

Trek
in
Nepal

I. Manaslu and Tsum Valley

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Manaslu is one of the great mountains of the world, and the eight highest at 8163m. It is the highest point on a near 50 km long ridge called the Mansiri Himal, which includes another 2 mountains just under 8000 metres along it's snow fluted and sharp spine. The Manaslu trek virtually encircles the Mansiri Himal by going up the large river valley on the east side, crossing a 5000m pass and then coming down a large river valley on the west side. This 2 week walk is best done anticlockwise, with the most stunning scenery in the middle.

The Manaslu Circuit trek has never been as popular as the adjacent Annapurna Circuit. This is largely due to it being a restricted area. However, with the recent incursion of roads around much of Annapurna it has lost it's appeal, and the Manaslu Circuit is now growing in popularity. This popularity is tempered by the fact that it remains a restricted area, so it is necessary to obtain a trekking permit. Also the tourist facilities on the Manaslu Circuit are not as developed as on the comfortable Annapurna Circuit.

The Manaslu Circuit starts in the largely Hindu Chhetri populations of the Hill Region (Pahar) and climbs up beside the Budhi Ghandaki river to the Mountain Region (Parbat) which is largely inhabited by Buddhist Gurung or Bhotiya populations, before descending down to the Hindu Chhetri populations again along the Marsyangdi river.



Day 3. Everything has to be done by hand in rural Nepal. Here logs are cut into planks to be used for building local houses. The cuts above represent about half a days work for 2 people.

The Tsum Valley is east of Manaslu. While it cannot quite match the huge 8000m scenery of Mansiri Himal it comes close with the 7000m mountains of the Ganesh Himal. The fertile Tsum Valley is a hidden Shangri La with a rich Buddhist heritage, which is manifested in the fabled mani walls and monasteries found along the lively villages on the flat valley floor. A return walk up Tsum valley to Mu Gompa takes well under a week. If the side trip to Lungdang Gompa and Ganesh Basecamp is included, it takes just over a week. It is best done at the start of the Manaslu Circuit.

The Tsum Valley was off limits until 2008 when it was opened up for trekking, albeit on a restricted basis. In addition the valley, except for a remote 5000 metre pass over to Tibet, is effectively a cul-de-sac with the only access being from the Manaslu Circuit. These two features have ensured that most modern developments have bypassed the valley which still remains very traditional with the unique culture relatively untarnished. Its strong Buddhist traditions mean that it has a non-violence policy where Tsumba locals avoid the killing of animals or fish and are vegetarian.

Doing the Tsum Valley with the Manaslu Circuit provides perfect acclimatization for the higher parts of the Manaslu Circuit, especially if one spends a night at Mu Gompa monastery, which is about about 3700m, or goes to Ganesh Basecamp.



Day 4. Threshing the millet, or *kodo*, is a labour intensive task and the ears have to be thrashed with special sticks to release the grains. The grains then have to be winnowed and dried in the sun.

Manaslu and Tsum



A monk at Mu Gompa prepares Tibetan tea with tea leaves, salt and often rancid yaks butter.



Every member of the family is always busy. If they are too young or old for physical work they look after younger children or spin and weave, as this great grandmother at Nile.



Women are often seen with baskets carrying leaves, manure or produce between field and house.

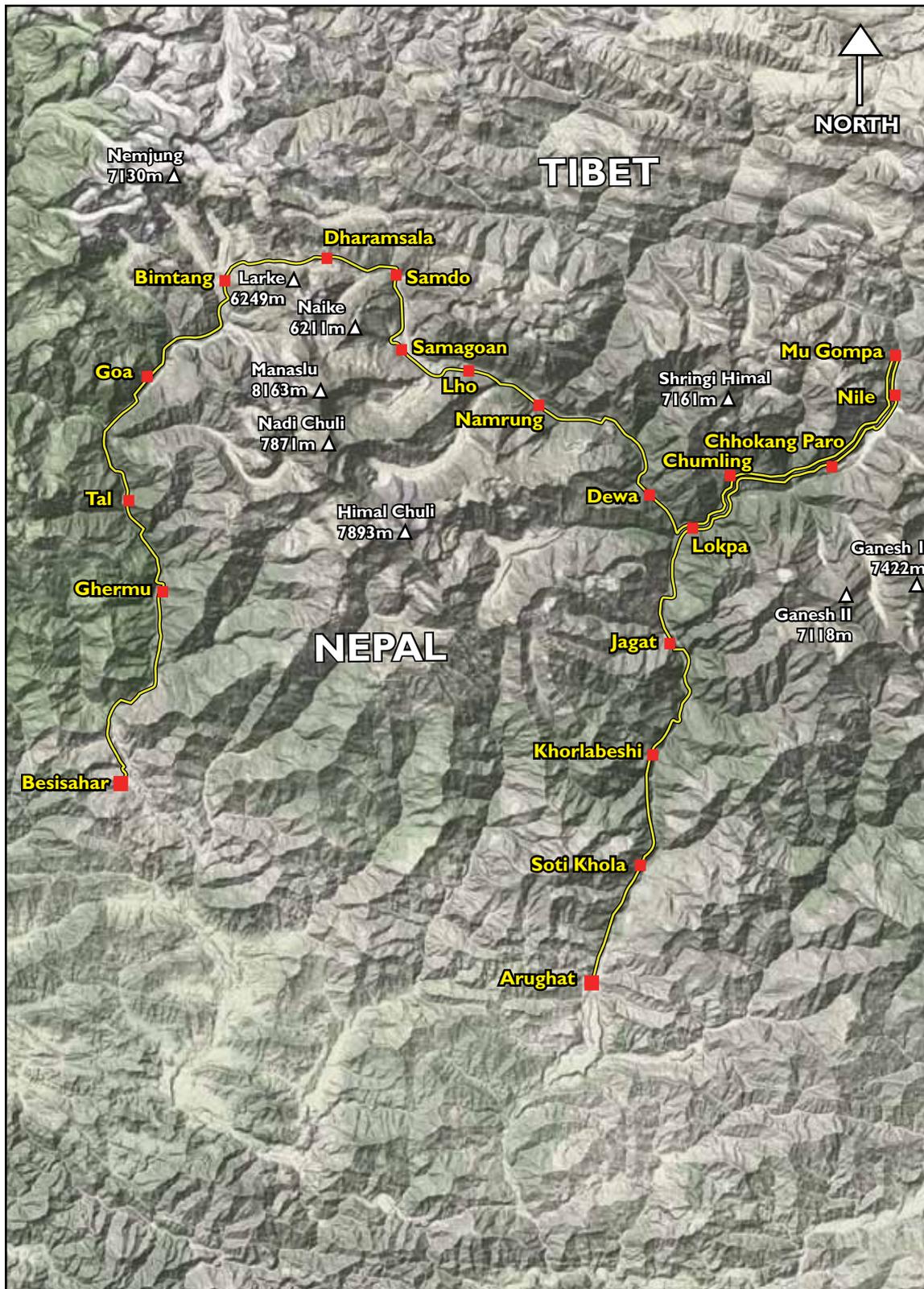
This trek goes through 2 restricted areas, Manaslu and Tsum Valley, and a permit is needed for each. To obtain a permit one must go through a trekking agency, be in a party of at least 2 and have a registered guide. If you are a single trekker you will have to buy 2 permits; one for yourself and one for a "ghost", which the trekking agency will unofficially arrange. In addition each person will need a Manaslu Conservation Area fee and an Annapurna Conservation Area fee. The permits and fees will cost about US\$350 each for a 3 week trek.

All accommodation is usually in teahouses around Manaslu, with some rustic homestays in the Tsum Valley. The accommodation will provide an evening meal and breakfast both of which are healthy but the choice is often extremely limited. The Nepali staple of *dhal bhat* is always one of the choices. Sleeping bags are essential. Clients usually cover the guides board and lodging unless it is included in the package. Allow about US\$35 daily per person.

The best time to go is November. October is good, but busy, and December is good, but cold. The spring months of April and May are often hazy and the views of the mountain landscapes are often lost. During the monsoon months of late June to early September there will be many cloudy days and frequent rains, except in the higher reaches of Tsum and Larkya La pass, where it is less common.

There is a set of 10 laminated maps covering the entire length of the mountains in Nepal. This set is produced by the Himalayan Map House. The map in this set needed for this trek is "The Great Himalaya Trail N6: The Ganesh Himal & Manaslu Section." The ISBN number is 9780956981752.

There is one suitable guidebook to the area it is also published by the Himalayan Map House, namely: "A Trekking Guide to Manaslu and the Tsum Valley" by Sian Pritchard-Jones and Bob Gibbons. The ISBN number is 9781483959856.



Map of the three week trek round Manaslu, 8163m, including the short week's detour up the relatively medieval Tsum Valley to Mu Gompa. The trek is best begun at Arughat and done anticlockwise to Besisahar, due to acclimatization. It goes over the 5160m Larkya la pass, just north of Larke Peak, 6249m.



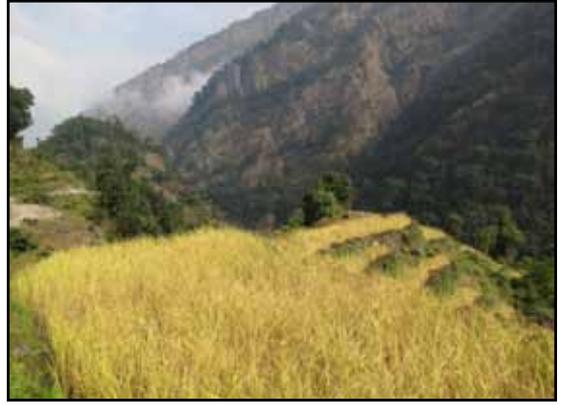
Day 5. Heading up the lower Tsum Valley with the 6000 metre peaks of the Churke Himal looming in the background above the hamlet of Domje. The Churke Himal lie just to the north of the much Ganesh Himal which is just out of the picture to the right. Upper Tsum Valley is to the left of the Churke Himal.



Day 6. Looking down the Upper Tsum Valley over fertile fields of Lamagoan village and the Rachen Gumpa monastery to the 6000m peaks of the Churke Himal. The larger Ganesh Himal is on the other side of, and obscured by, these mountains. Lower Tsum Valley follows the valley down as it veers right.



Day 1. After leaving Arughat the route follows a rough jeep track up the west side of the large Budhi Ghandaki river for 14 km. After a good 3 hour walk you reach the hamlet of Soti Khola where there are some rustic teahouses.



Day 2. Every bit of land which is stable is made into terraces and then farmed. All farming is by hand as the terrain is difficult. The fields are farmed intensively and may have up to 3 crops rotated on it each year with wheat and potatoes common.



Day 5. Approaching the village of Chhokang Paro which marks the start of Upper Tsum Valley. This valley veers round to the right of the photo. The mountains are the 6000m high Churke Himal.



Day 6. Lamagoan village is typical with many chortens and mani walls in and around the village. The houses are all built of stone with large overlapping stone slabs covering the sloped roof.



Day 7. Yaks are used for transport in upper Tsum Valley. They struggle below 2000 metres but thrive here and are used to transport goods over the 5000 metre pass at the head of the valley to Tibet.



Day 7. Looking down the Upper Tsum Valley from the village of Nile at 3400m. Beyond the large three tiered chorten or *kani* (entrance gate) are the 6000m mountains of the Churke Himal range.



Day 11. The old bridge near Lihi over the glacial Hinang Khola stream which drains the glacier and valley between the near 8000m peaks of Nadi Chuli and Himal Chuli. The red berries are on the deciduous *Cotoneaster frigidus* tree.



Day 11. The large prayer wheel at Lihi village by the small monastery. Prayer wheels are embossed with mantras, most often *Om Mani Padme Hum*, and are turned in a clockwise direction imparting a spiritually meritorious effect on the spinner.



Day 11. The three layered entrance chorten or *kani* to Lihi village with the ridges of the near 8000 metre Nadi Chuli in the background. Every Buddhist village in the Himalayan region has a religious entrance gate to welcome guests and to ward off evil spirits and bad luck. Some of these are a simple stone arch with 3 cairns of stones on top to ward off bad luck. Others like this one are more elaborate and are decorated.



Day 11. The village of Gumgaon is remote lying on the other side of the deep valley from Sho. Villagers here have to be largely self sufficient surviving off their small fields and livestock. Just above Gumgaon is Tong Gompa monastery.



Day 11. A wedding party in Sho where a boy from the nearby village of Lihi was marrying a girl from Sho. Wedding parties here can go on for a few days with celebrations in both bride and grooms villages, and celebrants coming and going.



Day 11. The heart of the village of Lho with its new stupa. The village centre is surrounded by traditional houses, with animal stables on the ground floor and the family staying above.



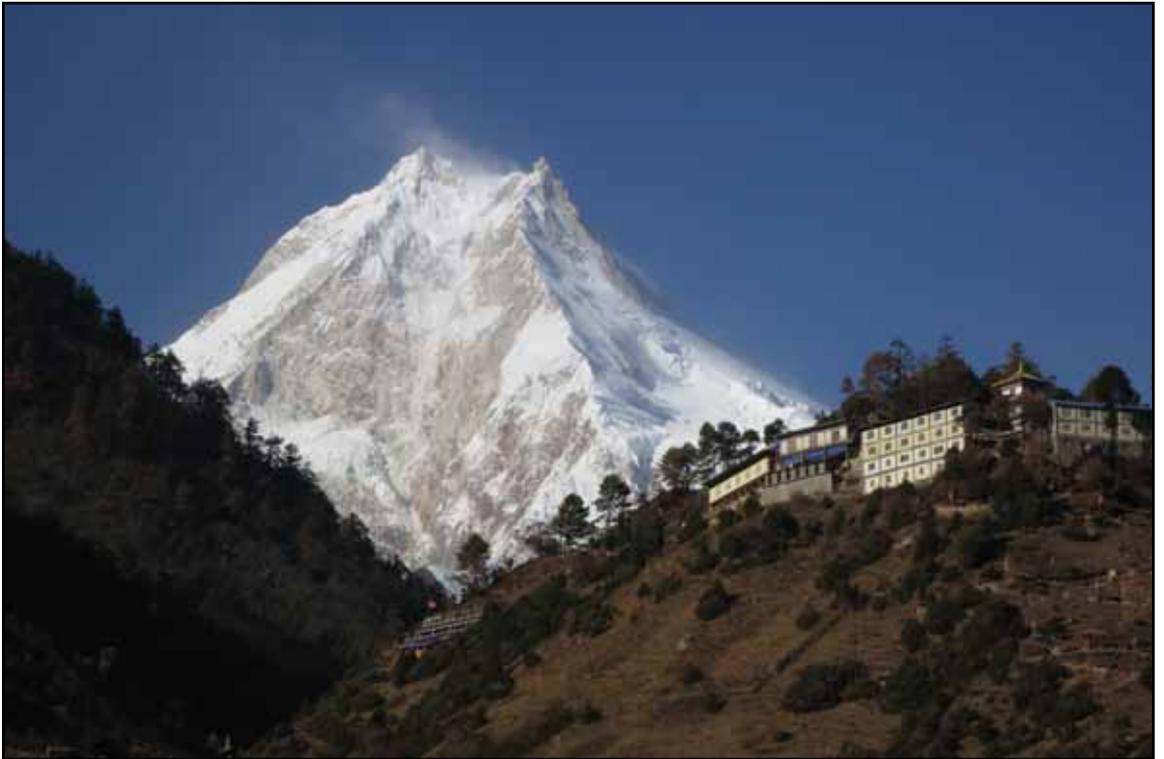
Day 12. The classic sunrise photo of Manaslu, 8163 metres, where the whole of the massive east face illuminated in the morning glow. There is often the trademark spindrift plume blowing off the peak.



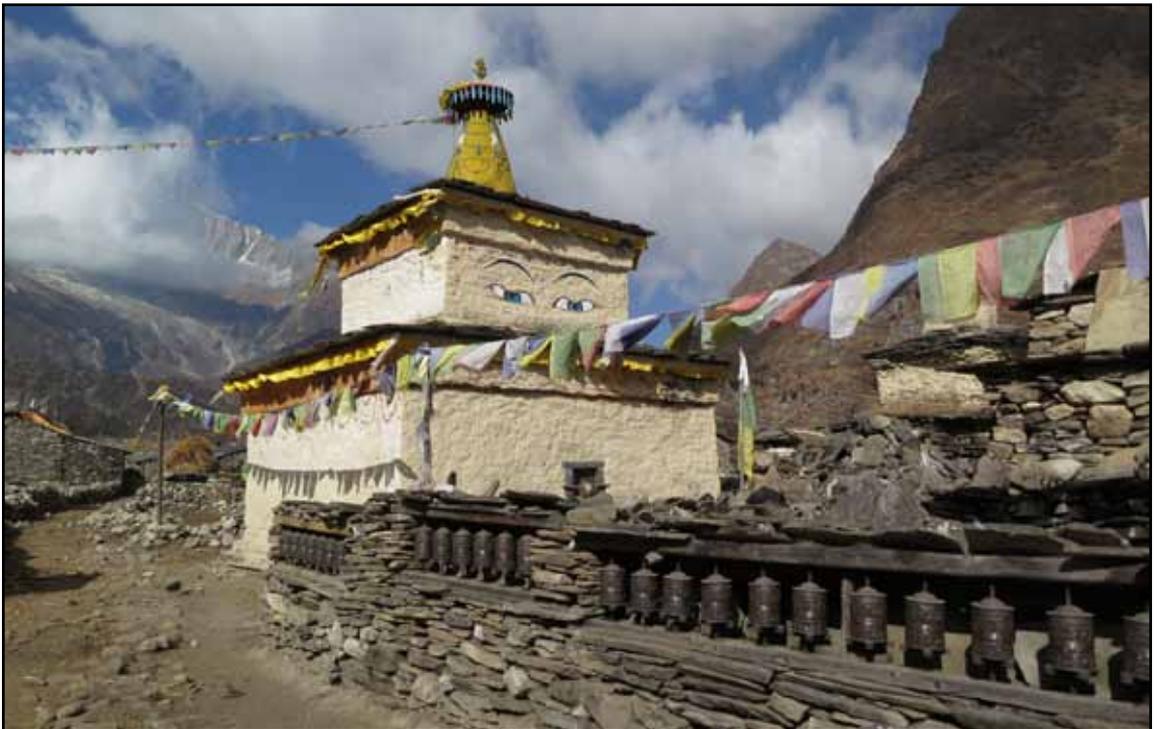
Day 12. The entrance chorten or *kani* to the village of Shyala. This village has good views of Nadi Chuli and Manaslu. There are some large tea houses here now due to a recent building spree.



Day 12. A typical homestead in Samagaon. There is a small yard where animals are tethered during the day. They go into stables below at night. The family live and cook in the 2 room above them.



Day 12. The much photographed Ribung Monastery above Lho village is predominantly a school for some 150 young novice monks most of whom are 5-10 years. These students come from various Buddhist areas in Nepal like Dolpo and Manang. The students follow a strict regime with learning and prayers, *puja*.



Day 12. At the entrance to Samagaon there are a couple of large *kani* or entrance chortens in a triangular courtyard which is bordered by walls on all sides covered in small prayer wheels. Inside the courtyard are vast piles of carved *mani* stones, all with a mantras carved on them, stacked in unruly mounds.



Day 12. Samagaon is a large village which is made up of both Tibetan populations generally called Bhotia. But like many places in Nepal there is a mix of peoples, and there are also many Gurung in Samagaon, such as this little boy.



Day 13. Birendra Tal is a lake under the east face of Manaslu. Once the Manaslu Glacier above would have carved its way down here but now it stops well above. However there are frequent avalanches following serac collapes at the far end.



Day 12. Before the wire suspension bridges of the last 30 years all the bridges were of this cantilever type. Stones at each end anchored logs which protruded and narrowed the gap to be spanned.



Day 13. Yaks thrive at higher altitudes and are used to carry loads of 100kg up to 6000 metres in Tibet. But they can have a fickle temper and it is best to give their sharp horns a wide berth.



Day 14. A yak grazing on a high pasture at 4500m above the Syacha Glacier which drains the north of the Manaslu range. The fluted mountain in the background is Manaslu North, 7157m.



Day 14. Looking back down the valley from Dharamsala to where the village of Samdo is. The spectacular mountain is also called Samdo, 6335m, and it rises steeply on the far side of the village.



Day 15. The final km up to Larkye La Pass, 5160m, are initially up the outside of the lateral moraine of the Larkya Glacier before the glacier veers south to Larke peak. You then have to walk across a moonscape of glacial debris on top of a stationary glacial ablation zone, which is no longer fed by snowfields



Day 15. The view west from the top of Larkye La Pass is over a vast bowl across which three large glaciers flow to a confluence on the left. The glaciers are separated by shallow ridges. Around this bowl is a complete ring of jagged 7000m mountains the most prominent being the pyramid of Nemjung, 7140m.



Day 15. The final km to the pass is up an easy slope usually covered in small stones and gravel. It is about 4 hours walk from Dharamsala. There is often a strong wind at the pass by mid morning, so it is best to start well before dawn to avoid it.



Day 15. If the wind does not arrive then the Larkye La pass, 5160m, can be very pleasant. Like all passes in the Himalayas it is festooned with prayer flags, which are put there by both locals and more commonly now by trekking companies.



Day 18. Below Tal the road which descends from Dharapani down to Besisahar is cut into the cliffs. Some sections of this road are so exposed even trekking guides refuse to take a jeep and will walk.



Day 19. On the last day the trek goes down the east side of the Marsyangdi for half a day descending through rural agricultural villages which are bypassed by the track on the west side.



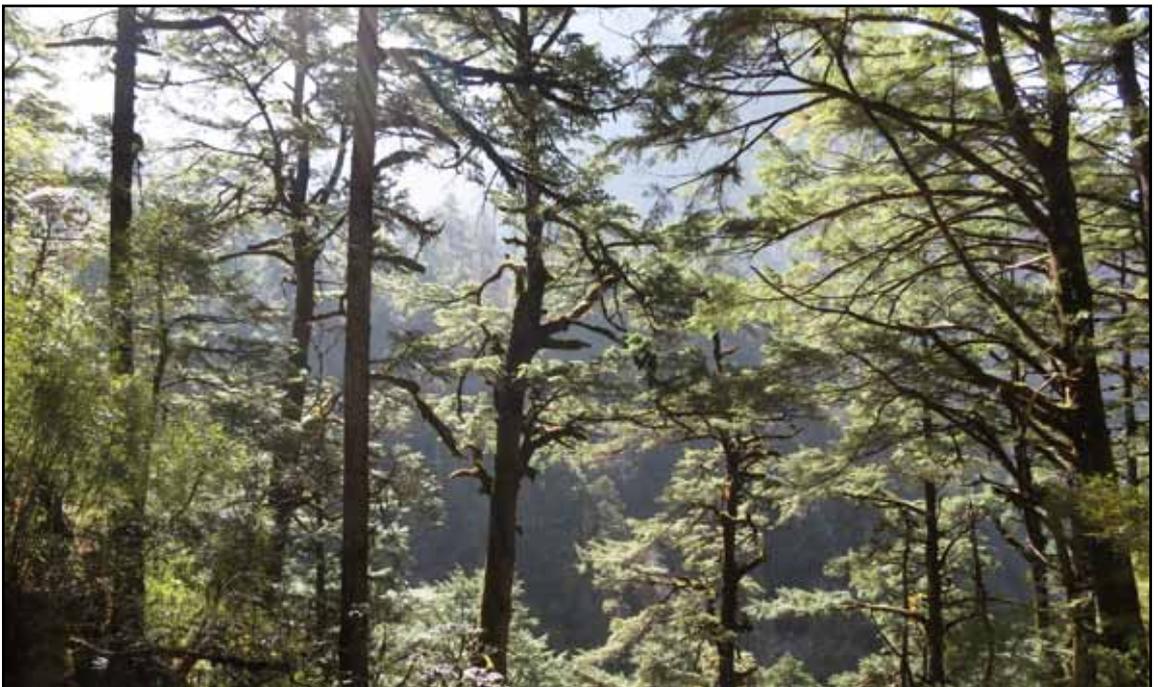
Day 19. Just before you reach the roadhead at Nadi you pass through the well maintained and tidy village of Bahundanda. Most inhabitants are Brahmin, with many Gurungs also living here.



Day 19. The last village is Nadi, which is where the roadhead and a hydroelectric plant are. If it is possible to get transport from Nadi to Besisahar it is best to take it rather than walk on the road.



Day 16. Just below Bimtang the path reaches the end of the glacier in a jumble of boulders and sand. Where it crosses the milky silt-ridden torrent emerging from the glacier there is a wonderful view SE. The massive west side of Manaslu North and Manaslu rise up some 5000 m above the surrounding forest.



Day 16. The forests below Bimtang are estimated to be 1000 years old with a rich collection of trees. Growing from 3700m to 3000m are the deciduous 20m Langtang Larch, *larix himalaica*, (nepali: lekh sallo). From 3300m to 2800m are some huge 50m East Himalayan Firs, *Abies spectabilis*, (nepali: talis patra). From 3000m to 2400m are 40m Himalayan Hemlock, *Tsuga dumosa*, (nepali: thinge salla) as shown above. From 2500m to 1800m are stands of 40m Himalayan Blue Pine. *Pinus wallichiana* (nepali: gobre salla).

NEPAL: Manaslu and Tsum Valley

Day	Start	Finish	Km	Up	Down	Time	General
1	Arughat	Soti Khola	14	260	160	3.5	The early morning bus arrives at Arughat in the early afternoon. The choice is either to walk the 14 km to Soti Khola or take another slow bus up the bumpy road for a good hour to Soti Khola - if the road is open that far. The best option is to walk. It is not much slower and you can get a feel for the trek. The track passes through the rest of Arughat crossing to the west side on the large Budhi Ghandaki river. It goes past bhattis and homesteads as it contours through terraces above the river for 7 km to the very small town of Arkhet Bazar. On each side of the main valley ridges rise up with villages clinging to their flanks, and terraced fields plunging down each side. There is much forest also on these flanks. After Arkhet Bazar the next 7 km continues with the same scenery and culture each side of the bumpy rough track. Farming families perform the agricultural tasks of ploughing, harvesting, and threshing depending on the season. The village of Soti Khola in the deep agricultural valley has a few teahouses and is a good first stop after Arughat.
2	Soti Khola	Khorlabeshi	15	780	500	6	From Soti Khola the track reverts to a broad path for a good hour as it passes through forest beneath huge cliffs, along ledges high above the raging Budhi Ghandaki river to reach the hamlet of Liding. The route is busy with mule trains whose ripe sweat fill the air as they pass. After Liding the path descends and then narrows as it hugs a narrow ledge hacked into the vertical rock faces of spurs which are almost overhanging the river. After another good hour the ledges lead to a open shelf above the river which is covered in rice terraces. On this shelf lies the village of Lapubesi where there are lodges. However a good half hour further is Nauli Khola where there is a lodge beneath a splendid waterfall, and just beside a wire bridge over the deep gorge where the stream meets the Budhi Ghandaki. The path crosses this bridge and continues on a narrow path above the river to the comfortable village of Macchhakola. Now the path descends to the river and follows its sandy banks for a quick hour climbing slightly through jungle to reach the hamlet of Khorlabeshi with its plentiful lodges.
3	Khorlabeshi	Jagat	15	710	300	5.5	Continue up the west side of the roaring Budhi Ghandaki river in a deep slot between the towering gorge sides rising up some 1000m on each flank. On the lush valley floor you soon reach the hot springs at Tatopani. Not long after the springs the path crosses over main river to the east side and continues through woods in the depths of the valley for another hour to the Dobhan village, which is only some 2 hours after Khorlabeshi. It is probably best to continue for a short hour through broadleaf jungle climbing to Thulo Dhunga, where there are bhattis. Just after here the river plunges down a gorge clogged with huge boulders. The path climbs beside it to reach the hamlet of Yaruphant where the valley floor opens up slightly with glimpses of the foothills of the Ganesh and Manaslu Himals. You cross a bridge over the Yaru Khola stream and drop down to the floor for a half km of gravel before re-entering the rocky scrub path. Soon you reach another bridge over the main river and recross to the west side just before the hamlet of Jagat where there are lodges.
4	Jagat	Lokpa	17	900	300	6	Leave Jagat and head past a line of springs and poinsettias as you pass a few agricultural hamlets above the river along the bottom of the deep valley. Each hamlet has a water driven mill to grind grains. After about 2 hours the pleasant undulating track crosses a very long bridge over the river and then starts to climb up to Phelim which is situated on a terraced spur above two side streams. Here there is a checkpoint and a few teahouses. After Phelim the track contours round the hillside above the river which is increasingly in a gorge again. Soon the side of the valley closes in between 2 huge rock walls with wispy waterfalls and isolated pines. After a couple of km of this, in the depths of the pine covered ravine with towering rock walls, the paths fork with a route up Tsum and a route up to Larke La pass. Take the right path towards Tsum and climb for a good hour. Soon you pass the confluence of the Budhi Ghandaki and equally mighty Siyar Khola as you climb through pines and then bamboos to emerge on a level path and a couple of tea houses at Lokpa soon after.
5	Lokpa	Chhokang Paro	19	1680	560	8	From Lokpa the path descends to the main Siyar Khola through montane jungle and pine. It follows the river for a while until it emerges from a deep impenetrable gorge. The path now makes an arduous hour's climb over this gorge up steep terrain until it reaches the pine clad top and then starts to descend to a bridge over the main river. There now follows a short hours walk up through the pines on the steep north bank to reach the charming village of Chumling some 3.5 hours after Lokpa. After Chumling the path follows an airy, glorious, almost flat, path through a couple of hamlets and open grass with splendid views towards the Ganesh Himal ahead. Across the valley are extensive pine forests. After an quick 2 hours this lovely path ends in the hamlet of Kowo. The path now starts a long near 500m climb up across open hillside and pine forest, gradually gaining height above the river in the forest below. Slowly but surely the tree covered ridge in the distance nears and soon you reach the mani walls and chortens marking the start of the Tsum valley. Chhokang Paro is just beyond.
6	Chhokang Paro	Nile	12	490	230	5	The gorges leading up to the Tsum valley are finally over as you set forth onto the wide plain of a Shangri La. Descending gently you drop down through the hamlet of Dzong and then climb up beside very long mani walls and chortens to Nayakyu Leru and a few other hamlets on the well cultivated plain beneath towering mountains and snow clad mountains beyond. After 2 hours you reach the hamlet of Lamagoan on the opposite bank to the extensive Rachen Gomba monastery. It is worth stopping just beyond at Burji and leaving your pack to hike up to the important Milarepa cave, where he meditated for 8 years. After taking a hour return to visit the caves return to Burji and then continue up the open valley with yak ploughed fields of barley on each side. You pass many mani walls and chortens as you saunter along the spectacular valley floor. As the upper valley unfolds you reach a large stupa beside the path at Pangdun, just before the hamlet of Chhule. Soon after Chhule the path crosses the Siyar Khola and climbs up a short slope to Nile village with its lodges.

NEPAL: Manaslu and Tsum Valley

Day	Start	Finish	Km	Up	Down	Time	General
7	Nile	Mu Gomba	6	370	60	2	Cross to the east side of the Siyar Khola and follow it north beside extensive mani walls and chortens, some hundreds of metres long. Ganesh II thrusts up from the high ridges down the valley, its fluted crown towering above the 6000m mountains. After a quick hour along the flattish, but narrowing valley floor you reach a bridge over the Siyar Khola to the west side again. Now the valley narrows again as flanks soar up to lofty, craggy mountains - some with glaciers. The final 3 km to Mu Gomba is a steady climb with a steeper final slope. The monastery here is some 11 Mu years old. Just above it is a nunnery which is said to be 850 years old. Mu Gomba provides some simple accommodation and simple board. It is located on a windy spur and fails to attract young monks to study here. It is worth spending an acclimatisation day here at 3700m, for Manaslu later on. There are various afternoon walks such as up the nunnery (2 hrs rtn), or to the path fork to the passes (4 hrs rtn), or even a days expedition to one of the two 5000m passes to Tibet further upstream.
8	Mu Gomba	Chhumling	24	290	1610	8	Descend the slope from Mu Gomba for a good half hour with the sky piercing tower of Ganesh II beyond you down the valley. Soon the path meets the Siyar Khola and levels out onto the 10 km long flood plain of Upper Tsum valley peppered with its long rows of mani walls. Soon pass the villages of Nile and Chhule as the plain broadens out. It does not take long to saunter down to the hamlets of Burji and Lamagooan where the Milarepa caves is, and if you want the large Rachen Gomba on the outside. There is about another hours walk through a couple of hamlets before you reach the last Upper Tsum village of Chhokang Paro. Just beyond you cross the the last manis and stupas on the pine clad ridge before beginning the long descent to the poor hamlets of Kowo and Domje near at the swing bridge. It is at Kowo the 3 day return trail leads off to the spectacular Ganesh base camp. There is now a very pleasant 1.5 hours "Nepali Flat" walk along an increasingly high balcony above the roaring Siyar Khola and past a couple of homesteads to Chumling and it's lodge.
9	Chhumling	Pewa	17	670	1200	5.5	It is a pleasant and easy descent through the pines to the bridge over the Siyar Khola. After this it is a surprisingly long ascent through thick montane forest to climb over an impenetrable cliff in the gorge. Climbing up to the pine forests again you get some good views of snowcapped peaks of Shingri Himal, 7161 m, above Chhumling. The steep descent down to the Siyar Khola again takes you into the more passable Sarti Gorge where there is a narrow river side path. It is an easy climb up through more montane forest to Lokpa which is reached after 3 hours in all. After Lokpa it is a easy but sometimes steep descent for an hour through pines to the junction of paths and river confluence. Turn right over the Budhi Ghandaki and follow a dry path through pines to the bhatti at Nyak Phedi. You now follow the Budhi Ghandaki keeping to a riverside path as the track enters a very deep gorge up to 1000m deep. The path clings to the rock walls, sometimes hacked in, crossing the thundering torrent twice in an hour to reach the sunless lodge at Pewa in the deep ravine.
10	Pewa	Namrung	22	1510	610	8	The trail clings to the steep gorge side for an hour then bursts out into the sunlight and fields of Deng which has a few better teahouses and would be a nicer place to stay than Pewa. The path now drops down to the Budhi Ghandaki crosses it and then climbs up to follow a pleasant terrace along the valley side, passing the odd small hamlet and teahouse to reach the gorge of the Serang Khola side stream. The Budhi Ghandaki at this stage snakes along the bottom of a deep rock slot emerging at Ghap where the easy path meets it and crosses it on a bridge. It is perhaps too early to stop here and better to continue another 3 hours to Namrung. The path initially keeps to the SW of the Budhi Ghandaki as it enters lush forest dominated by huge drooping spruce trees and other leafy treess dripping in moss and lichen. It then crosses to the north by a new lodge over a bridge by a rock arch in the river gorge. It climbs slightly and then crosses to the west again and climbs for a good 100 minutes through spruce forest to finally level out at the lodges at Namrung, 2700m.
11	Namrung	Lho	12	720	180	4	Walk through the main street of Namrung passing rustic households to cross a sidestream and walk a little to the hamlet of Banjam with its large fields before entering the forest for the climb up to Lhi village. This charming village has many rustic homesteads and a view of Himalchuli. The path now descends into a deep gorge where the stream from the nearby Hinang glacier descends. Cross the bridge here in mixed conifer forest and then climb up the other side where you pass under the entrance chorten to reach the rustic village of Sho where you get the first glimpse of the twin peaks of Manaslu, 8163m. The pleasant path continues to climb through mixed forest past the hamlet of Shrip before making the final ascent to Lho, 3200m. Lho is a perfect village with tight clusters of traditional rickety homesteads around courtyards. There are a few lodges here in the centre of the village where rural life is easily observed. Above the village is the proud Ribung monastery and perhaps the best view of Manaslu from anywhere on the whole Manaslu Circuit.
12	Lho	Samagoan	9	580	270	3.5	Enjoy the splendid sunrise on the east face of Manaslu before moving off up to the mani walls and through the chorten under the monastery. The path now drops down into a sidestream and then starts to climb through mixed and then predominantly fir forest. The path climbs for a good hour through this forest beside various streams from hydro discharges. Soon you pass a sign for Hongzambu gomba whose prayer flags are seen fluttering amongst the firs, before you finish the climb, just before Shyala. This developing village has superb views to the fluted ridges of the Nadi and Himal Chuli range. After Shyala the trail passes a large chorten with the backdrop of Manaslu and then drops down to the glacial torrent of the Numla Khola which drains the Pungen glacier. Just after this bridge a side trail goes up on the Pung Gyen gomba, about a five hour round trip. From this junction the path drops slightly to a vast plain on the east side of the Manaslu Massif. This farmed plain sustains the large archaic village of Samagoan with its many chortens, prayer walls and rustic houses
13	Samagoan	Samdo	10	460	160	3.5	From Samagoan head up to the old monastery on the hill just 15 minutes from the town. There is a great view from here. It is then possible to walk on yak trails to meet the main path up to Birendra Tal lake. This lake lies at the bottom of the cliffs where the serac filled Manaslu glacier ends. Frequently there are huge avalanches down these cliffs into the lake and it is worth waiting in the sun to view them. Then return along the path through juniper and berberis shrub to the main Samagoan to Samdo path. This easy path goes up the west side of the now greatly diminished Budhi Ghandaki river with the lower valley sides covered in the white trunked Himalayan Birch. You continue along the flat floor for two hours passing grazing yak horses, and occasionally blue sheep, while the great mountains of Nadi and Himal Chuli to the south of Manaslu finally show their real size. Finally at a fork in the river you cross the west one and climb a short spur to reach the previously hidden rustic village of Samdo, 3880m, at a junction of high alpine barren valleys

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Day	Start	Finish	Km	Up	Down	Time	General
14	Samdo	Dharamsala	8	650	70	3	Continue up for a good km from the busy village of Samdo to the junction of the Budhi Ghandaki and the stream which drains the glaciers on the north side of the Manaslu massif. Cross the Budhi Ghandaki at Larke Bazar, where there are seasonal markets with goods imported over the passes from Tibet. The path now heads west climbing steadily through juniper scrub with fantastic views of the north side of Naik Peak over the stone clad Syacha glacier. As you climb more of Manaslu north unfolds on the west side of this glacier. Down below outside the lateral moraine are grassy areas and stone huts (charka) where yaks graze. As you continue the easy ascent the entire north face of Manaslu itself unfolds with its extensive icefields. As you continue to climb you gain a spur and the view ahead to the west unfolds with Dharamsala lodge and the extensive moraine fields beyond leading up to Larke La pass, 5160m. The final 2 km are an easy contour across the grassy hillside, during which Manaslu disappears, to the rustic lodge, which may be closed for the winter.
15	Dharamsala	Bimtang	19	750	1450	8.5	Leave well before daybreak to avoid the inevitable winds on the pass. Climb in the dark in the valley on the north side of the lateral moraine of the Larke Glacier. As you climb more snowy giants appear to the south, including Larke Peak, 6249m at the pass, while barren jagged spires dominate the north. It takes 3-4 hours of relatively gentle ascent to gain the often snowy Larke La pass, 5160m. The descent is initially on a lateral moraine ridge. After 5 minutes a tremendous view unfolds which rapidly gets even better. There is a vast bowl surrounded by the mountains of Cheo, Himlung, Nemjung, and a few others around 7000m. You are not looking onto a view but are right in the middle of a view. From these mountains 3 vast glaciers flowed down merging into one in a collision of lateral moraines at Ponkar Lake. The descent down to these glaciers becomes quite steep as you plummet nearly 800m on steep scree or snow. At last you reach the glaciers and then follow the lateral moraine for 2 hours, descending further to reach the comfortable and warm Bimtang lodge, 3600m.
16	Bimtang	Goa	14	210	1320	5	Head down the plain between the moraine and mountain for a couple of km and then cross the moraine of the Ponkar Glacier and climb up the steep lateral moraine wall on the other side where there is a great view of Manaslu again. From the top of this light coloured rocky moraine wall drop down the west side into a glorious forest in the valley between moraine and mountain. Initially the forest is of huge firs but as you descend the firs become interspersed with hemlock. After a good 2 hours you pass Yak Kharka lodge in the forest. There are frequent views through the largely hemlock forest now to the snow capped giants of Manaslu. A good hour later after having skirted a couple of riveride landslide areas you reach Kharche by the bridge over the Suti Khola where there are lodges. From here the torrent of the Dudh Khola is blocked by a spur and has carved a deep impenetrable gorge. The path climbs up over this spur and then descends the south side to reach the terraced fields of Goa, 2550m, where there are comfortable lodges in the deep wooded valley.
17	Goa	Tal	15	210	1050	5	Leave Goa and head down on the west side of the Dudh Khola for a good hour passing through diminishing forest and terraced fields until you reach Tilje and cross to the east side. The path is now a broader track as it descends into a gorge which drops down to the Marsyandi Nadi river and the town of Dharapani. Before reaching the town the path crosses the river again on a long bridge to the west side and descends for a km to cross the Marsyandi Nadi river and reach Dharapani. Here the Manaslu Circuit meets the Annapurna Circuit and it would only take another week to turn right and head to Jomsom to complete it. The Manaslu Circuit however turns left towards Besisahar which takes 3 days to walk or less if a jeep is used. To walk head through Dharapani on the jeep track and cross the Marsyandi to the walking trail on the east side. Follow it for a good hour, while across the river the jeep track clings to the cliff face. Then cross to the west and jeep track and follow it for an hour before recrossing to the east to walk a further half hour to the charming town of Tal.
18	Tal	Ghermu	14	360	860	4.5	Continue down the east side of the Marsyandi Nadi from Tal climbing and dropping over bluffs which the torrent has carved over millennia. During this section the river plunges into an even deeper gorge and the path follows it down. Across the river is the precipitous road which was blasted across the near vertical hillside and which offers a brave escape via the occasional jeep to Besisahar. After a couple of hours on the peaceful east side with a few wispy waterfalls from the village terraces high above the main Marsyandi gorge, the path crosses near Chamje to the west side where it follows the still alarming road. For the next two hours it is necessary to follow the road with just the occasional jeep bumping past. You pass through the charming town of Jagat, high on a spur, before beginning another steep descent on hairpins to the riverside town of Syange. Here there is a wire foot suspension bridge to the quieter east side again. It is just a short 10 minute climb now to Ghermu where there are lodges with views over waterfalls and lofty villages high above on the opposite flank.
19	Ghermu	Besisahar	24	470	790	6.5	It is a glorious walk from Ghermu down the east bank of the Marsyandi river for 2 hours, passing rural hamlets and forest sections. Soon the distinct round knoll of Bahundanda is seen. It is a sustained half hour climb up the north side to the saddle east of this knoll. However this climb is eased by the tidy cultural landscape of a Brahmin village. The town which sits atop the saddle is mixed Brahmin and Gurung. The descent down the south side of the saddle is also through a rich rural cultreandscape for the short hour to Nadi Bazar. However downstream of Nadi it all becomes horribly industrial with a large powerplant under construction (in 2014), and reasonably busy roads with lorries, jeeps and local buses through the scruffy towns of Bhulbhule and Khudi and on to Besisahar. It would be better to finish at Nadi Bazar and get a jeep to avoid the more industrialised sections. Only a purist would walk to Besisahar along the 12 km of soulless dirt road. At Besisahar there are some hotels, and there are buses to Kathmandu and Pokhara early each day.
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