

NEPAL

DAY 1

ARRIVE KATHMANDU, NEPAL

Arrive in Kathmandu, capital of Nepal, where you are met and transferred to your intricate carved-wood and terra-cotta hotel. Nestled in a fertile Himalayan valley, Kathmandu dazzles with vibrant prayer flags and gilded *stupas*. During the 14th century, artisans commissioned by the nobility constructed temples, monasteries and elaborate courtyards that endure to this day.

DAY 2

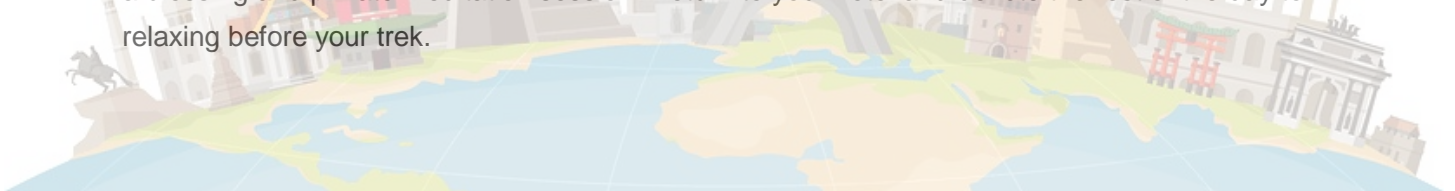
KATHMANDU | STUPAS & TEMPLES

This morning, visit 1,500-year-old Swayambhunath, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Set on a hilltop, this elaborate stupa offers you a superb view of the valley below. Continue exploring the icons of Kathmandu when you ride a rickshaw to Durbar Square. See gilded-roofed Taleju Temple, built in 1564, and Hanuman Dhoka, guarded by a stone image of the Hindu deity Hanuman. Then, behold the House of the Living Goddess (Kumari), where the virgin goddess known as Kumari is said to look down from the upper floor. Next, stroll through the bazaar and labyrinthine back streets of the old city. After lunch, discover pagoda-style Pashupatinath Temple. Dedicated to Lord Shiva, it's nestled into a verdant landscape on the banks of the holy Bagmati River. In the evening, attend a visual lecture by an Everest summiteer, hearing firsthand about the experience, required preparations and challenges faced when climbing Mount Everest.

DAY 3

KATHMANDU | HOLY TEMPLES & PRIVATE MEDITATION

After a relaxing breakfast, explore Patan, which today is a suburb of Kathmandu but was once a separate kingdom. A bastion of arts and architecture, Patan is famous for its fine bronze, silver and copper works. Begin at UNESCO-listed Patan Durbar Square, a marvel of Newari architecture. Also view the Golden Temple (Kwa Bahal), with its courtyard, frescoes and ornate, gilded decor. Continue to three-tiered Hindu Krishna Mandir temple, noting its intricate stone carvings. At the architecturally stunning Patan Museum — another UNESCO World Heritage Site — peruse the collection of traditional sacred art, which spans much of Nepal's cultural history. Pause for lunch, and then observe the thousands of pilgrims circling the Boudhanath *stupa*, also a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Delve deeper into Nepalese culture when you meet with a local artisan who lends insight into Thangka paintings and Buddhism. Proceed to Kopan Monastery for a blessing and private meditation session. Return to your hotel and devote the rest of the day to relaxing before your trek.





DAY 4

LUKLA & MONJO | ASCENDING THE “STEPS TO HEAVEN”

Board an early-morning flight to Lukla, which at 9,300 feet is your trailhead for the expedition ahead. Perhaps the most famous high-altitude airstrip in the world, Lukla was originally built by Sir Edmund Hillary’s Himalayan Trust as an emergency evacuation runway. As you fly, watch as rugged foothills give way to soaring peaks. Depending on the visibility, you might catch a glimpse of Kanchenjunga, Lhotse and Makalu — the world’s third-, fourth- and fifth-highest mountains. Meet your Sherpa crew and take your first strides along the trail that the Dalai Lama called “the steps to heaven.” Then, set out on a lengthy trek that traverses the mountainside on the left bank of the Dudh Koshi River. Follow a path with a mix of ups and downs, crossing streams, passing through forests and tiny villages, until reaching your lodge set in the village of Monjo at about 9,300 feet above sea level.

DAY 5

MONJO | ACCLIMATIZATION DAY-HIKE

Today, enjoy a day-hike to Thakchowk Danda, ascending to 10,000 feet and a great way to acclimatize. From here take in stunning views of jagged Kongde Ri (20,299 feet), Thamserku (27,729 feet) and Numbur (22,820 feet). Pause for a picnic lunch before returning to your lodge for an evening at leisure.

DAY 6

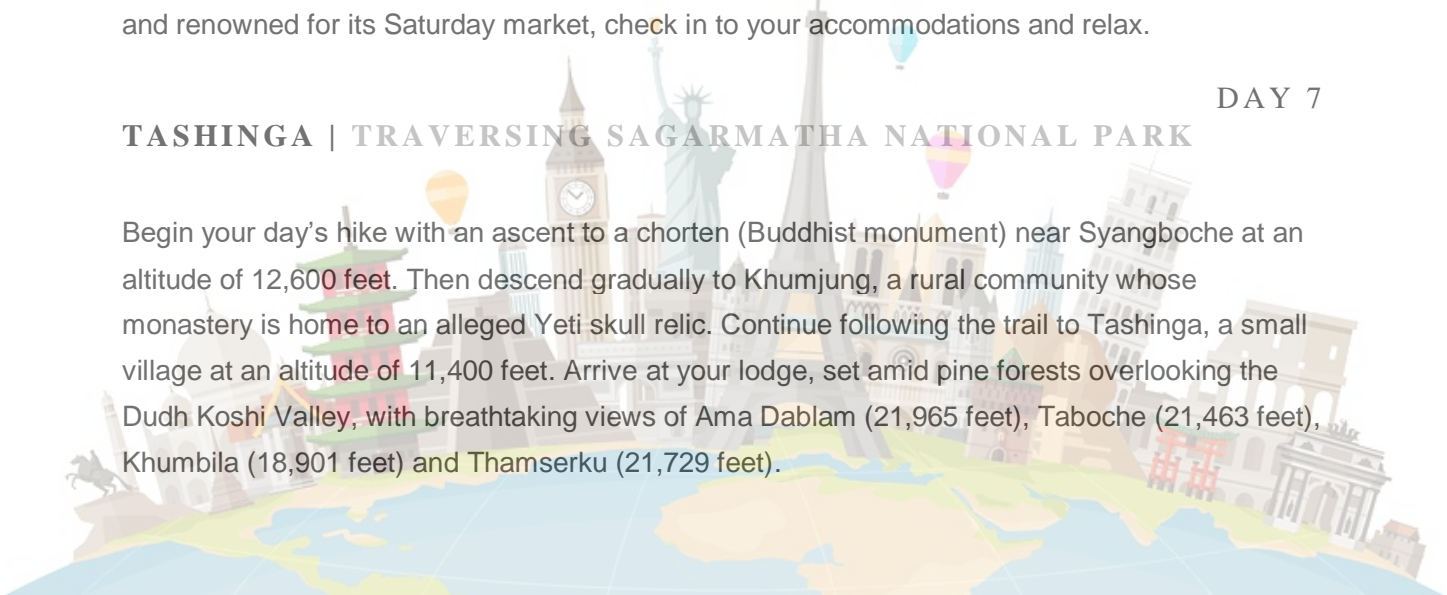
NAMCHE BAZAAR | GLIMPSING EVEREST

After breakfast, cross a bridge that takes you to the right bank of the Dudh Koshi River. Enter Sagarmatha National Park at Jorsale and set out on a short walk along the riverbed. Then, begin the steep, switch backing ascent to Namche Bazaar, catching your first glimpse of magnificent Mount Everest about halfway up. Near your goal, the climb eases and you’re surrounded by an amphitheater of peaks. Upon reaching Namche Bazaar, a prosperous town set at 11,300 feet and renowned for its Saturday market, check in to your accommodations and relax.

DAY 7

TASHINGA | TRAVERSING SAGARMATHA NATIONAL PARK

Begin your day’s hike with an ascent to a chorten (Buddhist monument) near Syangboche at an altitude of 12,600 feet. Then descend gradually to Khumjung, a rural community whose monastery is home to an alleged Yeti skull relic. Continue following the trail to Tashinga, a small village at an altitude of 11,400 feet. Arrive at your lodge, set amid pine forests overlooking the Dudh Koshi Valley, with breathtaking views of Ama Dablam (21,965 feet), Taboche (21,463 feet), Khumbila (18,901 feet) and Thamserku (21,729 feet).



PANGBOCHE | IMMERSED IN NATURE

Follow the trail from Tashinga as it descends steeply for a short distance to the Dudh Koshi River, where you cross a suspension bridge. Keep watch for vibrantly hued Himalayan monals (Impeyan pheasants), the elusive musk deer and, perhaps, small herds of the Himalayan thar (mountain goat). Continue to Phunki Tenga, a small hamlet. From here, the ascent takes you through pine forests to Tengboche Monastery at an altitude of 12,600 feet. Join an afternoon prayer session with local monks in this serene setting. Then, make a short descent to Debucho, a small settlement tucked amid a rhododendron and pine forest. Continue your descent toward the Imja Khola River before ascending to the village of Pangboche. Perched at 13,000 feet, it is home to the oldest monastery in the Khumbu. Behold breathtaking vistas of the surrounding fields and of Ama Dablam, which soars majestically close.

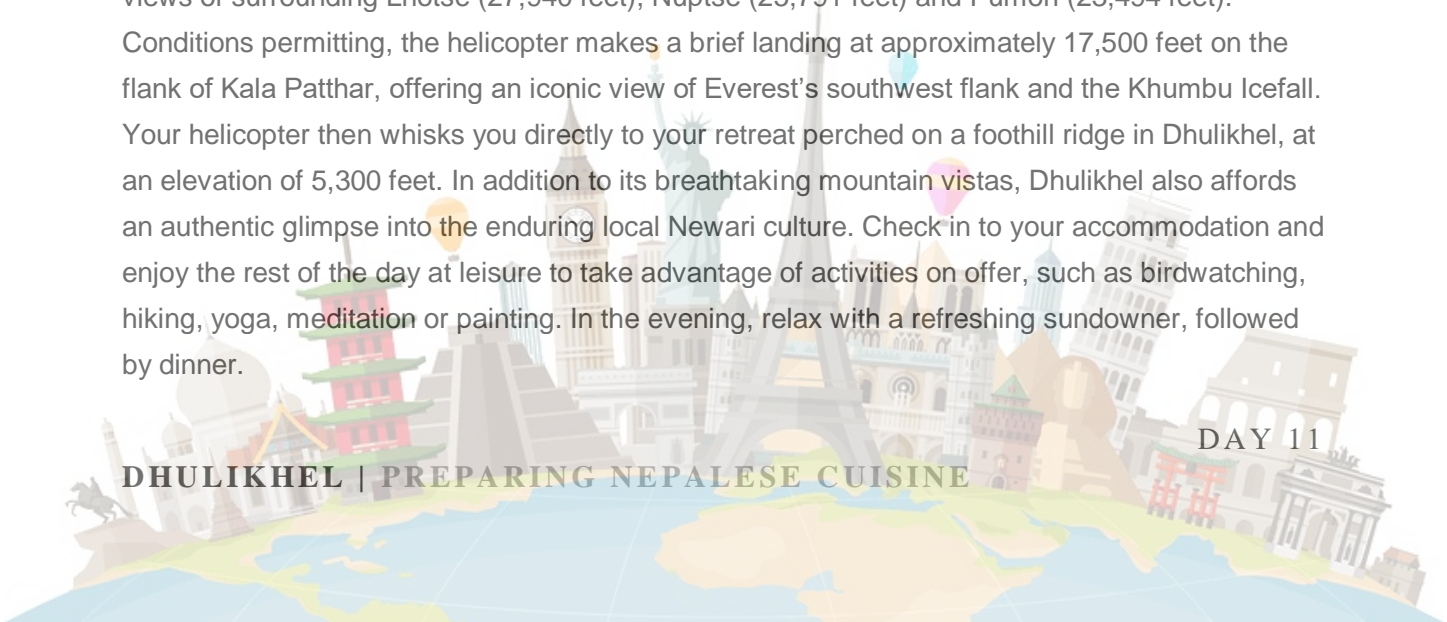
PANGBOCHE | AMA DABLAM BASE CAMP

Set out on a day-hike to Ama Dablam Base Camp, beginning by crossing the Khola River by suspension bridge. Then follow a gradual ascent to the base camp, which overlooks a yak pasture at an elevation of 15,000 feet. Admire the view of the climbing route, southwest ridge and the hanging glacier perched seemingly directly above.

KALA PATTHAR & DHULIKHEL | IN THE IMMENSE PRESENCE OF EVEREST

This morning, board a private helicopter for an awe-inspiring opportunity to get up close and personal with Mount Everest, the world's highest peak at 29,029 feet. From Pangboche fly up the valley, hovering over Everest Base Camp, set on the ever-shifting Khumbu Glacier. Also take in views of surrounding Lhotse (27,940 feet), Nuptse (25,791 feet) and Pumori (23,494 feet). Conditions permitting, the helicopter makes a brief landing at approximately 17,500 feet on the flank of Kala Patthar, offering an iconic view of Everest's southwest flank and the Khumbu Icefall. Your helicopter then whisks you directly to your retreat perched on a foothill ridge in Dhulikhel, at an elevation of 5,300 feet. In addition to its breathtaking mountain vistas, Dhulikhel also affords an authentic glimpse into the enduring local Newari culture. Check in to your accommodation and enjoy the rest of the day at leisure to take advantage of activities on offer, such as birdwatching, hiking, yoga, meditation or painting. In the evening, relax with a refreshing sundowner, followed by dinner.

DHULIKHEL | PREPARING NEPALESE CUISINE





Enjoy the morning at leisure, perhaps partaking in a meditation session or making pottery at your resort. Later, set out on a 90-minute walk to an organic farm. Explore the terraced fields with the small team of farmers and pick vegetables and herbs for this evening's meal. Then, head to the kitchen for a Nepali cooking class before sitting down to the meal you helped to prepare.

DAY 12

DEPART KATHMANDU

This morning, transfer to the Kathmandu airport to board your homebound flight.

