



Annapurna Region Trek Guide

Nepal's most varied trekking region

Nine open routes plus four restricted ones, compared by duration, altitude, difficulty and season, all starting from Pokhara.



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Every route in this guide is one we run ourselves. Durations are full package days, from the day you land in Kathmandu to the day you fly out, matching the itineraries on himalayaguidenepal.com.



Introduction to Annapurna region treks

Where it is, what makes it special, and who it suits

The Annapurna region sits north of Pokhara in west-central Nepal, inside the 7,629 square kilometre Annapurna Conservation Area. It is the most visited trekking region in Nepal, and for good reason: no other region packs so many different kinds of trek into one area.

What makes the Annapurna region special

- Four climate zones in one walk on the Circuit, from subtropical forest near 800 m to high Tibetan-style desert above 4,500 m beyond Thorong La.
- The Kali Gandaki gorge, often called the deepest river valley in the world, running between Dhaulagiri (8,167 m) and Annapurna I (8,091 m).
- Machhapuchhre (6,993 m), the Fishtail, closed to climbers since the 1950s out of respect for local belief that it is sacred to Shiva.
- Gurung and Magar villages on the southern trails, Manangi culture in the Manang valley, and Thakali
- food in the Kali Gandaki.
- Nearly fifty years of teahouse trekking, so lodges are reliable and trails well maintained.

Who can trek Annapurna Region

Everyone, depending on the route. Poon Hill suits complete beginners and families with children from about ten. Annapurna Base Camp and Mardi Himal need honest preparation. The Circuit and Tilicho cross 5,416 m and are for trekkers with prior altitude experience.

Getting To The Trek Starting Point

Every route starts from Pokhara, a 25-minute flight or a 6 to 7 hour drive from Kathmandu. From Pokhara, jeeps reach the trailheads at Nayapul, Ulleri, Kande and Besisahar in one to four hours.



All Annapurna treks at a glance

Nine open routes and four restricted ones

Use this table to shortlist two routes, then read the profiles that follow. Durations are full package days, from the day you land in Kathmandu to the day you fly out, matching the itineraries on himalayaguidenepal.com.

Trek	Days	Highest point	Difficulty
Ghale Gaun Home Stay Trek	7	about 2,100 m	Easy
Ghandruk Poon Hill Trek	7	Poon Hill 3,210 m	Easy
Awesome View Point Trek	8	Poon Hill 3,210 m	Easy
Short Annapurna Base Camp Trek	8	ABC 4,130 m	Moderate
Mardi Himal Trek	8	Mardi Himal Base Camp 4,500 m	Moderate
Khopra Danda Trek	11	Khayer Lake 4,600 m	Moderate
Annapurna Base Camp Trek	13	ABC 4,130 m	Moderate
Annapurna Circuit Trek	16	Thorong La 5,416 m	Strenuous
Tilicho Lake Trek	16	Thorong La 5,416 m	Strenuous

How to read the difficulty column

One grading key runs through every Himalaya Guide Nepal region guide. **Easy**: tops out below 3,500 m. **Moderate**: up to about 4,800 m with no pass above 4,500 m. **Strenuous**: a pass above 4,500 m or time above 5,000 m. **Challenging**: two or more high passes, a trekking peak, or remote camping. Section "Difficulty and altitude guide" explains each grade.

Nar Phu, Annapurna Two Passes, Upper Mustang and Damodar Kunda also start in the Annapurna region but need restricted area permits. Section 07 summarises them, and our Restricted Area Trek List covers them in full.



Poon Hill and village treks

A week in the hills, and one of the best sunrises in Nepal

Poon Hill (3,210 m) is a 45-minute climb above Ghorepani. At first light Dhaulagiri appears, then the whole Annapurna range and Machhapuchhre, all from one hilltop. These routes need no prior experience and carry little altitude risk for most people.

Ghandruk Poon Hill Trek

Nayapul to Ghandruk, one of the largest and best-preserved Gurung villages, with a small Gurung museum. Then through rhododendron forest via Tadapani to Ghorepani, sunrise on Poon Hill, and down through Ulleri.

DURATION
7 days

DIFFICULTY
Easy

HIGHEST POINT
Poon Hill 3,210 m

BEST FOR
First-timers and families



Day	Route	Sleep at	Walking
1	Arrive Kathmandu	1,350 m	–
2	Drive to Pokhara	820 m	6 – 7 hrs drive
3	Nayapul to Ghandruk	1,950 m	5 – 6 hrs
4	Ghandruk to Tadapani	2,630 m	4 – 5 hrs
5	Tadapani to Ghorepani	2,850 m	5 – 6 hrs
6	Poon Hill sunrise, trek to Ulleri, drive to Pokhara	820 m	5 – 6 hrs
7	Drive to Kathmandu	1,350 m	6 – 7 hrs drive



Awesome View Point Trek

A Pokhara-to-Pokharaloop through Ghorepani, Poon Hill and Ghandruk at a gentler pace, for trekkers who want an extra night in the hills.

DURATION
8 days

DIFFICULTY
Easy

HIGHEST POINT
Poon Hill 3,210 m

BEST FOR
An unhurried first trek



Ghale Gaun Home Stay Trek

A short cultural trip to the Gurung village of Ghale Gaun in Lamjung, staying with host families, with views of Lamjung Himal, Annapurna II and Machhapuchhre.

DURATION
7 days

DIFFICULTY
Easy

HIGHEST POINT
about 2,100 m

BEST FOR
Village life and homestays



March is Poon Hill's month

The rhododendron forest between Ghorepani and Ghandruk flowers from late February through April. Many trekkers who have done Poon Hill in both seasons prefer March.



Annapurna Base Camp Trek

Standing inside a ring of mountains

Base Camp sits in a glacial bowl at 4,130 m, the Annapurna Sanctuary, with Annapurna I directly ahead and Annapurna South, Hiunchuli and Machhapuchhre closing in around you. Poon Hill puts you outside the mountains looking at them. ABC puts you inside them looking up.

DURATION

13 days

DIFFICULTY

Moderate

DISTANCE

about 110 – 120 km

HIGHEST POINT

ABC 4,130 m

BEST SEASON

Oct – Nov, Mar – May

START AND FINISH

Pokhara



Day by day of Annapurna Base Camp Trek

Day	Route	Sleep at	Walking
1	Arrive Kathmandu	1,350 m	–
2	Drive to Pokhara	820 m	6 – 7 hrs drive
3	Jeep to Tikhedunga, walk to Ulleri	1,950 m	2 – 3 hrs
4	Ulleri to Ghorepani	2,850 m	4 – 5 hrs
5	Poon Hill sunrise, trek to Tadapani	2,630 m	6 – 7 hrs
6	Tadapani to Chhomrong	2,170 m	5 – 6 hrs
7	Chhomrong to Bamboo	2,310 m	5 – 6 hrs
8	Bamboo to Deurali	3,230 m	5 – 6 hrs
9	Deurali to Machhapuchhre Base Camp	3,700 m	3 – 4 hrs
10	Sunrise at ABC (4,130 m), descend to Bamboo	2,310 m	6 – 7 hrs
11	Bamboo to Jhinu Danda hot springs	1,780 m	5 – 6 hrs
12	Jhinu Danda to Nayapul, drive to Pokhara	820 m	4 – 5 hrs
13	Drive or fly to Kathmandu	1,350 m	–

Short Annapurna Base Camp Trek

The same Sanctuary in 8days, with jeep sections at both ends and no Poon Hill detour. Suits fit trekkers with short window.

DURATION

8 days

DIFFICULTY

Moderate

HIGHEST POINT

ABC 4,130 m

BEST FOR

Base Camp in one week

The avalanche zone

Between Deurali and Machhapuchhre Base Camp the trail runs beneath steep slopes that can release avalanches after heavy snow, especially from January to March. Our guides check conditions daily in that stretch and will hold the group or take the safer riverside line when needed.



Mardi Himal and Khopra Danda

Quieter ridges with big views

Two shorter routes for trekkers who want Annapurna views without the crowds on the main trails.

Mardi Himal Trek

Walk from the forest above Dhampus up through High Camp to Mardi Himal Base Camp (about 4,500 m), with Machhapuchhre so close it fills the view. Short days, big exposure on the upper ridge.

DURATION

8 days

DIFFICULTY

Moderate

HIGHEST POINT

about 4,500 m

BEST FOR

Close-up views in a week



Khopra Danda Trek

Via Ghorepani to the Khopra ridge (3,660 m), with a day hike to the sacred Khayer Lake (about 4,600 m) beneath Annapurna South. Community lodges, few trekkers, and views of Dhaulagiri and Annapurna South.

DURATION

11 days

DIFFICULTY

Moderate

HIGHEST POINT

Khayer Lake about 4,600 m

BEST FOR

Poon Hill plus solitude



Annapurna Circuit and Tilicho Lake

The full circuit around the massif

The Circuit starts in subtropical lowland, climbs the Marsyangdi valley to Manang, crosses Thorong La (5,416 m) before dawn, and drops to the pilgrimage temple at Muktinath and the Kali Gandaki. The landscape changes almost every day.

DURATION
16 days

DIFFICULTY
Strenuous

START
Besisahar, by road

HIGHEST POINT
Thorong La 5,416 m

BEST SEASON
Mar – May, Oct – Nov

FINISH
Pokhara via Poon Hill



Day by day Annapurna Tilicho Lake Trek

Day	Route	Sleep at	Walking
1	Arrive Kathmandu	1,350 m	–
2	Drive to Ngadi	860 m	Long drive
3 – 4	Via Jagat to Dharapani	1,960 m	6 – 7 hrs a day
5 – 6	Via Chame to Pisang	3,245 m	6 – 7 hrs a day
7	Pisang to Manang via Ghyaru and Ngawal	3,540 m	7 – 8 hrs
8	Acclimatisation day, hike to Gangapurna Lake	3,540 m	Short hike
9 – 10	Via Yak Kharka to Thorong High Camp	4,900 m	3 – 5 hrs a day
11	Over Thorong La (5,416 m) to Muktinath	3,710 m	8 – 9 hrs
12 – 13	Via Jomsom to Tatopani	1,200 m	Drive and walk
14 – 15	Tatopani to Ghorepani, Poon Hill sunrise	2,850 m	5 – 6 hrs a day
16	Drive to Pokhara	820 m	–



Altitude profile, Dharapani to Muktinath



Tilicho Lake Trek

The Circuit tour from Manang to Tilicho Lake (4,919 m), one of the highest lakes of its size in the world, beneath Tilicho Peak and Nilgiri. The detour adds two long days and acts as extra acclimatisation before Thorong La.

DURATION

16 days

LAKE

Tilicho 4,919 m

HIGHEST POINT

Thorong La 5,416 m

DIFFICULTY

Strenuous

Thorong La and the road

The pass is usually clear of deep snow from mid-March through November. We do not run the Circuit in January and February. A road now runs through much of the valley, so we use the NATT side trails wherever they exist and drive the dusty sections.



ANNAPURNA RESTRICTED ROUTES

Nar Phu, Two Passes, Upper Mustang, Damodar Kunda

Four of our routes leave the Annapurna trails for restricted valleys. Each needs a Restricted Area Permit through a registered agency and a licensed guide. They are covered in full in our Restricted Area Trek List.

Trek	Days	Highest point	Difficulty	In one line
Nar Phu Trek	13	Kang La 5,306 m	Challenging	Two medieval villages in a hidden side valley of Manang
Annapurna Two Passes Trek	19	Thorong La 5,416 m	Challenging	Nar Phu and Kang La, then the Circuit over Thorong La
Upper Mustang Tea House Trek	16	about 4,230 m	Moderate	The walled city of Lo Manthang, trekkable in the monsoon
Damodar Kunda Trek	20	4,890 m	Challenging	Sacred lakes beyond Upper Mustang, lodges and tents



Pokhara to Your Destination

Before and after the trail

Every Annapurna trek begins and ends in Pokhara, Nepal's lakeside second city. Plan it into your trip rather than treating it as a transit stop.

Getting to Pokhara

The flight from Kathmandu takes about 25 minutes. The tourist bus takes 6 to 7 hours and a private car slightly less. Morning flights give the best mountain views and the best chance of leaving on time.

Use a day here in Pokhara

- Rent or buy missing gear in Lakeside. Down jackets, poles and sleeping bags are easy to find.
- Build a rest day in after the Circuit or ABC. Boating on Phewa Lake and sunrise at Sarangkot are gentle ways to spend it.
- Paragliding, zip-lining and bungee jumping are also available if you want one more adventure.

Buffer day

The Jomsom flight on the Circuit exit and road conditions in the shoulder seasons can both slip by a day. A buffer night in Pokhara protects your international flight.



Trek comparison by category

The short answer, depending on what you want most

BEST FOR FIRST-TIME TREKKERS

Ghandruk Poon Hill Trek

Seven days, no altitude drama, and a sunrise over the whole range.

BEST BASE CAMP

Annapurna Base Camp Trek

Inside the Sanctuary, with a hot spring stop on the way down.

BEST FOR ADVENTURE

Annapurna Circuit Trek

Four climate zones and Thorong La at 5,416 m.

BEST SHORT TREK

Mardi Himal Trek

Eight days and Machhapuchhre almost within reach.

BEST FOR FEWER CROWDS

Khopra Danda Trek

Community lodges and a sacred lake away from the main trails.

BEST FOR CULTURE

Ghale Gaun Home Stay Trek

Gurung village life with host families.



SECTION 10

Annapurna region trek routes

The villages, junctions and passes you will hear named

Poon Hill and the Sanctuary



The Annapurna Circuit



Major junctions and places

Place	Altitude	Why it matters
Ghorepani	2,850 m	Base for Poon Hill, and the junction of the Poon Hill, ABC and Khopra routes
Chhomrong	2,170 m	Last proper village before the Sanctuary gorge
Machhapuchhre BC	3,700 m	Last stop before ABC, and a safer sleeping altitude
Manang	3,540 m	Acclimatisation stop on the Circuit, and the turn-off for Tilicho Lake
Thorong La	5,416 m	The highest point on the Circuit, crossed before dawn
Muktinath	3,710 m	Temple sacred to Hindus and Buddhists, with 108 water spouts and an eternal flame

Altitudes are the figures in common use on the trail and vary a little between sources and signboards.



Difficulty and altitude guide

What the grades actually mean on the ground

Grade	Daily walking	Top altitude	What it feels like
Easy	4 – 6 hours	Below 3,500 m	Good trail, village nights, no acclimatisation days needed
Moderate	5 – 7 hours	3,500 – 4,800 m, no high pass	Long days, thin air at the top, one acclimatisation stop
Strenuous	5 – 8 hours	A pass above 4,500 m or time above 5,000 m	Cold nights, pre-dawn starts, one or two very long days
Challenging	6 – 9 hours	Two or more high passes, a peak, or remote camping	Snow underfoot, basic facilities, prior altitude experience needed

Stone steps, not flat trail

The southern Annapurna trails are built on thousands of stone steps. Ulleri to Ghorepani and Chhomrong to Bamboo are the days that separate trekkers who trained on hills from those who did not.

Why the Manang day matters

The rest day in Manang includes a hike to Gangapurna Lake or higher. It is an altitude test as much as a rest: if you feel fine on that hike, you are ready for Thorong La, and if you feel symptoms, your guide knows before the pass.

Altitude considerations

- Above 3,000m, keep sleeping—altitude gains to roughly 300 to 500 m per night.
- Plan a full acclimatisation day for about every 1,000 m of altitude gained.
- Drink far more than feels necessary, three to four litres a day.
- Mild headache, poor appetite and broken sleep are common. A worsening headache, breathlessness at rest, confusion or loss of balance are not, and mean descending straight away.
- Talk to a travel doctor about altitude medication before you leave home, and tell your guide about any medication you carry.

Descent is the treatment

No drug, oxygen bottle or rest day replaces going down. Every itinerary we run has descent options identified in advance, and every guide carries a first aid kit and a way to call for help. Helicopter evacuation depends on weather, which is why travel insurance covering evacuation to the maximum altitude of your trek is a condition of joining any trip in this guide.



Best time for Annapurna treks

Choosing your season, and what each one costs you

Season	Conditions	Best for	Notes
Autumn Oct – Nov	Dry, stable, the clearest views of the year	Every route	Most popular months, book two to three months ahead
Spring Mar – May	Warm, some wind and haze at altitude	Poon Hill in flower, ABC, Circuit	Rhododendrons peak in March and April
Winter Dec – Feb	Cold, snow above about 3,500 m	Poon Hill, Ghale Gaun	ABC harder, Circuit not advised
Monsoon Jun – Sep	Daily rain, leeches below 2,500 m	Upper Mustang (rain shadow)	Avoid ABC and the Circuit



Permits and preparation For Annapurna Trek

Paperwork, logistics and getting your body ready

Permits

- Annapurna Conservation Area Permit (ACAP), required on every route in this guide.
- TIMS card where it is checked.
- Restricted Area Permits for Nar Phu, Upper Mustang and Damodar Kunda (see our Restricted Area Trek List).

Fees are revised periodically. We arrange every permit and confirm current fees in writing when you book. Checkpoints inspect originals.

Licensed guide rule

Since April 2023, foreign trekkers in Nepal's national parks and conservation areas must walk with a licensed guide arranged through a registered agency. Restricted areas have always required one. We provide licensed guides for solo travellers and groups of every size, and we confirm the current rules in writing when you book.

Money and accommodation

Teahouses are the most established in Nepal, with hot showers on most lower trails. There are ATMs in Pokhara, Besisahar and Jomsom, but not on the trail itself, so carry rupees for the days between them. Bring a sleeping bag rated to minus 10 Celsius for ABC and minus 15 for Thorong High Camp.

Travel insurance

Your policy must cover trekking to the maximum altitude of your itinerary and must include helicopter evacuation and repatriation. Many standard travel policies stop at 3,000 or 4,000 m. Read the altitude clause, not the summary.

Physical preparation

- Start eight to twelve weeks out. Consistency beats intensity.
- Uphill walking with a loaded pack is the most useful training there is. Flat cardio alone does not prepare you for the stairs.
- Add two or three cardio sessions a week, and one long walk of four hours or more at the weekend.
- Break your boots in properly. Blisters end more treks than altitude does.
- If you have a heart, lung or blood pressure condition, get medical clearance before booking.



Packing essentials For Annapurna Region Trekking

Tick as you pack. Aim for 10 to 12 kg in the porter bag

CLOTHING	FOOTWEAR AND GEAR	HEALTH AND EXTRAS
☐ Base layers, 2 sets ☐ Fleece or midlayer ☐ Down jacket ☐ Waterproof shell jacket ☐ Waterproof trousers ☐ Trekking trousers, 2 ☐ Trekking shirts, 3 ☐ Warm hat and sun hat ☐ Buff or neck gaiter ☐ Liner and insulated gloves ☐ Underwear and sports bras ☐ Trekking socks, 4 pairs	☐ Broken-in trekking boots ☐ Camp shoes or sandals ☐ Gaiters, for pass routes ☐ Trekking poles ☐ Daypack, 30 to 35 L ☐ Duffel bag for the porter ☐ Dry bags or pack liner ☐ Sleeping bag (see rating below) ☐ Sleeping bag liner ☐ Headtorch and spare batteries ☐ Microspikes or crampons, pass routes only	☐ Sunscreen, factor 50 ☐ SPF lip balm ☐ Category 4 sunglasses ☐ Personal medication ☐ Blister kit and tape ☐ Rehydration salts ☐ Water bottles, 2 to 3 L ☐ Purification tablets or filter ☐ Quick-dry towel ☐ Wet wipes and hand sanitiser ☐ Power bank, 20,000 mAh ☐ Universal adapter ☐ Passport, permits, insurance ☐ Cash in Nepali rupees



Annapurna-specific additions

A buff or mask for the dusty road sections of the Circuit, microspikes for Thorong La in spring, and a swimsuit for the Jhinu Danda and Tatopani hot springs.



Quick trek selection guide For Annapurna Trekking

Start with the days you have, not the trek you have heard of



Have 7 or 8 days, no experience?

Ghandruk Poon Hill or Awesome View Point

Have 8 days and good fitness?

Mardi Himal or Short ABC

Have 11 days, want quiet trails?

Khopra Danda Trek

Have about two weeks?

Annapurna Base Camp Trek, 13 days

Have 16 days and altitude experience?

Annapurna Circuit or Tilicho Lake

Want something rarer?

Nar Phu or Upper Mustang (restricted)

Want village life?

Ghale Gaun Home Stay Trek, 7 days



Final Annapurna region trek list

One page. Print it, or keep it on your phone



Trek	Days	Highest point	Difficulty	Best season	Main highlight
Ghale Gaun Home Stay	7	2,100 m	Easy	All but monsoon	Gurung homestays
Ghandruk Poon Hill	7	3,210 m	Easy	All but monsoon	Poon Hill sunrise
Awesome View Point	8	3,210 m	Easy	All but monsoon	Poon Hill and Ghandruk
Short ABC	8	4,130 m	Moderate	Autumn, spring	The Sanctuary in a week
Mardi Himal	8	4,500 m	Moderate	Autumn, spring	Machhapuchhre up close
Khopra Danda	11	4,600 m	Moderate	Autumn, spring	Khayer Lake, few crowds
Annapurna Base Camp	13	4,130 m	Moderate	Autumn, spring	Inside the Sanctuary
Annapurna Circuit	16	5,416 m	Strenuous	Mar – May, Oct – Nov	Thorong La, Muktinath
Tilicho Lake	16	5,416 m	Strenuous	Mar – May, Oct – Nov	Tilicho Lake and the pass

Ready to pick one?

Send us your dates and the two routes you are weighing up, and we will come back with a day-by-day itinerary, a firm price and the current permit position. WhatsApp +977 9851193013 or info@himalayaguidenepal.com. We would rather talk you onto the right trek than sell you the famous one.

Altitudes, durations and seasons reflect our standard itineraries and commonly published figures, which vary a little between maps and signboards. Conditions on the ground, permit fees and regulations change. Confirm current details with us before you travel.





Plan your trek with people who live here

Himalaya Guide Nepal is a Nepali-owned trekking company based in Kathmandu, running guided treks and peak climbs across Everest, Annapurna, Manaslu, Langtang, Ruby Valley and Nepal's restricted areas. This guide covers the Annapurna region. Every itinerary in this guide can be adjusted to your dates, pace and budget.

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