

Earthbound Expeditions

Mera Peak Expedition, 6,461 m

18 days, from US$2,485 per person

Duration
18 days

Grade
Very strenuous

Max altitude
6,461 m

Start and end
Kathmandu

On the move
4 to 7 hours a day

Best season
Mar to May, Oct to Nov

Accommodation
Lodges and tents

Meals
All meals on the trek

Group size
Up to 8

Getting there
Fly to Lukla

Mera Peak Expedition, 6,461 m Overview

Climb Nepal's highest trekking peak through the quiet Hinku Valley, with a full day of rope and crampon training before you go onto the glacier.

Climb overview

The trip lasts eighteen days. Eleven are spent moving, and four are planned rest days at altitude for acclimatisation. You fly to Lukla, turn south away from the Everest trail, cross the Zatrwa La at 4,610 m into the Hinku Valley, and walk up the valley to Khare at 5,045 m. From Khare it is two days on the glacier to a tented high camp at 5,780 m, followed by one long night that ends on the summit of Mera Central at 6,461 m.

Who this trip is for

This climb suits trekkers who want to take the next step, rather than climbers looking for a difficult route. There is no rock, no mixed ground and no significant exposure. The only steep section is fifty metres of fixed rope below the summit. Mera requires the endurance to walk for two weeks and the patience to acclimatise properly. The technical skills take one day to learn, and we teach them at Khare.

Why the trip takes 18 days

Fifteen-day versions of this climb exist, but we do not offer one. They save time by removing an acclimatisation day, by going directly from Khare to high camp in a single 735 m ascent, and by leaving no spare day for bad weather. Climbers on Mera are rarely turned back by the difficulty of the climb. They are usually turned back because they reached high camp two days too early.

Key highlights of the Mera Peak Expedition, 6,461 m

- Stand on Mera Central at 6,461 m, the highest of Nepal's trekking peaks
- See five 8,000 m summits from one place: Everest, Kangchenjunga, Lhotse, Makalu and Cho Oyu
- The Hinku Valley, a day south of the Everest trail and very quiet
- A full day of training on the glacier at Khare before the climb
- Two nights in tents, at 5,350 m and 5,780 m
- Cross the Zatrwa La, 4,610 m, on the way in and again on the way out

Itinerary

Day	Route	Hours	Distance	Altitude
1	Arrive Kathmandu	-	-	1,400 m
2	Permits, gear fitting, briefing	-	-	1,400 m
3	Fly to Lukla, walk to Chutanga	3–4 hrs	4 km	3,050 m
4	Chutanga, acclimatisation day	3–4 hrs	4 km	3,050 m
5	Over Zatrwa La to Thuli Kharka	6–7 hrs	9 km	4,300 m
6	Thuli Kharka to Kothe	5–6 hrs	13 km	3,600 m
7	Kothe to Thaknak	4–5 hrs	8 km	4,358 m

8	Thaknak, acclimatisation day	3–4 hrs	5 km	4,358 m
9	Thaknak to Khare	4–5 hrs	5 km	5,045 m
10	Khare, glacier skills day	4–5 hrs	3 km	5,045 m
11	Khare to Mera Base Camp	3–4 hrs	5 km	5,350 m
12	Base Camp to High Camp	2–3 hrs	2 km	5,780 m
13	Summit Mera Central, down to Khare	9–11 hrs	12 km	6,461 m
14	Spare summit day at Khare	-	-	5,045 m
15	Khare to Kothe	5–6 hrs	13 km	3,600 m
16	Kothe to Thuli Kharka	6–7 hrs	13 km	4,300 m
17	Over Zatrwa La to Lukla	6–7 hrs	13 km	2,840 m
18	Fly to Kathmandu	-	-	1,400 m

Day 1

Arrive in Kathmandu

We meet you at Kathmandu airport and drive you to your hotel. If you are not too tired, you can take an hour to walk through the old streets. In the evening we have dinner together, go through the route day by day, and answer your questions.

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

Day 2

Permits, equipment fitting and briefing

This is a preparation day rather than a sightseeing day. Your photographs and passport go to the Nepal Mountaineering Association office for the climbing permit. We then fit your boots, crampons, harness, ice axe and jumar, so that everything is ready before Khare. The afternoon is free if you would like to visit Boudhanath or Patan.

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

Day 3

Fly to Lukla and trek to Chutanga

The flight lands on Lukla's short, sloping runway, and you start walking within the hour. The trail soon turns south, away from the busy Everest route, and climbs gently through rhododendron and juniper to the few stone huts and tent platforms at Chutanga. The first day is kept short on purpose.

Altitude: 3,050 m On foot: 4 km, 3–4 hrs Night: Lodge, Chutanga Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 4

Acclimatisation day in Chutanga

You sleep at the same altitude for a second night. This is the first of four days in this itinerary without forward progress. In the morning we walk up towards the ridge below the pass to about 3,800 m, look at the next day's route from above, and return for lunch and a free afternoon.

Altitude: 3,050 m On foot: 4 km, 3–4 hrs Night: Lodge, Chutanga Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 5

Trek over the Zatrwa La to Thuli Kharka

This is the hardest day of the approach. A long, steady climb over rock, and often snow, leads to the Zatrwa La at 4,610 m, where the Hinku Valley appears ahead and the Khumbu is left behind. A rough traverse and a descent follow, to the yak pastures at Thuli Kharka. This is your first night above 4,000 m.

Altitude: 4,300 m On foot: 9 km, 6–7 hrs Night: Lodge, Thuli Kharka Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 6

Trek from Thuli Kharka to Kothe

A long day, mostly downhill, which helps your body recover after the previous night. The path follows the western side of the Hinku Valley through fir and rhododendron, drops steeply to the river, then follows it upstream to Kothe. You sleep 700 m lower than the previous night, which is planned for acclimatisation.

Altitude: 3,600 m On foot: 13 km, 5–6 hrs Night: Lodge, Kothe Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 7

Trek from Kothe to Thaknak

The trail follows the Hinku Khola, with the south face of Mera ahead for most of the morning. The forest gives way to scrub and then to open ground, and the valley becomes wide, grey and open. Thaknak is a summer grazing settlement with a few lodges that serve mainly climbers.

Altitude: 4,358 m On foot: 8 km, 4–5 hrs Night: Lodge, Thaknak Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 8

Acclimatisation day in Thaknak

This is the second acclimatisation day. We walk up the moraine to Sabai Tsho, the glacial lake below Kusum Kanguru, reach about 4,900 m, and return to sleep at the same place as the night before. The walk takes half a day, is one of the best mornings of the trip, and helps your body adjust to the altitude.

Altitude: 4,358 m On foot: 5 km, 3–4 hrs Night: Lodge, Thaknak Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 9

Trek from Thaknak to Khare

The distance is short but progress is slow. The trail climbs the moraine beside the Dig Glacier, becomes steeper, and reaches the shelf at Khare, directly below the Mera glacier. You are now at 5,045 m, higher than Everest Base Camp. You spend two nights here now and two more after the summit.

Altitude: 5,045 m On foot: 5 km, 4–5 hrs Night: Lodge, Khare Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 10

Glacier skills training at Khare

A full day on the ice below Khare with your climbing guide. You practise walking in crampons, using the ice axe and harness, climbing a fixed line with a jumar, abseiling, and what to do if the person ahead of you falls into a crevasse. If you have no experience of these skills, this is where you learn them.

Altitude: 5,045 m On foot: 3 km, 4–5 hrs Night: Lodge, Khare Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 11

Climb from Khare to Mera Base Camp

You rope up for the first time. A steep climb from Khare leads onto the glacier, followed by an easier route to the Mera La at 5,415 m and a short descent to the base camp tents on the far side. This takes three to four hours. Tonight you sleep in a tent, and our kitchen crew cooks the food they have carried up.

Altitude: 5,350 m On foot: 5 km, 3–4 hrs Night: Tented camp, Mera Base Camp Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 12

Climb from Base Camp to Mera High Camp

The climb takes only two to three hours, on snow and roped together, with the Khumbu peaks rising behind you as you gain height. High Camp is on a rock band at 5,780 m, above a long drop, with views of Everest, Lhotse and Makalu across the valley. You eat early, drink plenty of fluids, and try to sleep by seven.

Altitude: 5,780 m On foot: 2 km, 2–3 hrs Night: Tented camp, Mera High Camp Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 13

Summit day and descent to Khare

You leave by two in the morning with head torches and climb slowly up a broad glacier, which is much less steep than it looks from below. The final fifty metres are steep and fixed with rope, and you climb them using a jumar. The summit is a snow dome surrounded by five 8,000 m peaks. You then descend all the way to Khare.

Altitude: 6,461 m at the summit On foot: 12 km, 9–11 hrs Night: Lodge, Khare Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 14

Spare day at Khare

This is a reserve day. If wind or cloud prevented the summit attempt the day before, we climb again today. If not, you rest at Khare, eat well and recover. We include this day in the itinerary rather than offering a shorter trip.

Altitude: 5,045 m On foot: Optional 2–3 hrs Night: Lodge, Khare Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 15

Trek from Khare to Kothe

You return the way you came, and the walking is easier. You pass the moraine, Thaknak and the long grey valley, and then reach the first bushes and trees, and thicker air for the first time in over a week. Kothe has a bakery.

Altitude: 3,600 m On foot: 13 km, 5–6 hrs Night: Lodge, Kothe Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 16

Trek from Kothe to Thuli Kharka

The trail leaves the river and climbs steadily, 700 metres, up the western side of the valley to the yak pastures where you stayed on the way in. It is a long afternoon, with views of Mera behind you for most of the way.

Altitude: 4,300 m On foot: 13 km, 6–7 hrs Night: Lodge, Thuli Kharka Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 17

Trek over the Zatrwa La to Lukla

You cross the pass for the second time, early in the day, before the cloud rises from the Hinku Valley. You then descend 1,800 m through Chutanga to Lukla. The walk takes seven hours, mostly downhill, and is hard on the knees. At Lukla there is a hot shower and a dining room full of other trekkers and climbers at the end of their trips.

Altitude: 2,840 m On foot: 13 km, 6–7 hrs Night: Lodge, Lukla Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 18

Fly to Kathmandu

Flights from Lukla leave early in the morning or not at all, so you are at the airstrip at first light. You are back at the hotel by mid-morning, or by mid-afternoon if your flight goes via Manthali. We have dinner together in the evening. Book your flight home for tomorrow at the earliest, never for tonight.

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

What's included

- Airport transfers & ground transport
- Kathmandu to Lukla flights, both ways
- Licensed guide and climbing sherpa from Khare
- All permits, park and municipality fees
- Lodges, tented camps and all meals from day 3
- Group climbing gear, ropes and tented high camps

Not included

- International flights
- Travel, climbing & helicopter rescue insurance
- Personal climbing gear, hire available in Kathmandu
- Tips & personal expenses
- Nepal entry visa (on arrival)

Permits and other costs

Permit	Fee	Issued by
NMA climbing permit, Mera Peak. Rates increased on 1 September 2025. Only a registered agency can apply, not an individual climber, and the permit is issued against your guide's licence.	$350 in spring, $175 in autumn, winter and summer	Nepal Mountaineering Association, Kathmandu
Makalu Barun National Park entry permit. SAARC nationals pay NPR 1,500. Children under ten go free.	NPR 3,390, about $25	Kathmandu, or at the park post on the way in
Khumbu Pasang Lhamu Rural Municipality permit. This permit is required because the trek starts in the municipality and crosses the Zatrwa La before entering the Hinku Valley.	NPR 2,000, about $15	Lukla, on arrival
Garbage deposit. Returned when the team presents a clearance certificate for the waste it has carried out. We carry our waste out in any case.	$500 a team, refundable	Lodged with the permit, refunded in Kathmandu
TIMS card. The climbing permit replaces it, and the Khumbu stopped using TIMS in 2018. Some other operators still list it, but you do not need to buy one.	Not required	-

Other cost	Amount	Note
NMA climbing permit, autumn	$175	$350 in spring, set by the royalty band

Makalu Barun National Park entry	$25	NPR 3,390
Khumbu Pasang Lhamu permit	$15	NPR 2,000, bought in Lukla
Garbage deposit	$500 a team	Refunded when the rubbish is brought back down
Lukla flight, both ways	$400–460	About $500 via Manthali in peak season
Climbing Sherpa	$45–60 a day	From Khare upwards, one for every two climbers
Licensed trekking guide	$30–40 a day	Including their accommodation and meals
Porter, one for every two climbers	$22–28 a day	Including their accommodation and meals
Lodge bed in the Hinku	$6–25 a night	Khare is the most expensive and the coldest
Food on the trail	$30–40 a day	Three meals a day and tea, no alcohol
Tented camps at base camp and high camp	$130–190 a night	Tents, kitchen crew and fuel, all carried up
Climbing gear hire	$140–180	Boots, crampons, ice axe, harness and jumar, for the whole trip
Insurance to 6,500 m	$180–300	Must cover climbing and helicopter evacuation
Kathmandu hotel	$40–70 a night	Three-star, three nights
Tips for the whole team	$250–400	Per climber, paid at the end

Packing list

Baggage weight limits

Your porter carries a strict maximum of 20 kg, shared between two climbers. The Lukla flight allows 15 kg in total, 10 kg checked and 5 kg hand luggage, and all bags are weighed. Mountaineering boots and crampons use up much of this allowance, which is why we hire equipment in Kathmandu and send it up as freight with the crew. We provide the duffel bag, sleeping bag and down jacket, so you do not need to bring these. Anything else you are not taking on the trek is stored free of charge at our office.

Head and eyes

- Sun hat with a brim, and a warm hat that covers your ears
- Two buffs or neck gaiters, and a balaclava for summit night
- Category 4 glacier glasses. The glare on the Mera glacier is intense by nine in the morning
- Ski goggles for summit night, in case of wind
- Head torch and spare batteries. You leave high camp at two in the morning
- SPF 50 sunscreen and lip balm with sun protection

Clothing

- Four merino or synthetic base layers, not cotton
- Two mid layers: one fleece and one light insulated jacket
- Expedition down jacket. We provide one, but bring your own if you feel the cold at night
- Waterproof jacket and trousers that pack small
- Insulated or softshell climbing trousers for summit day
- Two pairs of trekking trousers, one of them lined

Hands and feet

- Liner gloves, insulated gloves and a pair of expedition mittens
- Worn-in trekking boots with ankle support for the approach
- B2 or B3 mountaineering boots for the glacier. You can hire a pair in Kathmandu if you do not own any
- Five pairs of trekking socks and two thick pairs for summit night
- Camp shoes for the evenings, and gaiters

Climbing equipment

- Crampons that fit your boots. Check the fit in Kathmandu, not at Khare
- Ice axe, walking length rather than technical
- Harness, jumar, belay device and two screwgate karabiners
- Helmet
- Trekking poles, which are more important on the descent than on the climb
- Ropes, ice screws and snow bars are group equipment, and we carry them

Bags

- Duffel bag for the porter, 20 kg maximum. We provide one
- Daypack, 35 to 40 litres, large enough for summit day
- Dry bags or heavy-duty liners. Bags do not stay waterproof for long in the Hinku Valley

Sleeping

- Sleeping bag rated to -20°C. We provide one
- Silk or cotton liner, for warmth and hygiene
- Inflatable mat if you do not sleep well on foam. The camps provide foam mats
- Earplugs. Lodge walls are plywood, and tents are noisier

Health

- Personal first aid kit: blister plasters, tape, painkillers and rehydration salts
- Diamox, if your doctor agrees, and any medication you take regularly
- Water purification: tablets, a filter or a SteriPen
- Hand sanitiser and wet wipes. There are no showers above Thaknak
- Throat lozenges. Most people develop a dry cough at altitude

Documents and money

- Passport valid for six months, plus two photocopies
- Four passport photographs for the climbing permit
- Insurance certificate showing climbing and helicopter cover to 6,500 m
- $400 to $600 in small notes. There are no ATMs in the Hinku Valley

Altitude profile

Day	Place	Sleep at	Highest point
1	Kathmandu	1,400 m	-
2	Kathmandu	1,400 m	-
3	Chutanga	3,050 m	-
4	Chutanga	3,050 m	3,800 m
5	Thuli Kharka	4,300 m	4,610 m
6	Kothe	3,600 m	-
7	Thaknak	4,358 m	-
8	Thaknak	4,358 m	4,900 m
9	Khare	5,045 m	-
10	Khare	5,045 m	5,300 m
11	Mera Base Camp	5,350 m	5,415 m
12	Mera High Camp	5,780 m	-
13	Khare	5,045 m	6,461 m
14	Khare	5,045 m	-
15	Kothe	3,600 m	-
16	Thuli Kharka	4,300 m	-
17	Lukla	2,840 m	4,610 m
18	Kathmandu	1,400 m	-

Lukla flights

Flight delays to and from Lukla are the most common problem on any Everest region trip. This section explains how they are handled.

Departure airport: Kathmandu or Manthali

Outside the two busiest periods of the year, the flight leaves from Kathmandu and takes about 35 minutes. From about mid-March to mid-May, and from late September to the end of November, the civil aviation authority moves Lukla departures to Manthali airport at Ramechhap to reduce congestion at Kathmandu. This means a four to five hour drive, leaving at around two in the morning, followed by a twenty-minute flight. The climb is the same, but the night before is much shorter. We tell you which applies to your dates before you book.

Baggage allowance

The allowance is 15 kg in total: 10 kg checked and 5 kg hand luggage. Excess baggage costs about $1.50 per kilo and the limit is enforced, because the aircraft is a nineteen-seat Twin Otter or Dornier landing on a 527-metre sloping runway. Climbing boots and crampons use up much of the allowance, which is one reason we hire equipment in Kathmandu and send it up with the porters. Anything you do not take is stored free of charge at our office.

Flight delays

Lukla airport closes because of cloud several times a month in every season. Losing one day is common, and losing two is not unusual. On this itinerary, the spare day at Khare covers a weather day on the mountain, and the day you need to protect is the one after you return to Kathmandu. If flights are cancelled for more than three days at the start, we will move you to a climb that does not require Lukla rather than shorten this one, and we do not charge for the change.

Booking your flight home

This itinerary ends in Kathmandu on the evening of day 18. Book an international flight that leaves on day 19 at the earliest, and on day 20 if possible. This costs little and protects you against delays, and it is the advice we most often wish travellers had followed.

Accommodation

Lodges

From Lukla into the Hinku Valley you stay in simple lodges, each with one warm dining room with a stove, and plain twin rooms with foam mattresses and thin walls. Bathrooms are shared. Chutanga and Thuli Kharka are basic, and Kothe and Thaknak have hot showers for a fee. You spend four nights at Khare, the highest lodge on the route, which is basic and has no shower. Bring a warm sleeping bag.

Tented camps

Above Khare you sleep in tents. You spend one night in tents at Mera Base Camp and one night at Mera High Camp, at about 5,780 m, in two-person tents on a rock band, with a toilet tent. The crew cook and melt snow for water. You leave High Camp in the dark on summit day.

Where	Nights	Type	Room	Bathroom
Kathmandu	3	Three-star hotel	Twin or double	Private, hot water

Chutanga	2	Simple lodge	Twin	Shared
Thuli Kharka	2	Lodge in a yak pasture	Twin, basic	Shared
Kothe	2	Lodge	Twin	Shared, hot shower for a fee
Thaknak	2	Lodge	Twin	Shared, hot shower for a fee
Khare	4	Lodge, the highest on the route	Twin, basic	Shared, no shower
Mera Base Camp	1	Tented camp	Two-person tent	Toilet tent
Mera High Camp	1	Tented camp on a rock band	Two-person tent	Toilet tent
Lukla	1	Lodge	Twin	Private

Heating
From Kothe upwards, one stove in the lodge dining room, lit at dusk. Bedrooms and tents are not heated.

Hot shower
Available at Kothe and Thaknak for $5 to $8, gas-heated or by bucket. None at Khare or above.

Charging
$3 to $5 per device in lodge dining rooms as far as Khare. None above Khare. Bring a power bank and keep it in your sleeping bag at night.

Wifi
Data cards are sold at some lodges from Kothe upwards. The connection is slow and often unavailable. Expect to be out of contact from Khare onwards.

Phone signal
Ncell and NTC cover parts of the lower Hinku Valley, with no signal above Thaknak. Buy a SIM card in Kathmandu.

Water
Boiled water costs $1 to $4 a litre in the lodges, and the camps use melted snow. Please use these rather than buying bottled water.

Sleeping bag
Provided, rated to -20°C. It is lent to you for the trip and returned at the end.

Tents and mats
Two-person tents and a foam mat at base camp and high camp. Bring an inflatable mat if you do not sleep well on foam.

Meals

Meal	Time	What it is like
Breakfast	6:30–7:30	Porridge, Tibetan bread, eggs, chapati, pancakes, tea or coffee
Lunch	12:00–13:00	Dal bhat, fried rice, noodles, soup, and potatoes prepared in many ways
Dinner	18:00–19:00	Dal bhat, pasta, thukpa, curry and rice, soup to start

At the camps	cooked in a tent	Above Khare, our own kitchen crew serves soup, rice, pasta, tinned fish and as many hot drinks as you want

Diet	How we manage it
Vegetarian	Easy throughout. Dal bhat is vegetarian and is the best dish on any menu in the Hinku Valley.
Vegan	Possible with advance notice. Tell us when you book, so the guide can order ahead and the camp cook can plan the two nights above Khare.
Gluten free	Rice, dal, potatoes and eggs are safe. Bread, noodles and momo are not, and no lodge kitchen in the Hinku Valley can guarantee there is no cross-contamination.
Halal	There is no certified halal kitchen on this route. Vegetarian meals are the practical option.
Meat	Available as far as Thaknak, but we advise against it, because it is carried in without refrigeration over a 4,610 m pass.

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 leave your duffel outside the door for the porter
7:00	Breakfast together in the dining room
8:00	Walking. The guide sets a slow, steady pace
12:00	Lunch, about an hour, at a lodge or on the trail
13:00	Two to four more hours of walking, 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 taken, and written down
18:00	Dinner, and the guide explains the next day's plan
20:00	Bed. At 5,000 m, most people are asleep by nine

Difficulty and preparation

Difficulty 5 of 5

A long trek followed by a straightforward climb, both at very high altitude.

- Eleven days of walking, four to seven hours on most of them, and nine to eleven hours on summit day.
- You sleep in a tent at 5,780 m and reach 6,461 m, where there is less than half the oxygen you are used to.
- Crampons, ice axe, harness and a fixed rope on the final fifty metres. All of this is taught at Khare, and no previous experience is needed.
- A crevassed glacier from the Mera La to the summit. You must walk roped together.

- The Zatrwa La, at 4,610 m, is crossed twice, with 1,800 m of descent to Lukla on the second crossing.
- Climbers who turn back almost always do so because of altitude, and very rarely because of fitness.

Getting ready

16 weeks before: Build endurance
Do four cardio sessions a week, 45 to 60 minutes each, at a pace where you can still hold a conversation. Walking, cycling, swimming or rowing are all suitable. This is the most important factor in how you will feel on day 12.

14 weeks before: Add hill walking
Replace one session with a one-hour hill walk with 400 m of ascent. Add two strength sessions: squats, step-ups, lunges and calf raises. Your thigh muscles work harder on the 1,800 m descent to Lukla than anywhere on the climb.

12 weeks before: Train with a pack
Start walking with the daypack you will carry, loaded to 8 kg, and in the boots you will trek in. Blisters end more expeditions than lack of technique, and they can be prevented.

10 weeks before: Walk on consecutive days
Do one long walk at the weekend, five to six hours, followed by a three-hour walk the next morning on tired legs. This trip consists of consecutive days of walking, and one very long walk a month does not prepare you for that.

6 weeks before: Practise early starts
Do two walks that start before dawn, in the dark and the cold, in the clothes you will wear at high camp. Summit day starts at two in the morning after a night of poor sleep, so it helps to practise this beforehand.

4 weeks before: Longest training day
Walk for eight hours with 1,000 m of ascent and the same descent. If you finish able to eat a meal and sleep normally, you are ready for everything except the altitude, which cannot be trained for at home.

2 weeks before: Reduce training
Halve the amount of training but keep the same number of sessions. Nothing you do in the last two weeks will make you fitter, and it could cause an injury. Rest and sleep well instead.

Altitude and safety

You sleep one night at 5,780 m and reach 6,461 m, where each breath holds less than half the oxygen it does at sea level. Training at home does not change how your body responds to this. Fitness and tolerance of altitude are unrelated: strong young climbers can get altitude sickness, and less fit older climbers often do not. What helps is ascending slowly, which is the purpose of the four rest days in this itinerary, and telling your guide on the day a symptom starts, not three days later at high camp.

What to watch for

- Headache that does not improve with water and paracetamol
- Nausea, or loss of appetite
- Dizziness, or feeling drunk without having had alcohol
- Breathlessness at rest, not only when climbing
- Poor sleep, or waking up short of breath
- A wet cough, or a rattling sound when you breathe out

- Loss of coordination, which means you must descend immediately

How to prevent it

- Walk more slowly than you want to. Your guide will set a slow pace, and this is correct.
- Drink three to four litres of water a day, even though you will not feel thirsty enough.
- Eat, even when you do not feel like it. Appetite is usually the first thing to go.
- No alcohol above Kothe, and no sleeping pills at any altitude.
- Climb high and sleep low: each of the three acclimatisation days gains 300 to 550 m and returns to sleep lower.
- Diamox is effective and worth discussing with your doctor before you travel.
- Tell your guide on the first day you feel unwell, not the night before the summit attempt.

What we do

1. Daily health checks
Your guide carries a pulse oximeter and measures your oxygen saturation and pulse every evening, and again on any morning you feel unwell. The readings are recorded, so a decline over three days can be clearly seen.

2. Final check at Khare
No one goes onto the glacier unless they are eating, sleeping and showing normal readings at Khare. The climbing guide makes this decision on the evening of day 10, in a lodge, rather than at two in the morning at 5,780 m.

3. Mild symptoms
You rest for a day where you are, or descend a short distance to the previous village and climb back up the next day. Most cases are resolved at this stage, and the expedition continues.

4. Serious symptoms
Descent is the only effective treatment, and 500 m is usually enough. From high camp this means descending to Khare, and from Khare it means descending to Kothe. This decision is not open to discussion.

5. Helicopter evacuation
Helicopters can land at Khare and, in an emergency, on the flat ground near base camp. There is no clinic in the Hinku Valley, so evacuation goes directly to Kathmandu. This is why you need insurance and why we ask to see it: the cost is $4,000 to $6,000, and no helicopter will fly without a payment guarantee.

Weather by month

This table shows the conditions month by month. We do not run the climb in three of these months.

Month	Day, in the Hinku valley	Night, in the Hinku valley	Night at Khare, 5,045 m	Conditions	Note
January	2°C	-12°C	-25°C	Hard	Clear and extremely cold. Most lodges in the Hinku Valley are closed, and the pass is often closed too.
February	4°C	-10°C	-23°C	Hard	Cold, quiet and very clear. Deep snow on the Zatrwa La until early March.

March	7°C	-7°C	-20°C	Good	The spring season begins. Cold nights, good snow on the glacier and few other climbers.
April	10°C	-3°C	-16°C	Best	The best month of spring. Stable weather, deep firm snow, and rhododendrons in flower lower in the valley.
May	12°C	0°C	-13°C	Best	The warmest conditions of the spring. Softer snow, more care needed around crevasses, and hazier skies by the end of the month.
June	14°C	3°C	-10°C	Hard	The monsoon arrives. Cloud, wet snow on the glacier, and Lukla flights begin to be cancelled.
July	15°C	5°C	-8°C	We do not run it	We do not run this climb. Views are poor and flights are unreliable.
August	15°C	5°C	-8°C	We do not run it	As in July. The mountain is usually hidden by cloud.
September	13°C	2°C	-12°C	Good	The monsoon clears during the month. By late September the valley below Kothe is clear and green.
October	10°C	-4°C	-17°C	Best	The most reliable month of the year. Book several months ahead.
November	6°C	-8°C	-21°C	Best	Cold, very clear, and quiet by the end of the month. The best weeks for the summit.
December	3°C	-11°C	-24°C	Hard	Clear and very cold. The climb is possible with the right equipment, and there are very few other climbers.

Built from Lukla station records and standard lapse rates for the Hinku and Khare. Any given week can sit ten degrees either side of these, and wind at high camp makes minus twenty feel a great deal worse than the number looks.

Guides and porters

Your guide

A government-licensed trekking guide leads the whole expedition. A climbing Sherpa with the NMA high-altitude qualification joins the team at Khare, one for every two climbers on the glacier. One porter carries for every two climbers as far as Khare, and from there our own crew moves the camps. With nine or more climbers, a second climbing Sherpa joins the team.

Porters and luggage

Each porter carries 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 a bag is overweight, the load is split rather than added to. Porters carry luggage, not daypacks: your water, camera, jacket and food for the day stay with you.

Staff pay and insurance

Salary, insurance, food, accommodation and high-altitude clothing for every guide, climbing Sherpa and porter are included in the price you pay, not collected separately on the trail. All of them are insured for altitude and helicopter evacuation on the same terms we require of you. Climbing Sherpas are paid a higher rate above Khare, because the work there is different.

Tipping

Tipping is customary but not compulsory, and it never replaces a wage. For this expedition, $250 to $400 per climber 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 that you do not tip in front of the group.

Responsible travel

Waste

Everything we carry above Khare comes back down with us: tents, fuel canisters, packaging, batteries, food waste and the contents of the toilet tent. A garbage deposit is paid for every climbing permit, but we would carry everything out even without it, because there is nobody on the mountain to clean up.

Drinking water

A climber drinking bottled water uses fifty or more plastic bottles on this trip, each of them flown to Lukla and carried over a 4,610 m pass by a porter. Boiled water costs a dollar or two a litre in the lodges, and the camps melt snow. Bring purification as a backup, not as your main supply.

Supporting local communities

The lodges in the Hinku Valley are family businesses with a season of about five months. The guides, climbing Sherpas and porters live in this district. The permit fees fund the national park and the rural municipality. Almost all of what you pay is spent within fifty miles of the trail. This is a reason to book with a Nepali operator rather than a foreign company that subcontracts the work to a local operator.

Local customs

The Hinku Valley is grazing land, not a resort, and the settlements at Thaknak and Khare are occupied for only a few months a year. Ask before photographing anyone. Camp where the crew sets up the tents rather than where the view is best. If a herder asks you to walk around rather than through, please do so.

Booking and payment

How to book

Write to us or send a message on WhatsApp. Tell us roughly when you would like to go and what you have climbed before, if anything. You will receive a reply from someone who has climbed this peak, not an automated form. Nothing is payable at this stage, and there is no obligation until you pay a deposit.

Deposit

A deposit of thirty per cent secures your dates and your climbing permit, 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, four photographs, your insurance certificate and any dietary or medical information, because the NMA permit cannot be applied for without them.

Payment

You can pay by bank transfer or by card through a secure link. Card payments carry the bank's 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 45 days before departure, the deposit can be transferred to any other date or trip we run, with no time limit. Within 45 days, the deposit is kept, because the climbing permit, flights, camping equipment 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

From a group of five, both cost the same. A private expedition runs on your dates at your pace and can be arranged for a single climber. A group departure runs on the dates in the table above, with a maximum of eight climbers. Most people book privately, at no extra cost.

Late bookings

Three weeks is usually enough if the Lukla flights have seats, although in October they are often full. The climbing permit itself can be issued in a couple of days. If you are already in Kathmandu with two free weeks, visit our office and we will see what we can arrange.

Optional extras

Helicopter from Khare
from $700 a seat, saves 3 days
Fly from Khare to Lukla or directly to Kathmandu instead of crossing the Zatrwa La again. People usually choose this to save time or to spare their knees.

Add Island Peak
from $1,250, +7 days
Cross the Amphu Labtsa from the Hinku Valley into the Imja Valley and climb Island Peak while you are still acclimatised. A serious, committing route, and one of the best-value climbs in Nepal.

Lower approach via Paiya
$340, +3 days
Walk in through Paiya, Pangkoma and Ningsow instead of over the Zatrwa La. It takes three days longer, with several hundred metres less climbing each day, and gives much better acclimatisation.

Everest scenic flight
$220, 1 morning
A one-hour flight along the range from Kathmandu, with a guaranteed window seat. A useful option if Lukla flights are cancelled for a week.

Guided Kathmandu Valley tour

$95, 1 day

Bhaktapur, Patan and Boudhanath with a guide who can explain the religious art, on the day after you return from the mountains.

Single room in Kathmandu

$135

A room to yourself for all three hotel nights. Lodges and tents are twin-share only.

Frequently asked questions

Answers to the 24 questions travellers ask us most often. If your question is not here, contact us and we will answer it.

Do I need previous climbing experience?

No. Most people who book this climb have none. Day 10 at Khare is a full day of training on the glacier: crampons, ice axe, harness, jumar, abseiling and moving roped together as a group. Mera requires stamina at altitude and a willingness to learn, not previous climbing experience.

How fit do I need to be?

You need to be able to walk four to seven hours a day on rough ground for two weeks, day after day, and then keep moving for nine to eleven hours on summit day, starting at two in the morning. The training plan on this page is designed for a reasonably active person starting twelve weeks before departure.

How does Mera compare with Island Peak?

Mera is more demanding physically, and Island Peak is more technical. Mera is nearly 300 m higher, the approach is twice as long, and you sleep two nights in tents above 5,300 m. Island Peak has a steeper, more technical headwall but a much shorter approach. Most people find Mera the harder climb overall.

What is the chance I reach the summit?

Across the industry, roughly four in five climbers who set out from high camp reach the summit. Weather and altitude account for almost all of the others. Our itinerary includes an extra acclimatisation night and a spare summit day, which helps, but no one can guarantee a summit and we do not.

Is there an age limit?

There is no upper age limit. We have guided climbers in their sixties to the summit and turned back climbers in their twenties. The minimum age is sixteen, with a parent on the trip. Experience of long days in the hills matters more than age.

Which summit do we climb?

Mera Central, 6,461 m. The peak is usually listed at 6,476 m, which is the height of Mera North, a more technical summit about three hours further on that most commercial groups do not attempt. Your certificate will say Mera Central, because that is the summit you reached.

What is summit day like?

You leave high camp at around two in the morning, when the snow is firm and the wind is usually lighter. You walk slowly, roped together, for four to five hours up a wide glacier, then climb a steep fifty-metre section on a fixed rope to the summit. You descend to Khare the same day, so the total is nine to eleven hours.

How steep does it get?

For almost all of the route, the slope is gentle. The glacier above high camp rises at an angle you could walk up without a rope if it were rock. The exception is the final headwall below the summit. It is short and steep enough to need a jumar, and it has fixed ropes in both climbing seasons.

Are there crevasses?

Yes, on the glacier between Mera La and the summit. There are more of them in a warm spring than in a cold autumn. You walk roped together from the time you leave Khare, and your guide chooses the route. The early start is partly so that snow bridges are frozen when you cross them.

What climbing gear do you provide?

We provide the ropes, ice screws, snow bars and tented camps. Boots, crampons, harness, jumar, descender, helmet and ice axe are personal equipment. You can bring your own or hire a set in Kathmandu for about $150 for the trip. We fit all equipment on day 2, rather than at 5,045 m in the cold.

How does this itinerary handle acclimatisation?

There are three acclimatisation days, at Chutanga, Thaknak and Khare. On each, you climb several hundred metres and return to sleep at the lower altitude. Above Khare, the sleeping altitude rises by 305 m and then 430 m, both within the guidance published by the Himalayan Rescue Association. Fifteen-day versions of this climb leave out one of these days.

Day 5 gains over 1,200 m of sleeping altitude. Is this safe?

This is the only day on the route that goes beyond the recommended gain, and it cannot be avoided: between Chutanga and Thuli Kharka there is a 4,610 m pass and nowhere to sleep. For this reason, day 4 is a rest day beforehand, and day 6 takes you 700 m down to Kothe afterwards.

Do you carry oxygen?

An emergency oxygen bottle and mask travel with the team from Khare upwards, and your guide carries a pulse oximeter for the whole trip. The oxygen is for emergency descent only, not for climbing. Climbers on our departures do not use supplementary oxygen on Mera, and it is not needed.

What happens if I cannot go above Khare?

You stay at Khare with a member of our crew while the rest of the group climbs. This costs nothing extra and happens on about one departure in four. If you need to descend instead, we walk you down to Kothe. You are always accompanied.

Is there a doctor on the route?

No. The Hinku Valley has no clinic, no road and no aid post like the one at Pheriche on the Everest trail. The nearest medical care is in Kathmandu, reached by helicopter. For this reason, we ask to see insurance that covers climbing to 6,500 m and helicopter evacuation before you fly to Lukla.

Which permits do I need?

You need three: the NMA climbing permit for Mera, the Makalu Barun National Park entry permit, and the Khumbu Pasang Lhamu Rural Municipality permit, which is bought in Lukla. All three are included in the package price. A refundable garbage deposit is paid for each team and returned when the team brings its rubbish back.

Do I need a TIMS card?

No. A climbing permit replaces it, and the Khumbu stopped using TIMS in 2018 in favour of the municipality permit. Some other operators still list it for Mera, but you do not need to buy one.

What insurance do you require?

You need a policy that specifically covers mountaineering or high-altitude trekking to at least 6,500 m, including helicopter evacuation and repatriation. Standard travel insurance rarely covers this, and an upgrade limited to 6,000 m is not enough for this peak. Please send us the certificate before you fly.

Where will I sleep, and how cold is it?

You stay in simple lodges as far as Khare, with plywood walls, a stove in the dining room and no heating in the bedrooms. Above Khare, you spend two nights in tents at 5,350 m and 5,780 m. We supply a sleeping bag rated to minus twenty and a mat, and at high camp you sleep in your down jacket.

Is there wifi and charging on the trek?

It is unreliable, and there is none above Khare. Lodges from Kothe upwards charge around $3 to $5 per device and sell data cards that work when the signal is good. There is no wifi or charging at base camp or high camp. Bring a power bank, keep it inside your sleeping bag at night, and let people at home know that you may be out of contact.

What are the toilets like at high camp?

There is a screened toilet tent with a drum, which we carry back out. It is cold and the least comfortable part of the trip, but it keeps waste off the mountain, which has suffered from it for thirty years. Please use it rather than the snow.

Why does spring cost more than autumn?

The NMA royalty for a peak of this height is $350 per climber in spring and $175 in autumn, winter and summer. This $175 difference accounts for the whole price difference on this page. We pass it on at cost rather than charging an averaged price all year.

What is not in the price?

International flights, your Nepal visa, insurance, personal climbing equipment if you do not hire ours, drinks, hot showers, charging, wifi and tips. Budget $300 to $500 in cash, in addition to tips. There are no ATMs in the Hinku Valley and no card machines above Lukla.

How far ahead should I book?

Book two to three months ahead for October and November, because Lukla flights and the better lodges at Khare fill early. Six weeks is usually enough for spring. We have arranged a climbing permit in five days when a place became free, so it is always worth asking.

Photos, videos and reviews of this trip: earthbound.rajansimkhada.com/mera-peak-expedition