


Kangchenjunga North & South Base Camps Trek

- Grade:** Strenuous 
- Land-only duration:** 29 days Kathmandu - Kathmandu
- Trekking days:** 23
- Maximum altitude:** 5139m
- Minimum numbers:** Requires just 4 participants to guarantee these departures at the advertised price.
- Dates and prices:** Our latest dates and prices list is available at www.catreks.com or from the CAT office.



Kanchenjunga from north base camp (David Geddes)



This long and rewarding trek visits the spectacular mountains that straddle the border of Nepal and neighbouring Sikkim. Among them is 8586m Kangchenjunga, the third highest summit in the world, which was first climbed by Charles Evans in 1955.

Our trek starts with a climb through the lush farmlands of the mostly Buddhist communities of the Kiranti, Tamang and Sunwar peoples. Several days of up and down bring us to the approach to Kangchenjunga's south face and the awesome Yalung Glacier. We then traverse the 4640m pass Mirgin La, from where the peaks of Makalu, Chamlang and Everest may be visible. Descending the pass on the other side we follow the route to the north base camp of awesome Kangchenjunga, which was pioneered in 1979 by Doug Scott and his fellow climbers as they prepared for the third ascent of the summit.



*Chorten, Okten Kangchenjunga South
(Photo: Steve Goodwin)*

We took our first group to the area in 1989, which was in fact the first time that permission had been given for organised trekking in East Nepal.

Since then we have run treks to the region each year and our groups have often commented that it is a truly remarkable area for the variety of scenery, vegetation and climate encountered along the way.

The trek is graded strenuous, not so much for the height gained each day, but because of the cumulative effect of walking day after day, coupled with the several days spent at high altitude. Regular, fit walkers should not find too many difficulties with the route and we allow a couple of spare days in case we need to adjust the pace.

• Land-only prices:

The cost of flights, in particular those to Nepal, are less predictable than they used to be. Airlines now request full payment upfront. As a result, we will quote you a land-only cost, and quote separately for the cheapest flights we can find at the time of your booking. We will, however, require full payment for the flights prior to booking them. If you prefer to search for alternative flights yourself, we can sell you the trek at the land-only price.

• Important note – minimum numbers:

Before booking flights, please note that this trip requires a minimum of 4 trekkers before we can guarantee the departure at the advertised price. Please note that should you decide to book your own flights, it is essential that you check with the Community Action Treks office to ensure that the departure is guaranteed before committing financially to any flights or travel arrangements.

OUTLINE ITINERARY

Walking and journey times are approximate

Taplejung airport is currently closed for maintenance. We have adjusted our itinerary accordingly.

- Day 1 Arrive Kathmandu:** transfer to hotel: rest of the day free.
- Day 2 Fly to Bhadrapur, drive to Phidim, 6 hours**
We take a morning flight to Bhadrapur. From there we drive for 2 hours to Birtamod, and for a further 4 hours to Phidim where we overnight.
- Day 3 Drive Phidim to Taplejung (or Suketar) 7hrs, trek to Lali Kharaka 2270m, 3 ½ hours walk**
We set off early to make the journey by road from Phidim to Taplejung, or to Suketar. On arrival we meet with our porters and after loading up, we start trekking. We follow a ridge to start with, before descending through forests to the valley and our overnight stop on the slopes near Lali Kharaka 2270m.
- Day 4 Lali Kharaka to Khare Bhanjyang 6 hours walking**
The day starts with a descent through the village of Tambawa to Pakora, where we cross the Phawa Khola by the suspension bridge. We then climb steeply into the forests, which will give us welcome shade from the heat of the day. From the top of the pass at Khare Bhanjyang 2170m, we may get our first views of distant Kangchenjunga. We camp below the ridge among the terraced fields.
- Day 5 Khare Banjyang to Mamamkhe 1830m 7½ hours walking**
Today's walk starts with a descent to warm up, passing several villages, including the delightfully named Funfun, where we may get our first views of impressive Jannu. The rest of the day is up and down to the next camp at Mamamkhe, a substantial village of about 60 houses 1830m.
- Day 6 Mamamkhe to Yamphudin 1735m 4 hours walking**
A shorter day largely of contouring as we follow the valley above the river Kabeli Khola. Climbing through terraced fields we reach Yamphudin 1735m, the most remote permanent village on our route.
- Day 7 Yamphudin to Omje Khola 2445m 4 hours walking**
We start the day with a climb to the pass at Dupi Bhanjyang (2,684m). Trekking downhill through the woods we come to our camp near the Omje Khola river 2445m.
- Day 8 Omje Khola to Thoronton 2995m 7 hours walking**
Leaving the farmlands behind, we now trek mostly through forest and pasture land. We gain further height to cross the pass of Lamite Bhanjyang 3430m, descending to the valley of the Simbua river that flows from the Yalung glacier. We camp in the wooded valley at Thoronton (2995m).
- Day 9 Acclimatisation day at Thoronton**
We have an acclimatisation day at Thoronton, and a local walk to gain height during the day is recommended, returning to spend a second night at the same altitude. This is a very important aspect of our trek and will undoubtedly assist with the success, as well as with our enjoyment of it.
- Day 10 Thoronton to Tseram 3890m 6½ hours walking**
Though we continue to gain height, today's walk is gentle and follows the Simbuwa river. The rhododendron forests thin to give superb views of Kabru 7338m and Talung 7349m. Our campsite is at Tseram 3890m and at this altitude we can expect a colder night.
- Day 11 Tseram to Ramze 4110m 4½ hours walking**
Today we reach the tree line and the landscape opens out to the valley of the Yalung Glacier, littered with moraines and glacial debris. We follow the northern edge of the glacier with good views of Kabru South 7317m, Ratong 6678m and Kotkan 6147m. We camp by the shepherds' huts at Ramze. 4110m.
- Day 12 Ramze acclimatisation and exploration day**
We have an acclimatisation day at Ramze. For an acclimatisation walk we can move further up the Yalung Glacier we start to get views of Kangchenjunga's south face. Reaching Oktang 4624m Jannu's icy east face towers above. It may be possible to climb higher for better views if time and energy permit - your sirdar will advise on this.
- Day 13 Ramze to Yalung**
For further morning is spent in the Ramze area for acclimatisation and exploration in the area. In the afternoon we trek back down to Yalung in preparation for crossing the Mirgin La.
- Day 14 Yalung to Mirgin La 4640m 8 - 10 hours walking**
We start the long climb up towards Sinelapche La, 4640m, the highest point on the route, followed by the crossing of the Mirgin La pass. The views of nearby Jannu are spectacular but distant Makalu, the Khumbu Himal and the mountains bordering Tibet are a panoramic backdrop. Our camp will depend on availability of water but today could be a very long day.

Day 15 Mirgin La to Ghunsa**4 - 5 hours walking**

We descend through rhododendron forests to Ghunsa, a Sherpa village and our first contact with permanent habitation for almost a week. Ghunsa 3414m nestles on the valley floor. If it weren't for the mani walls and prayer flags fluttering in the breeze, the setting could almost be alpine. Forests of giant deodar and other conifers, bearing masses of Spanish moss, grow up the hillsides.

Day 16 Ghunsa – Kambachen**5 hours walking**

Climbing steadily today but the terrain starts to open out, with less forest and better views of the mountains. With the climbing over, we trek around the flank of the valley in full view of imposing Jannu, (7710m) known as the 'peak of terror'. We camp at Kambachen (4090m), the summer home of Ghunsa's people.

Day 17 Kambachen - Llonak

A day of spectacular scenery as we are back in among the high peaks. The walking is easier today but no doubt the altitude will slow us down. We pass the summer pastures of Ramtang just before reaching the moraines of Kangchenjunga's glacier. We camp at the pastures of Llonak (4700m) just beyond the glacier in view of Tent Peak (7365m), Nepal Peak (7168m), Wedge Peak (6750m) and Mera (6335m). (6 hours walking).

Day 18 Llonak - Pang Pema**4 hours walking**

If we have fully acclimatised we will continue with the short walk into the base camp at Pang Pema, though the altitude and distracting scenery are likely to slow us down. The campsite is at 5139m, lying at the entrance to a vast cirque formed of Wedge Peak, Ramtang (6700m), Kambachen (7902m), Yalung Kang (8505m) Kangchenjunga (8586m), The Twins (7350m) and Cross Peak (6510m). This is a dramatic setting for a well-earned supper. It is from here that in 1979 that Doug Scott, Pete Boardman, Joe Tasker and Georges Bettembourg prepared for the third ascent of Kanchenjunga, and the first ascent of the north west side.

Day 19 Pang Pema exploration / contingency day

We have a free day to explore these wonderful surrounds. In case of any delays on our walk in, this day can be used as contingency day.

Day 20 Pang Pema – Ramtang**4 – 5 hours walking**

We start our journey back down the valley. Though we are backtracking, a journey is never quite the same in reverse. There may be chances to photograph scenes missed on the journey in.

Day 21 Ramtang – Ghunsa**4 hours walking**

A leisurely walk down the valley to Ghunsa

Day 22 Ghunsa – Kyapra**4 hours walking**

A pleasant day walking through dense forest with occasional monkey troupes for company. Camp at Kyapra 2770m.

Day 23 Kyapra – Amjilassa**6 hours walking**

A longer day, but as we get lower down and temperatures warm up and a welcome bathe in the river awaits.

Day 24 Amjilassa - Chirwa**8 hours walking**

Continuing our descent down the valley but now through cultivated land. Today will be a longer day.

Day 25 Chirwa - Taplejung

Our final trek to Taplejung ends with a short climb back into the town, where we stay overnight.

Day 26 Drive to Phidim

After breakfast at Taplejung we will take a packed lunch for the 9 hour drive to Phidim where our staff will prepare dinner. Overnight camp.

Day 27 Drive to Biratnagar, fly to Kathmandu

We have to start early for today's 9 hour drive to Biratnagar. We take a late afternoon flight from Biratnagar to Kathmandu

Day 28 Free in Kathmandu

at leisure. Optional excursions may be taken (bookable through our Kathmandu office) or you can shop for fine crafts. This day may be required for travelling back from Biratnagar if there were any problems with the journey.

Day 29 Depart Nepal: transfer to Kathmandu airport for international flights.

Important Note: Whilst we expect that the trek will run as per the itinerary, participants should accept that there is a possibility of changes being necessary subject to local conditions.

Please note that malaria has still not been eradicated from Biratnagar area, and that anti-malarials are advised.

The Price Includes:

- Transfers between Kathmandu airport and hotel accommodation
- Return journey between Kathmandu and trail head as described in the itinerary, including departure taxes for internal flights.
- Accommodation for 3 nights in Kathmandu in rooms with shower and w.c. and inclusive of breakfast
- Participation in the trek as per itinerary inclusive of full board, camping equipment (not sleeping bags), services of porters (15 kg load per participant); Sirdar (head guide) and kitchen staff; trekking permit

Not Included:

- International flights
- Nepalese visa (please refer to our document "Preparing for your trek: Nepal" for latest prices)
- Meals other than breakfast in Kathmandu
- Travel Insurance
- Tips
- Items of a personal nature such as drinks, laundry, telephone calls and souvenirs (allow approximately £250 spending money)

Options:

- Extra nights are available in Kathmandu in our group hotel, and in Pokhara in our choice of accommodation.
- Extension packages can also be organized in Nepal, Tibet or Bhutan. Please refer to our Himalayan extensions dossier for more details. Extensions should be arranged to booking international flights.

