DHAULAGIRI & THE FRENCH PASS

Grade: Strenuous
Land-only duration: 20 days Kathmandu - Kathmandu
Trekking days: 13 days
Maximum altitude: 5360m
Minimum numbers: Requires just 4 participants to guarantee these departures at the advertised price.
Dates and prices: Land-only price: Recce trek £1825 land-only

Dates: mid / late October – mid November 2011. Exact dates to be confirmed, timed to try to fit in with the dates of those people interested.

Dhaulagiri at Dawn (© Ann Foulkes)
This is an exciting itinerary which takes us off the well-trodden routes and into some wild scenery. The Dhaulagiri massif itself is an impressive range, with huge glaciers in the high mountains. Our trek takes us through the villages, then through forest before crossing glacial moraine and the French Pass. We descend to join a section of the Annapurna Circuit Path, which will seem very busy after our time in the wilderness. We take the small mountain plane to fly back from Jomson to Pokhara – itself an amazing journey and one of the most impressive flights in the world. As we fly down the world’s deepest valley, the Kali Gandaki, we’ll be craning our necks up to see the 8000m peaks on either side of the plane. We will spend time in the lovely resort town of Pokhara before returning to Kathmandu.

It is anticipated that this trek will appeal to the connoisseur trekker, although previous trekking experience is not essential. However, previous mountaineering experience is a requirement for this trip. You will need to bring, and to be familiar with using crampons and ice axes (for self-arrest, not for ice climbing)! There is some steep and exposed ground, and competence on such terrain is needed.

The trek in Autumn 2011 will be a recce trek, and on joining it we ask you to understand that this will be the first time we have run this trek. We therefore expect you to bring along a sense of humour and a degree of flexibility, as things may not go quite as smoothly as we would normally expect them to! It will be led by a qualified and experienced western leader who will work with the sirdar and the rest of the Nepalese team to ensure that the trek is undertaken as safely and smoothly as possible. However, our recce treks are not intended to be profit-making. The price quoted is simply to cover costs of the trip.
**Land-only prices:**
The cost of international flights 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.

**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

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

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<tr>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Arrive Kathmandu</th>
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<td>You will be met at Kathmandu airport and taken to our group hotel. The rest of the day free.</td>
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<th>Day 2</th>
<th>Fly to Pokhara, free time in Pokhara</th>
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<td>We return to Kathmandu airport, but this time to the domestic terminal for a 25 minute flight to Pokhara. We have time to explore the delightful resort town of Pokhara, and to make our final preparations for the trek. Overnight hotel.</td>
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<th>Day 3</th>
<th>Drive to trail head at Darbang,1180m</th>
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<td>We drive from Pokhara via Baaglung to Beni, which will take around 4 hours. From Beni we change to a local vehicle for around 2½ hours (depending on the condition of the surface) of off road driving to Darbang where we will camp for our first night. Expected driving time: 6½ hrs</td>
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<th>Day 4</th>
<th>Trek to Sibang, 1610m</th>
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<td>From our camp at Darbang we cross the Myagdi Khola River. This initial part of the trek is prone to landslips, so we may find that we encounter some rough diversions. Our route heads steeply uphill before the path becomes easier as it approaches Dharapni. From here the mountains of Putali and Ghurja which are part of the Dhaulagiri massif are visible. Our overnight camp will be at Sibang. Expected trekking time: 6-7 hrs</td>
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<th>Day 5</th>
<th>Trek to Mudi, 2080m</th>
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<td>From Sibang the path follows above the river before descending for about 2 hours to the point where the Myagdi Khola meets the Dar Khola. Ascending for another 2 hours on the other side of the Dar Khola, we go to Mudi which will be both our lunch and camp site, and from where we can enjoy magnificent views of Dhaulagiri (8167m) and Manapati (6380m). Expected trekking time: 4-5 hrs</td>
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<th>Day 6</th>
<th>Trek to Bagar, 2080m</th>
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<td>Dropping back downhill again, this time to the Muri Khola, we climb up through forest over a ridge. At a junction there is a...</td>
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fork in the path. The lower path is shorter by about 2 hours, but does involve a steep, exposed section which has some rope handrails on the more exposed sections. After this, the path becomes less technically difficult, but ascends steeply to Bagar. This is the final village on our trek before we reach the Kali Gandaki Valley on the other side of the French Pass. Expected trekking time: 6 hrs

Day 7 Trek to Doban, 2500m
Beyond Bagar the path undulates through forest, which has slippery, wet sections and another steep technical section. We may see monkeys and honey collectors in the forest. Before. We will lunch in the forest en-route, and then continue to finally reach the forest clearing that is Doban, dominated by Kambo (6570m) and Dhaulagiri IV (7661m). Expected trekking time: 6 hrs

Day 8 Trek to Chaur Bag Khola, 3445m 7 hrs.
Our journey today continues through forest, and takes us soon across the Kunaban Khola, before continuing to follow the Myagdi Khola towards a wooden bridge that we cross before ascending to overnight at Chaur Bag Khola Camp. Expected trekking time: 7 hrs

Day 9 Trek to the Japanese Camp, 3890m
The valley widens and we continue on the right bank of the Chauiban Khola though rhodedendron forest and then moraine to the Italian Base Camp at 3660m, where the valley narrows again. The route can be difficult through the moraine, and we may fix a rope to help with the passage for ourselves and the porters. Extra care may be need if the area is affected by snow or ice. We then pass through the Swiss and French Base Camps before ascending to our camp at the Japanese Camp. From here, Dhaulagiri I and Tsaurabong Peak (6395m) and their glaciers dominate our view. Expected trekking time: 5-6hrs

Day 10 Acclimatisation day
This is the first of 2 essential days for acclimatisation during this trek. A walk to gain some height, and then returning to the same altitude for a second night at the same altitude will put us in good stead for the next altitude gain to Dhaulagiri Base Camp.

Day 11 Trek to Dhaulagiri Base Camp, 4700m
A tough day of walking over the morain of the Chhonbardan Glacier. Dhaulagiri I (8172m), II (7751m), III (7715m) and V (7618m) are all visible from our camp, as is the icefall which is between Dhaulagiri and Tukuche Peak (6920m). Expected trekking time: 8 hrs.

Day 12 Acclimatisation day
Our second acclimatisation day will help us to prepare for the ascent of the French Pass.

Day 13 Trek via French Pass, 5360m to our camp above the Hidden Valley, 5050m
We cross the moraine and climb up above the Chhonbardan Glacier. As we follow the ablation valley on the approach the French Pass, the snow slopes are not technically difficult. The Pass is usually reached around 4-5 hours after leaving Dhaulagiri Base Camp. From the pass we can see Tashi Kang, Tukuche Peak, the Mukut Himal mountains and of course, Dhaulagiri I. The descent is gentle, across snow slopes to our camp in the Hidden Valley, which was only discovered a few decades ago. We need to carry plenty of water today as there won't be opportunity to refill. Expected trekking time: 7 hrs

Day 14 Contingency day
We have allocated a contingency day in case of problems with the weather or acclimatisation, to be used at the leader's discretion. It could be used to break up the descent from Dhampus Pass, staying overnight at Alu Bari on the way down, allowing more time in Marpha.

Day 15 Cross the Dhampus Pass, 5244m and on to Yak Kharka, 4900m
We cross the Dhampus Pass, which is almost the height of the French Pass, before a long descent to Yak Kharka. Still carrying axes and crampons, we may well have to use them today. Our long descent, which is sometimes steep and rocky, is rewarded with views of the Annapurnas and Nilgiri as well as Tukuche Peak. We will also see Tilicho, Jomson and the striking semi-desert landscape towards the Mustang region. Expected trekking time: 7 hrs

Day 16 Trek to Jomsom, 2760m
A big descent day, for which trekking poles are strongly recommended! We descend for around 2 hours before Dhaulagiri I reappears from a ridge viewpoint. Alubari is a seasonal settlement, and then we continue downhill
steeply to Marpha. We are now ion the Annapurna Circuit, and will no doubt feel rather shell-shocked by the sight of so many trekkers and tea housees. Marpha is a beautiful unusually clean white-washed village. There are many Tibetan craft shops here, as well as apple orchards – the apples are used for the famous Marpha brandy. From here it is a short walk to Jomson, and the end of our trek where no doubt we celebrate with a well-earned local brandy. Expected trekking time: 6 hrs

Day 17 Fly to Pokhara
From Jomson the mountain flight back to Kathmandu is one of the most impressive flights in the world. Following the course south of the Kali Gandaki down what is called the world’s deepest gorge, the tiny twin otters fly between the 8000m peaks of Dhaulagiri on the right, and Annapurna on the left. Returning to Pokhara, we have time to enjoy a well-earned shower and meal in one of Pokhara’s many excellent restaurants. Overnight hotel

Day 18 Free time in Pokhara return flight to Kathmandu.
We fly back (probably in the afternoon) to Kathmandu and transferred to our group hotel. The rest of the day is free, and any time in the morning can be spent continuing to enjoy Pokhara.

Day 19 Free in Kathmandu
Why not take the chance to explore the fascinating city of Kathmandu, with its temples and markets, or take an optional excursion (can be booked locally through our Nepal office) into the Kathmandu Valley.

Day 20 Depart Nepal
You will be transferred to Kathmandu airport for your international flights. Extensions are possible if you wish to extend your time in the Himalayan Kingdoms – see our Himalayan extensions itinerary for details.
The Price Includes:
- Journeys (by air and road) between Kathmandu and trail head, inclusive of airport taxes
- Transfers between Kathmandu airport and hotel accommodation
- Accommodation for 3 nights in Kathmandu and 2 night(s) in Pokhara in rooms with shower and wc 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/trek guide (head guide) and kitchen staff; trekking permit
- Qualified, experienced western leader for recce trek

Not Included:
- International flights
- Visa – see “Preparing for your trek” for latest visa prices
- Meals other than breakfasts in Kathmandu and Pokhara
- Travel Insurance
- Tips – see “Preparing for your trek” for our guidance on tipping
- 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.
- Accommodation is usually in twin rooms and twin tents with another trekker of the same gender, or with a person you name on your booking form. Single rooms and single tents are available – see the dates and prices list for details.
- 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 prior to booking international flights.

Updated 8.6.2011, AF