

The Annapurna Circuit Trek

- Complete circumnavigation of the Annapurna range.

Itinerary in full:

Day 1: Kathmandu

Transfer day, briefing and welcome dinner in Kathmandu. We will be staying near Thamel, the main tourist section of town in order to allow you to shop without having to take a taxi.

Day 2: Kathmandu

Sightseeing for half a day, visiting Swayambhunath, Bouddhanath, and Pashupatinath, Buddhist and Hindu temples. Visiting these temples early in the morning is a magical experience as the faithful from both religions make offerings and perform religious ceremonies. Beware of the monkeys though, as they tend to like to be at the centre of the action!!

Day 3: Kathmandu – Besisahar

Katmandu to Besisahar by bus. We get to see the real Nepal as we leave behind the pizza parlors and ATM machines of the capital. We will have time in the afternoon to explore the little village of Besisahar. Our journey will be in a private minibus but because of road traffic and infrastructure issues, this journey could take longer than expected.

Day 4: Besisahar - Bahundanda

We will be walking through fairly lush ground, slowly climbing up to Bahundanda, a village perched high above the valley floor, surrounded by rice paddies. Here we get to experience what rural Nepal is all about. Our hikes for the next few days will be following the mighty Marsyandi River, a raging torrent of water during the monsoon rainy season.

Day 5: Bahundanda - Tal

Today we will be leaving the lush rice paddies and the sub-tropical jungle, as we begin our ascent towards the village of Tal, nestled on a plateau. Tal means lake, but no lake can be found here, just the imprint it has left. At only 1400 meters, the nights are already cooler and the vegetation begins to change. Due to the density of small villages in the area, we will have ample opportunity to meet the Nepalese at work and at play.

Day 6: Tal - Bagarchap

While hiking to Bagarchap we will pass the old village and its ruins, which was completely destroyed by a massive landslide less than ten years ago. A series of bridges allow us to cross the roaring Marsyandi River, using the well-trodden paths of the porters and locals. Today's hike is not for the faint hearted as several sections of the path allow for some rather impressive views down to the river. Bagarchap is the first truly Tibetan style village we will come across with flat, firewood covered roofs, and prayer flags blowing in the wind.

Day 7: Bagarchap - Chame

The hiking today is a little rougher than the previous days with quite a bit of up and down, crossing the river several times on good bridges. Reaching the town of Chame, one of the larger settlements of the area will allow us to have a hot shower. Chame is the administrative headquarters for the Manang area and is also known for its healing thermal baths and interesting architecture.

Day 8: Chame - Pisang

Today we will have a shorter hiking day ahead of us. The landscape between Chame and Pisang changes notably, and soon we will be walking through sub- alpine terrain which is

characteristic of the higher elevations and more arid sections of our hike. The early part of today's walk will take us through large forests and past the massive, 1500-meter rock face called Paungda Danda. Pisang proper is a cluster of homes with a few nice lodges and plenty of activity in the fields. This village is a fantastic opportunity for photographs and to really meet the local population. Helping them in their fields would not be unwelcome.

Day 9: Pisang - Manang

A half-day of walking will get us to Manang. The climate here is very similar to the high Tibetan plateau, with little precipitation and large fluctuations between daytime and nighttime temperatures. The inhabitants of Manang use horses for nearly everything, and the jingling of bells will announce the arrival of a horseman and his steed. Manang has a local airport, and many good bakeries and several internet cafés. We will be staying here for three nights, allowing us to acclimatize properly before taking on Thorang-La. Day hikes will be planned but are not mandatory.

Day 10: Manang

Rest-day in Manang. Explore, relax, do laundry, read. Manang also has a 'high-altitude' medical office, which regularly holds lectures on high-altitude illnesses for trekkers and climbers. Watching an English-speaking movie in Manang's local movie theatre can also be a quite 'surreal' experience.

Day 11: Manang

Another rest day, or a fairly leisurely hike to Tilicho. There are many opportunities to explore this fascinating village, meet locals harvesting their fields of barley or tending to their herds of horses.

Day 12: Manang – Thorang Phedi

Today's trek will be difficult, as the higher altitude is certainly felt here. Our hotel for the night is located at 4420 meters, roughly 400 meters lower than the highest point of the western Alps! Thorang Phedi will be our last stop before we head over the Thorang-La the following morning. A good sleep will be hard to get with the altitude but the reward for reaching the pass will make up for it.

Day 13: Thorang Phedi - Mukthinath

Our day will begin at sunrise, as we need to set out early to complete the crossing of the Thorang La at 5416 metres. The trail is steep right from the start, but with a slow and steady pace, we should reach the summit within three hours. Prayer flags and hot tea await us as we reach the highest point of our trek. Our descent to Mukthinath is long, but the views out towards the Tibetan border and Dhaulagiri are simply amazing. Mukthinath is a large, rambling settlement with several hotels to choose from. Hot showers and a good meal will allow for a quick recovery after today's long and difficult day.

Day 14: Mukthinath - Marpha

A 'gentle stroll' as some guidebooks describe today's walk. Our destination is Marpha, a lovely village surrounded by apple orchards and the sweet smell of cider. Several great bakeries produce apple strudel and apple cakes, which along with a rest day will be most welcome.

Day 15: Marpha

Rest-day. For those who would like to join us, we will be visiting a little distillery just outside of Marpha, which produces amazing distilled spirits such as apricots, carrots, peaches, and many more. We will also get a chance to visit the monastery and learn a bit more about Tibetan Buddhism from several resident monks.

Day 16: Marpha – Kalopani

We gently make our way downhill to Kalopani, which means 'black water'. About half way there, we reach Tukuiche, which was at one time the most important village in the area. It was a staging area for Tibetan traders bringing goods to barter such as salt and yak hair

products. The views from our hotel are stunning, especially of the mighty Dhaulagiri which rises to over 8000 metres.

Day 17: Kalopani – Tatopani

We begin our hike today with a steep descent to the village of Lete and its flagstone - paved streets before following the Kali Gandaki Gorge and the last remnants of Tibetan influence in the valley. Our trail takes us through the villages of Ghasa and then Dana. Here we enter the territory of the Magars, a different ethnic group from what we have seen so far. Our evening's accommodation will be in a delightful setting in the large village of Tatopani (meaning hot water in Nepalese). Tatopani's architecture and lovely gardens make it a favourite for both locals and Western hikers. With citrus groves and thermal baths, Tataopani is a thriving little community with excellent food and live music. One of the most beautiful villages of the trip.

Day 18: Tatopani – Chitre

After leaving the village of Tatopani a fork in the trail takes us away from the Kali Ghandaki Gorge and towards the Gar Khola River. The scenery changes once again as large terraces appear, signaling the return of rice production. Overnight in Chitre at 2400 metres.

Day 19: Chitre – Gorepani

Today will be another uphill day. From Chitre we will be climbing many, many steps, until we finally see the blue roofs of Gorepani right above us. Gorepani has a strong Tibetan influence, and you will be able to purchase jewelry almost everywhere. This is a difficult day as the stairs are not evenly spaced and there are many of them!!

Day 20: Gorepani – Ghandrung

A very early start (before sunrise) will allow us to reach the magical view point called Poon Hill. From here, we have unobstructed views of such giants as Dhaulagiri and Annapurna I. After photographs and hot tea, we head back to Gorepani and the trail to Ghandrung which winds through heavily forested areas of large rhododendron trees. Over night in Ghandrung.

Day 21: Ghandrung – Naya Pul, Pokhara

Today will be our last day of the Annapurna Circuit, and as on the first day of our trek, rice paddies dominate the landscape. A half-day hike will bring us to Naya Pul, from where we take the local bus back to Pokhara.

Day 22: Pokhara – Kathmandu

After breakfast, we will be leaving Pokhara and drive back in our minibus to Kathmandu.

Day 23: Kathmandu

Rest day in Kathmandu to do some final shopping, relaxing and sight-seeing.

Day 24: Departure day

Transfer of all guests back to Tribhuvan International airport.