerous worthy detours along its course, including not-to-be-missed excursions to Kala Patthar (5,642 m [18,514 ft]) and Gokyo Ri (5,360 m [17,585 ft])—see Bonus Tracks. Although neither porters nor a guide is obligatory, the

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