

Earthbound Expeditions

Manaslu Circuit Trek

15 days, from US$1,687 per person

Duration
15 days

Grade
Strenuous

Max altitude
5,106 m

Start and end
Kathmandu

On the trail
5 to 7 hours a day

Best season
Mar to May, Sep to Nov

Accommodation
Teahouses

Meals
All meals on the trek

Group size
Up to 10

Getting there
By jeep

Manaslu Circuit Trek Overview

A quieter, more remote alternative to the Annapurna Circuit, circling the world's eighth-highest mountain through remote villages with a strong Tibetan influence.

Trek overview

A full circuit of the world's eighth-highest mountain, up the Budhi Gandaki gorge and over a 5,106 m pass to join the upper section of the Annapurna Circuit. There are eleven walking days through an area that was closed to foreigners until 1991 and is still a restricted area today. It is similar to the Annapurna Circuit of thirty years ago: there is no road through the middle section, the villages are Tibetan in language and religion rather than Nepali, and there are far fewer trekkers.

Who this trip is for

This trek suits someone who has already done a Himalayan trek and wants the next one to be quieter rather than higher. It is not technically harder than the Annapurna Circuit, but it is much more remote: there are fewer lodges, fewer good ones, no road to walk out to for a week in the middle, and no helicopter landing site until Samagaon. If your first trek went well and you would have preferred fewer people on the trail, this trek is a good choice.

The Budhi Gandaki gorge

The Budhi Gandaki cuts a narrow channel through the foothills, and the trail is cut into its side. Days 4 to 6 are therefore a continuous series of climbs and descents that gain very little height and are tiring on the legs. There are suspension bridges, landslide crossings and stone staircases, and the views are of the gorge walls rather than the mountains. It is the least scenic section of any of our treks, but it leads to the upper half of the route, which is among the best.

Acclimatisation day at Samagaon

Samagaon, at 3,530 m, is the acclimatisation stop. It prepares you for a pass 1,576 m higher, with a night at 4,460 m in between. It is also the best place on the trek to spend a day: Birendra Lake is an hour away, Manaslu Base Camp is a hard day hike above it, and the Pungyen Gompa sits on a moraine with the mountain directly behind. Some itineraries skip this day, and their trekkers are the ones who turn back at Dharamsala.

Key highlights of the Manaslu Circuit Trek

- Cross the Larkya La pass (5,106 m)
- Remote Nubri & Tsum valleys
- Views of Manaslu (8,163 m)
- A quiet, remote trail

Itinerary

Day	Route	Hours	Distance	Altitude
1	Arrive Kathmandu	-	-	1,400 m
2	Kathmandu valley sites, trek briefing	-	-	1,400 m
3	Drive to Maccha Khola	8 hrs	-	870 m

4	Maccha Khola to Jagat	6–7 hrs	22 km	1,340 m
5	Jagat to Dyang	6–7 hrs	18 km	1,800 m
6	Dyang to Ghap	5–6 hrs	16 km	2,080 m
7	Ghap to Lho	5–6 hrs	14 km	3,180 m
8	Lho to Samagaon	6–7 hrs	12 km	3,530 m
9	Samagaon to Samdo	4–5 hrs	8 km	3,875 m
10	Samdo, acclimatisation day	4–5 hrs	-	4,400 m
11	Samdo to Dharamsala	4–5 hrs	7 km	4,460 m
12	Over the Larkya La to Bimthang	8–10 hrs	24 km	5,106 m
13	Bimthang to Tilje	5–6 hrs	13 km	2,300 m
14	Walk to Dharapani, jeep to Kathmandu	7–8 hrs driving	-	1,400 m
15	Fly home	-	-	-

Day 1

Arrive in Kathmandu

An Earthbound Expeditions representative meets you at Tribhuvan International Airport and transfers you to your hotel to rest.

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

Day 2

Kathmandu Valley sightseeing

A tour of UNESCO World Heritage Sites, including Swayambhunath Stupa, Boudhanath and Pashupatinath, followed by a pre-trek briefing. Overnight in a hotel.

Altitude: 1,400 m On foot: Easy walking, 2–3 hrs Night: Hotel, Kathmandu Meals: Breakfast

Day 3

Drive from Kathmandu to Maccha Khola (870 m)

An 8 hour drive over rough roads passes Arughat on the Budhi Gandaki River and continues through Soti Khola to Maccha Khola. Overnight in a simple riverside teahouse.

Altitude: 870 m On foot: None, 8 hr drive Night: Teahouse, Maccha Khola Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 4

Trek to Jagat (1,340 m)

A 6 to 7 hour trail climbs and descends past the Tatopani hot springs, over ridges and bridges above the Budhi Gandaki gorge, to the traditional village of Jagat. Teahouse accommodation.

Altitude: 1,340 m On foot: 22 km, 6–7 hrs Night: Teahouse, Jagat Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 5

Trek to Nyak or Dyang (1,800 m)

About 18 km of walking climbs to Salleri, then descends through Philim and Ekle Bhatti, crossing millet fields and bamboo forests to the Himalayan village of Dyang. Teahouse accommodation.

Altitude: 1,800 m On foot: 18 km, 6–7 hrs Night: Teahouse, Dyang Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 6

Trek to Ghap (2,080 m)

Beyond Deng, the route crosses the Budhi Gandaki, climbs to Rana and heads west through forests to Ghap, known for its mani stones, waterfalls and views of snow-capped peaks. Teahouse accommodation.

Altitude: 2,080 m On foot: 16 km, 5–6 hrs Night: Teahouse, Ghap Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 7

Trek to Lho (3,180 m)

A 5 to 6 hour trail crosses the Simnang Himal side valley to Lho, which has a large gompa and a carved chorten, and close views of Mount Manaslu. Teahouse accommodation.

Altitude: 3,180 m On foot: 14 km, 5–6 hrs Night: Teahouse, Lho Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 8

Trek to Samagaon (3,530 m)

A 6 to 7 hour route via Shyala crosses rough terrain beneath Manaslu and large glaciers, with a visit to Pungyen Gompa. Samagaon is an essential acclimatisation stop. Teahouse accommodation.

Altitude: 3,530 m On foot: 12 km, 6–7 hrs Night: Teahouse, Samagaon Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 9

Trek to Samdo (3,875 m)

The route descends to the Budhi Gandaki River, then crosses bridges and passes through birch forests at Kermo Kharka to Samdo, a small Bhotia village of Tibetan origin with monasteries and chortens. Teahouse accommodation.

Altitude: 3,875 m On foot: 8 km, 4–5 hrs Night: Teahouse, Samdo Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 10

Acclimatisation day at Samdo (3,875 m)

A rest day before the Larkya La, with an optional hike along old Tibetan trade routes offering views of Manaslu, Simrang and Ngadi peaks. Teahouse accommodation.

Altitude: 3,875 m On foot: Optional 4–5 hrs Night: Teahouse, Samdo Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 11

Trek to Dharamsala (4,460 m)

A 4 to 5 hour day along narrow trail edges and over wooden bridges passes the Larkya Glacier and the Salka Khola valley to Dharamsala, via the seasonal Larkya Bazaar. Overnight in a stone shelter.

Altitude: 4,460 m On foot: 7 km, 4–5 hrs Night: Teahouse, Dharamsala Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 12

Cross the Larkya La pass (5,106 m) to Bimthang (3,590 m)

This is the longest day, about 24 km. The route climbs to the Larkya Glacier and crosses the pass, one of the hardest parts of the trek, with views of Himlung, Cheo and Kang Guru, before a steep descent to Bimthang. Teahouse accommodation.

Altitude: 5,106 m at the Larkya La On foot: 24 km, 8–10 hrs Night: Teahouse, Bimthang Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 13

Trek to Tilje (2,300 m)

About 13 km of descent through the Sangure Kharka pastures, across the Dudh Khola and through rhododendron forests and Karche, to the village of Tilje. Teahouse accommodation.

Altitude: 2,300 m On foot: 13 km, 5–6 hrs Night: Teahouse, Tilje Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 14

Trek to Dharapani and drive to Kathmandu

A walk along dirt roads through the Marsyangdi valley rejoins the Annapurna Circuit at Dharapani. A 7 to 8 hour jeep or bus journey then returns to Kathmandu, followed by an evening cultural show and dinner.

Altitude: 1,400 m On foot: 1–2 hrs, then 7–8 hr drive Night: Hotel, Kathmandu Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 15

Departure

You may end or extend your trip. If you are departing, we provide transport to Tribhuvan International Airport.

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 & national park 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
Manaslu restricted area permit (RAP). Covers Jagat to Dharapani. Since 22 March 2026 it can be issued to a single trekker; before that it required a party of two.	$100 for 7 days, then $15 a day, Sep to Nov. $75 and $10 a day, Dec to Aug	Department of Immigration, Kathmandu, through an agency
Manaslu Conservation Area permit (MCAP). Checked at Jagat, Namrung, Samagaon and Samdo.	NPR 3,000, about $22	Kathmandu, before you start

Annapurna Conservation Area permit (ACAP). Required on a Manaslu trek. The pass leads into the Annapurna Conservation Area, and the permit is checked on the way out at Dharapani.	NPR 3,000, about $22	Kathmandu, before you start
Licensed guide, and a registered agency. A guide is more than a requirement here, as in the national parks: a restricted area permit is issued only through an agency, so it has never been legal to trek this route alone.	Inside the trek price	-
TIMS card. Not required. The restricted area permit replaces it, although some Manaslu pages still list TIMS.	Not required	-

Other cost	Amount	Note
Restricted area permit, autumn rate	$145	$100 for 7 days, then $15 per day. $75 and $10 from December to August
Manaslu Conservation Area permit	$22	NPR 3,000
Annapurna Conservation Area permit	$22	NPR 3,000, required to walk out through Dharapani
Private jeep from Kathmandu to Maccha Khola	$180–280	Eight hours, the last three on rough road
Jeep from Dharapani to Kathmandu	$160–240	Seven to eight hours
Teahouse bed	$5–15 a night	Basic in the gorge, better in Samagaon
Food on the trail	$25–35 a day	Three meals a day and tea. Dharamsala is the most expensive and the most basic
Licensed guide	$30–40 a day	Plus their accommodation and meals. Compulsory on this route even before the 2023 rules
Porter, one per two trekkers	$22–28 a day	Plus their accommodation and meals
Kathmandu hotel	$40–70 a night	Three-star, three nights
Travel insurance to 6,000 m	$120–200	Must cover helicopter rescue
Hot shower, charging, wifi	$3–8 each, each time	Not included, cash only, and limited above Samagaon
Tips for guide and porter	$150–250	Per trekker, at the end of the trek

Packing list

Weight limit and supplies

Your porter carries a strict maximum of 20 kg, shared between two trekkers. There are no flights on this trek and no shops after day 8, so you must bring everything you need from Kathmandu. We provide the duffel bag and the sleeping bag.

Headwear and sun protection

- 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 can damage your eyes
- Headtorch and spare batteries
- Sunscreen SPF 50 and lip balm with sun protection

Clothing

- Three or four merino or synthetic base layers, no cotton
- Two mid layers; fleece is sufficient
- A light down or synthetic jacket for the evenings
- Waterproof jacket and trousers that pack small
- Two pairs of trekking trousers, one lined
- Underwear for four or five days, washed along the way

Footwear and gloves

- Light gloves, and a warmer pair for the mornings
- Trekking boots with ankle support, already worn in. This is essential
- Four pairs of wool trekking socks
- Camp shoes or trainers for the evenings
- Gaiters, if you are trekking 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. No bag stays waterproof for long on a Himalayan trail

Sleeping

- Sleeping bag rated to -10°C. We provide one
- Silk or cotton liner, for warmth and hygiene
- Earplugs. Teahouse walls are thin plywood

Health

- Personal first aid: blister plasters, tape, painkillers, rehydration salts
- Any medication you take regularly, in its original packaging
- Water purification: tablets, a filter, or a SteriPen
- Hand sanitiser and wet wipes
- Throat lozenges. Almost everyone develops a dry cough at high altitude

Documents and money

- Passport valid for six months, plus two photocopies
- Four passport photographs for permits
- Travel insurance certificate showing trekking cover to your maximum altitude
- $300 to $450 in small notes. The last cash machine is in Kathmandu, and there is none on this route

Specific to this restricted area

- All the money you will need, in Nepali rupees. There is no cash machine anywhere on this trek, and cards are not accepted
- Two power banks. Charging above Lho is solar, rationed, and sometimes unavailable at Dharamsala
- An insulated flask. A hydration bladder hose freezes on the pass day
- Microspikes for a March or November crossing. Your guide decides at Samdo whether they are needed, and they can be bought in Kathmandu
- A sleeping bag liner you are comfortable with. The bedding at Dharamsala is the most basic on any trek we offer

Altitude profile

Day	Place	Sleep at	Highest point
1	Kathmandu	1,400 m	-
2	Kathmandu	1,400 m	-
3	Maccha Khola	870 m	-
4	Jagat	1,340 m	-
5	Dyang	1,800 m	-
6	Ghap	2,080 m	-
7	Lho	3,180 m	-
8	Samagaon	3,530 m	-
9	Samdo	3,875 m	-
10	Samdo	3,875 m	4,400 m
11	Dharamsala	4,460 m	-
12	Bimthang	3,590 m	5,106 m
13	Tilje	2,300 m	-

14	Kathmandu	1,400 m	-

Getting there and back

There is no mountain airstrip on this trek. Instead, there are about eight hours of rough jeep track at each end, and the monsoon can close the road.

No mountain flights

Nothing on this trek depends on a nineteen-seat aircraft landing on a sloping airstrip, so nothing on it can be delayed for three days by weather. This is a real advantage over the Everest treks, and it is why this itinerary has no spare day. Instead, the trek relies on roads, which have their own problems.

The jeep to Maccha Khola

The drive from Kathmandu takes about eight hours: paved road to Arughat, then a rough single-track road cut into the side of the Budhi Gandaki gorge. It is uncomfortable, at times unnerving, and very scenic. We use a private jeep rather than the shared local one, which makes the long day much more comfortable.

Where the road ends

The track is extended further up the valley every year, and the monsoon damages parts of it every summer. In a good season we drive to Maccha Khola or beyond; after a heavy monsoon the jeep stops earlier and day 3 includes an extra hour or two of walking. We tell you in advance which applies to your dates, rather than on the morning of departure.

Returning through Dharapani

On day 14 you walk down to Dharapani and join the upper Annapurna Circuit road, followed by a seven to eight hour jeep journey back to Kathmandu. If you would prefer to break the journey with a night in Besisahar or go on to Pokhara, both are easy to arrange. Dharapani is also where a Manaslu trek can be extended directly into the Annapurna Circuit instead of returning to Kathmandu.

Leaving the trek early

This is the main difference between Manaslu and Annapurna. Between Jagat and Samagaon there is no road and no reliable helicopter landing site, and walking out from the middle of the gorge takes two to three days back along the same route. Samagaon has a landing site and is the first place a helicopter can reach reliably. This is a reason to take acclimatisation seriously, not a reason to avoid the trek.

Accommodation

Teahouse accommodation

Every night on the trail is spent in a teahouse: a family-run lodge with one warm dining room, heated by a single stove, and simple twin rooms with foam mattresses and thin walls. Bring a sleeping bag. The Manaslu lodges are simpler than those on the Annapurna Circuit, and bathrooms are shared on most nights, from the riverside lodges at Maccha Khola and Jagat up to Samdo.

Best and most basic lodges

Samagaon has the best lodges on the route, some with private bathrooms and a hot shower for a fee. Lho has the best view. Samdo is basic, and you spend two nights there. Dharamsala, the night before the Larkya La, is a stone shelter with dormitory or shared twin rooms and no shower, and it is the most basic night of the trek. Bimthang and Tilje, on the far side of the pass, are comfortable by comparison.

Where	Nights	Type	Room	Bathroom
Kathmandu	3	Three-star hotel	Twin or double	Private, hot water
Maccha Khola	1	Riverside teahouse, simple	Twin	Shared
Jagat	1	Teahouse	Twin	Shared
Dyang	1	Teahouse, basic	Twin	Shared
Ghap	1	Teahouse	Twin	Shared
Lho	1	Teahouse, with the best view on the trek	Twin	Shared
Samagaon	1	Teahouse, the best on the route	Twin	Private in the better lodges, hot shower for a fee
Samdo	2	Teahouse	Twin, basic	Shared
Dharamsala	1	Stone shelter, the most basic night on any of our trips	Dormitory or shared twin	Shared, no shower
Bimthang	1	Teahouse	Twin	Shared
Tilje	1	Teahouse	Twin	Private in most lodges

Heating

One stove in the dining room, lit at dusk. Bedrooms are not heated at any altitude.

Hot shower

Available up to Samagaon for $3 to $8, heated by gas or solar. None above Samdo.

Charging

$3 to $5 per device. Above Lho it is solar and rationed, and at Dharamsala there is often none. Bring two power banks rather than one.

Wifi

Occasional and slow as far as Namrung, better in Samagaon, and none above it. Do not expect to be reachable for the last five days.

Phone signal

NTC covers parts of the valley as far as Samdo. Ncell coverage is weaker here than in the Annapurna region. Buy an NTC SIM card in Kathmandu if you want any signal.

Water

Boiled water costs $1 to $4 a litre. There are fewer safe drinking water stations than in the Annapurna region, so bring water purification and use it.

Sleeping bag

Provided, rated to -15°C. It is yours to use during the trek and is returned to us afterwards.

Bedding

A mattress, a pillow and a blanket. Your sleeping bag goes on top of these, not in place of them.

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. Included at every stop.

Diet	How we manage it
Vegetarian	Easy throughout the trek. Dal bhat is vegetarian and is the best dish on the menu.
Vegan	Manageable with advance notice. Tell us when you book so the guide can order ahead.
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 meals are the practical option.
Meat	Available, but we advise against it above Namrung, because it has been carried up for two days without refrigeration.

A typical day

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

Difficulty and preparation

Difficulty 4 of 5

Eleven demanding days with little rest, followed by a 5,106 m pass.

- Five to seven hours of walking a day for eleven days, with no rest day until day 10.
- On days 4 to 6 in the Budhi Gandaki gorge, the trail climbs and descends constantly, gaining very little height and tiring the legs.
- Day 12 climbs 646 m to the Larkya La and descends 1,516 m to Bimthang, taking eight to ten hours, and the descent is on loose moraine.
- You sleep at 4,460 m at Dharamsala the night before the pass, in a stone shelter that is the most basic accommodation on any of our trips.
- There is no technical ground and no rope work. In spring there can be snow on the pass, and your guide will decide at Samdo whether microspikes are needed.

Getting ready

12 weeks before: Build endurance
Three cardio sessions a week, 45 minutes each, at a pace at which you can still hold a conversation. This trek demands endurance more than intensity, so a solid base is what matters.

10 weeks before: Add hill walking
Replace one session with an hour-long hill walk with 300 m of ascent. Add a strength session: squats, step-ups, lunges and calf raises. Both the gorge and the Larkya La descent are hard on the thigh muscles.

8 weeks before: Train with your pack
Start walking with the daypack you will carry, loaded to 6 kg, in the boots you will trek in. Boot problems are hard to deal with over eleven consecutive days, and there is nowhere on the trail to stop and fix them.

6 weeks before: Walk three days in a row
This is the training this trek most requires, and the part most people skip. Do a long weekend walk, then a medium one, then another on tired legs. There is no rest day on the Manaslu Circuit for nine days, and walking three days in a row is the only way to learn how your body copes with that.

4 weeks before: Longest training day
Seven hours with 900 m of ascent and the same in descent. If you finish able to eat a meal and sleep normally, you are ready for the Larkya La.

3 weeks before: Early start in the cold
Do one walk starting at four in the morning, in whatever cold weather you have. On the pass day you leave Dharamsala at three or four in the morning at around minus fifteen, and it is useful to learn beforehand that you can eat breakfast at that hour.

2 weeks before: Reduce training
Halve the volume but keep the frequency. Training now will not make you fitter, and it increases the risk of injury.

Altitude and safety

The Larkya La, at 5,106 m, is lower than the Thorong La, but this trek is not necessarily easier at altitude, because of where you sleep. You spend two nights at 3,875 m at Samdo and then one at 4,460 m at Dharamsala. Dharamsala is a stone shelter with no heating, poor food and often no electricity, which makes it a difficult place to be if you feel unwell. The acclimatisation profile itself is good: the gorge keeps you at low altitude for four days, and the climb from Lho to Samdo is gradual. The difficulty is the isolation. From Dharamsala the only options are to cross the pass or walk two days back down, and the first reliable helicopter landing site is at Samagaon.

What to watch for

- A headache that does not improve with water and paracetamol
- Nausea, or loss of appetite when you would expect to be hungry
- Dizziness, or feeling drunk without having drunk alcohol
- Breathlessness at rest, not only when climbing
- Poor sleep at Samdo or Dharamsala, or waking short of breath
- A dry cough that worsens over a day
- Loss of coordination, which means you must descend immediately

How to prevent it

- Make full use of the acclimatisation day at Samdo: walk up towards the Tibet border trail to about 4,400 m and come back down to sleep.
- Take the extra night at Samagaon if your guide offers it. It adds a day, and it is the most effective thing you can do to prepare for the pass.
- Drink three to four litres of water a day, even though you will not feel thirsty enough to do so.
- Eat at Dharamsala even though the food there is the poorest on the trek. You leave at three in the morning.
- No alcohol above Namrung, and no sleeping pills at any altitude.
- Diamox is effective and is worth discussing with your doctor before you travel.

What we do

1. Daily health checks
From Lho at 3,180 m upward, your guide uses a pulse oximeter to measure your oxygen saturation and pulse each evening, and again any morning you feel unwell. The readings are recorded, so any decline over the days at Samdo is clearly visible rather than a matter of opinion.

2. Decision point at Samdo
As on the Annapurna Circuit, and for the same reason: descending from Samdo is straightforward, and descending from Dharamsala is not. We decide whether you will cross a day and a half before the pass, rather than at four in the morning at 4,460 m.

3. Mild symptoms
We descend three hundred and fifty metres to Samagaon, which has the best lodges and the only reliable helicopter landing site on the route. Most cases improve there, and there is often time to climb again and still cross the pass.

4. Serious symptoms
You do not cross the pass. You descend with a guide and the group continues. From Samagaon you either wait for a helicopter or walk three days back down the gorge, and both are safer than crossing the pass. This decision is not open to discussion.

5. Helicopter evacuation
Samagaon is the reliable landing site, and Samdo can be used in good conditions. The flight to Kathmandu takes about fifty minutes. Your insurance must cover this: the cost is $3,500 to $5,500, more than an Annapurna rescue because of the distance, and the helicopter will not take off without a payment guarantee.

6. Medical facilities
Unlike the Everest and Annapurna regions, Manaslu has no Himalayan Rescue Association aid post. There is a small health post at Samagaon that is not always staffed. Your guide's first aid training and the oximeter are the medical cover on this trek, which is one reason we follow the protocol above strictly.

Weather by month

The rating shows whether the Larkya La can be crossed, not whether the valley is pleasant. Between December and February these are two different things.

Month	Day at Samagaon	Night at Samagaon	Night at Dharamsala	Conditions	Note
January	6°C	-9°C	-20°C	We do not run it	The pass is closed by snow and Dharamsala is unstaffed. We do not run this trek in this month.
February	8°C	-7°C	-18°C	We do not run it	Similar to January. Most lodges above Samagaon are closed.
March	12°C	-4°C	-15°C	Good	The season opens late in the month. Snow on the pass is likely and microspikes are usually needed.
April	15°C	-1°C	-12°C	Best	The best spring month. Rhododendron in the gorge and stable conditions on the pass.
May	17°C	2°C	-9°C	Good	Warm, becoming hazier through the month. This is the last period before the road becomes dangerous.
June	18°C	5°C	-6°C	We do not run it	Monsoon. The Budhi Gandaki road is prone to landslides, and we do not run trips on it in this season.
July	18°C	6°C	-5°C	We do not run it	Conditions are similar to June but worse. There are leeches in the gorge, and the road is cut in several places.
August	18°C	6°C	-5°C	We do not run it	Similar to July. Upper Mustang is a better choice in this season.

September	16°C	3°C	-8°C	Good	The weather clears through the month and the road is repaired. From about the 20th, conditions are excellent.
October	13°C	-1°C	-13°C	Best	The most reliable month. It is busy for Manaslu, but still quiet compared with the Annapurna region.
November	10°C	-5°C	-16°C	Best	Clear, cold and quiet. The pass is still open, and this is the best time to cross it.
December	7°C	-8°C	-19°C	Hard	The gorge is in good condition, and the pass closes at some point during the month. The date cannot be predicted in advance.

Averages from station data for the Manaslu region. The closures at either end of the year have different causes: the pass under snow in winter, the access road under landslides in the monsoon.

Guides and porters

Your guide

A government-licensed guide with wilderness first aid training leads every departure, and there is one porter for every two trekkers. For groups of 11 or more, a second guide joins, so nobody is left alone at the back of a long line. Our guides come from the hill regions they lead you through.

Porters and luggage

Each porter carries a maximum of 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 overweight, the load is split rather than added to. Porters carry luggage, 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. Every guide and porter is insured for altitude and for helicopter evacuation on the same terms we ask of you. Porters in this industry have long been overloaded, poorly equipped and underpaid, and including their full costs in the package price is how we make sure we do not contribute to this.

Tipping

Tipping is customary but not compulsory, and it never replaces wages. The usual amount for this trip is $150 to $250 per traveller for the whole team, given together on the last evening rather than daily. Your guide will not ask for tips and would prefer that you do not tip in front of the group.

Responsible travel

Drinking water

A traveller drinking bottled water uses around 35 plastic bottles on this trip, and every one of them has to be carried in and carried out again. Boiled water is available at every lodge for a dollar or two a litre, and we encourage you to buy it. Bring water purification as a backup rather than as your main supply.

Waste

We carry out everything we bring in that is not food. The Manaslu valley has a waste problem that it did not create and cannot solve on its own, and every operator should avoid adding to it.

Supporting local communities

The lodges are family businesses in the villages you pass through. The guides and porters live in this district. The restricted area fee goes to the Department of Immigration, and the conservation permit fee goes to the National Trust for Nature Conservation, which runs the Manaslu Conservation Area and funds the schools and health posts in Samagaon and Samdo. 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 one that subcontracts the trip to a local company.

Local customs

Ask before photographing anyone. When a mule train approaches, stand on the mountain side of the trail, not the drop side, and let it pass. Monasteries welcome visitors, but they 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 message on WhatsApp with your approximate dates, and tell us whether you are travelling alone. Manaslu is a restricted area, so we need passport scans earlier than for other treks, and the permit is applied for in your name at the Department of Immigration rather than bought over the counter.

Deposit

A deposit of thirty per cent holds 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

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. 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 group 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 travellers book privately, at no extra cost.

Late bookings

Three weeks in advance is comfortable, and ten days is possible. The limiting factor is the Department of Immigration rather than the lodges: restricted area permits are issued against scanned passports on working days only, so an enquiry on a Friday for a Monday start is not possible.

Optional extras

Tsum Valley
from $690, +7 days
A side valley reached from Lokpa that was closed to outsiders until 2008, with its own dialect, its own gompas and a longstanding ban on killing animals. It requires its own restricted area permit, and it is the best extension we offer.

Manaslu Base Camp day hike
no extra cost, uses the Samagaon day
A demanding day hike, climbing 1,200 m from Samagaon to the base camp at 4,800 m. It provides excellent acclimatisation and views, and is only suitable for trekkers who are already acclimatising well.

An extra night at Samagaon
$90, +1 day
The most useful day you can add to this trek. It gives time for Birendra Lake and the Pungyen Gompa, and a much better chance of crossing the pass.

Continue on the Annapurna Circuit
from $740, +7 days
You finish the Manaslu Circuit at Dharapani, where the upper section of the Annapurna Circuit begins. This gives two 5,000 m passes in one trip and about a month on the trail.

Helicopter from Samagaon
from $2,900 for the aircraft, saves 6 days
Priced per aircraft rather than per seat. It is usually chosen because of a change of plan rather than an emergency, and it depends on the weather.

Single room where available
$120
For the Kathmandu nights and the better lodges. Above Samagaon the lodges do not have single rooms, and Dharamsala is a dormitory.

Frequently asked questions

Answers to the 23 questions travellers ask us most often. If your question is not here, contact us and we will answer it.

How does it compare with the Annapurna Circuit?

The two treks follow a similar pattern but offer very different experiences. Both cross a pass a little above 5,000 m, and both take about two weeks. The Annapurna Circuit has a road at each end, good lodges throughout, a doctor at Manang and many trekkers. The Manaslu Circuit has none of these, which is the main reason people choose it. If you have trekked the Annapurna Circuit and would prefer a quieter route, this trek is a good choice.

Is it harder than Annapurna?

Not on any single day. The Larkya La is 310 m lower than the Thorong La, and the pass day is comparable. It is harder overall: there are eleven walking days with no rest day until the ninth, four of them in a gorge where the trail climbs and descends repeatedly, and a much more basic night before the pass.

Should this be my first Himalayan trek?

Usually not, and we will tell you so. The route is remote, the accommodation at the higher villages is very basic, there is no clinic on the route, and leaving from the middle of the trek takes days. None of this is dangerous with a good guide, and all of it is easier to manage when you already know how your body responds at 4,000 m. We recommend trekking to Annapurna Base Camp or Everest Base Camp first, and then this route.

How fit do I need to be?

You need to be fit enough to walk six hours a day for eleven days in a row. For this trek, that is a better measure than any single hard day. The training plan on this page covers twelve weeks. The part most people skip, three walking days back to back, is the most important part for this trek.

Can I trek the Manaslu Circuit on my own?

Yes. Since 22 March 2026, the Department of Immigration no longer requires two foreign trekkers on a restricted area permit. Before that date, solo travellers had to find a partner or pay for a second permit in another name, and many websites still give this outdated information. You will still walk with a licensed guide, because a restricted area permit is only issued through an agency.

Which permits do I need?

You need four things. The restricted area permit costs $100 for seven days plus $15 per additional day from September to November, and $75 plus $10 per additional day from December to August. The Manaslu Conservation Area permit costs NPR 3,000. The Annapurna Conservation Area permit also costs NPR 3,000. You also need a licensed guide from a registered agency. All of these are included in the price, and we arrange them for you.

Why do I need an Annapurna permit on a Manaslu trek?

The Larkya La leads into the Annapurna Conservation Area, and you walk out through the checkpoint at Dharapani, where the permit is checked. Travellers are caught out by this every season, and about half of the Manaslu permit guides online do not mention it.

Do I need a TIMS card?

No. The restricted area permit replaces it. Some Manaslu pages list a TIMS card, but buying one would be an unnecessary expense of NPR 2,000.

Why does this trek cost more than the Annapurna treks?

The difference is almost entirely the restricted area permit. At the autumn rate it costs around $145 per person for this itinerary, while an Annapurna trek needs no such permit. The conservation permit costs are also doubled, because you need two. In total, permits cost roughly $190, compared with $37 on an Annapurna trek. This cost is the reason the trail stays quiet.

What is the Larkya La day like?

You leave Dharamsala at three or four in the morning, when the temperature is about minus fifteen. There are four to five hours of steady climbing across moraine to the pass at 5,106 m, a wide saddle hung with prayer flags, with views of Himlung, Cheo and Kang Guru. This is followed by a long descent of 1,516 m on loose ground to Bimthang. The day takes eight to ten hours in total and is by far the longest day of the trek.

What if I cannot cross the pass?

You descend with a guide. This is why we make the decision at Samdo rather than at Dharamsala. From Samdo, Samagaon is three hours below and has the only reliable helicopter landing site on the route. From Dharamsala at four in the morning, the options are much more limited. If the discussion takes place at Samdo a day and a half earlier, nobody has to make that decision at 4,460 m.

Is there a doctor on the route?

No. Unlike the Everest and Annapurna regions, there is no Himalayan Rescue Association post on this trek, only a health post at Samagaon that is not always staffed. Medical cover consists of your guide's wilderness first aid training, the daily oximeter readings and a readiness to descend early. For this reason, we follow the altitude protocol strictly.

Will there be snow on the pass?

In October there is usually little snow. In March and late November, expect some, and your guide will decide at Samdo whether the group needs microspikes. From December to February the pass is normally closed, and we do not offer the crossing then.

What is Dharamsala like?

It is the most basic accommodation on any of our trips, and we want you to know this in advance. It is a stone shelter at 4,460 m, with dormitory or shared twin rooms, no heating, an unreliable electricity supply, poor food, and a cold night before the most demanding day. It is only one night, and it is necessary in order to cross the pass. Bring a sleeping bag liner you are comfortable with, and make sure you eat.

What are the other lodges like?

They are better than Dharamsala, but simpler than the lodges in the Annapurna region. The gorge lodges at Dyang and Ghap are simple. The lodge at Lho has the best view on the trek from its dining room. Samagaon is the most comfortable night, with hot showers and private bathrooms in the better lodges. Samdo is basic but adequate.

Is there wifi and phone signal on the trek?

Coverage is patchy as far as Namrung, better at Samagaon, and there is none above it. NTC covers more of this valley than Ncell, which is the opposite of the Annapurna region, so buy an NTC SIM card in Kathmandu. Expect to be out of contact for the last five days, and let people at home know.

How much cash do I need, and where is the last cash machine?

The last cash machine is in Kathmandu. There is no cash machine anywhere on this trek, and cards are not accepted. Bring three hundred to four hundred and fifty dollars in Nepali rupees, in small notes, to cover tea, charging, the occasional shower and your tips.

How busy is the trail?

It is much quieter than the Annapurna region in October. It is busier than it was five years ago, and part of the lower gorge now has a jeep track. Between Namrung and Bimthang, the most important week of the trek, you will still have long stretches with no other trekkers.

How do I get to the start?

The drive from Kathmandu to Maccha Khola takes eight hours by private jeep. The road is paved as far as Arughat, followed by a rough road cut into the hillside above the Budhi Gandaki. The exact point where the jeep stops depends on the monsoon damage to the track that year, and we will tell you before you arrive, not on the morning of departure.

Are there flights to the start of the trek?

No, and this is an advantage. Nothing on this trek can be delayed for three days by cloud, as a Lukla flight can, which is why this itinerary has no spare day at the end. In exchange, there is a rough road at each end, and the monsoon occasionally closes it.

When should I go?

Late September to mid-November, or April. October is the most reliable month, and November has the clearest weather and the fewest trekkers. Do not trek during the monsoon: from June to August the access road, rather than the trail itself, makes the trip unsafe.

How far ahead should I book?

Three weeks in advance is comfortable. The limiting factor is the Department of Immigration rather than the lodges, because restricted area permits are issued against scanned passports on working days only. Ten days is possible, but an enquiry on a Friday for a Monday start is not.

Should I add the Tsum Valley?

If you have an extra week, yes. The Tsum Valley is a side valley that was closed to outsiders until 2008. It has its own dialect and a longstanding local ban on killing animals, and it is the best extension we offer. It requires its own restricted area permit and extends the trip to about twenty-four days.

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