

# Annapurna Sanctuary

## Day 1 - Fly to Pokhara & Trek to Tolka

5 hours, 3.7 miles (6km), +1,100 feet, -1,300 feet

Our adventure begins early in Kathmandu. After a short flight overlooking the Himalayas we arrive in Pokhara. From here we taxi up to the town of Kande and the beginning of our trail. Breaking us in early we ascend to Australia Camp with breathtaking views of Machhapuchhre (Fish Tail) and the Annapurna range we will get to know well in the upcoming days. From this view point a short decent will take us to the town of Pothana, our lunch-spot. After lunch we will continue to descend weaving our way through a Rhododendron forest and traversing the upper canyon edge of the Modi Khola river. Descending to almost the same elevation as the trailhead, we will finish our day in the town of Tolka.



Early morning view of the Himalayas from Tolka

## Day 2 - Tolka to Chomrong

6 hours 30 minutes, 5 miles (8km), +2723 feet, -1181 feet

Beginning our day in Tolka we spend a short time walking on the newly constructed road before arriving in the town Landruk. From here we continue on the historic Annapurna trekking route, descending all the way down to the river bottom. Today is full of springs and waterfalls. Spending a short time walking along the bottom of the canyon we cross the “new bridge” to the other side of the river and begin our ascent. A tea break at the town of New Bridge re-energizes us for the upcoming section.

Ascending high on the canyon wall, only to drop all the way back down to the river, then climb back up the other side of the canyon gives us the opportunity to practice being where we are and not trying to rush any step along the way. \*Note: At this time a huge suspension bridge is currently being constructed that would significantly decrease the second descent and final ascent to lunch. Feeling victorious and happy to arrive in the town of Jhinu we stop for a well deserved lunch. After enjoying a delicious meal perched high on the canyon wall we begin our afternoon climb. This section is probably the steepest part of the trail and makes us grateful for the Nepali slow and mindful pace of moving. As our trip leader Kumar says, “There is no need for rushing.” When a seemingly endless staircase finally does end, we arrive in the town of Chomrong and are greeted with incredible views of Annapurna III, Annapurna South and Machhapuchhre (Fish Tail).



Sharing the trail with the locals around New Bridge

### Day 3 - Chomrong to Bamboo

5 hours 30 minutes, 2.5 miles (4km), +1214 feet, -754 feet

While enjoying breakfast overlooking the Annapurna mountain peaks we can see the direction we are headed. From our tea house perched on the hill we journey down about 1,700 stone stairs back to the river bottom. Crossing the river on a prayer flag adorned suspension bridge we begin climbing on the other side. Using our recent down climb as an indicator of how far we getting along we climb to our stopping point at the town of Sinuwa. This is our last ridge to ridge climb on the way up. The open viewpoint allows us to reflect on how our perspective has shifted and minds have settled. At lunch in Sinuwa we start to get the feeling that the canyon is beginning to close in around us. Our afternoon trail exchanges the sunny open canyon walls for the deep lush forests of Rhododendrons, Alders and Birch trees. As we climb up through the forest we feel as though we have entered into another world. Our final short steep climb rewards us with amazing views of the sacred mountain Machhapuchhre (Fish Tail) as it towers above the rushing river below. We take a short rest and prepare for our final afternoon descent. From Kuldhigar we descend stone steps into the bamboo forests eventually arriving at our evening tea house in the aptly named town of Bamboo.



Glimpses through the forest reveal the surrounding magnitude



## Day 4: Bamboo - Deurali

5 hours, 3.1 miles (5km), +2920 feet, -300 feet

From Bamboo we continue our trek through the dense forested vegetation of the canyon. Even though we spend a majority of this day climbing, the trail is fairly gradual. We have a few short steep sections of trail where we climb over and around tree roots of overhanging trees but these sections quickly dissipate and the gentle slope of the trail returns. At the top of our final climb for the afternoon we see the “first lodge of the Annapurna region.” This massive cave provides a great resting spot and a glimpse into the history of trekking in this area. A short steep descent followed by a couple of river crossings bring us to our last climb of the day and evening tea house at Deurali. This section of the trail has steep canyon walls on both sides and a towering waterfall above us.



As we gain elevation our views get more and more impressive

## **Day 5: Deurali to Machhapurchhe (Fish Tail) Base Camp (MBC)**

2 hours 45 minutes, 1.9 miles (3km), +1640 feet, -0 feet

Today we leave the forest behind and begin our climb gently to the end/beginning of the canyon. Trekking along the upper reaches of the Modi Khola river we are awestruck by numerous waterfalls. Slowly the canyon begins to recede into the stunning mountains we have been seeing from a distance. Moving upriver we trek alongside Machhapurchhe (Fish Tail) and have incredible views of Fluted Peak and Annapurna 1. Our arrival at MBC marks the entrance to the Sanctuary of the Annapurna Range. We enjoy a breathtaking lunch at MBC and have the remainder of the afternoon off to relax, practice yoga, take a shower or perhaps explore the glacial moraine behind camp. As we sit in the afternoon sun we observe some of the highest mountains in the world dance as they move in and out of passing clouds. Dinner tonight at our highest camp will energize us for our early climb to Annapurna Base Camp tomorrow morning.



Looking back down the canyon we came from this morning

## **Day 6: Machhapurchhe (Fish Tail) Base Camp (MBC) to Annapurna Base Camp (ABC). Descend ABC to Deurali**

5.5 hours, 6 miles (9.6 km), +1410 feet, -3917 feet

Today is our earliest start on the trail. Waking up a first light we have a small breakfast and a cup of tea before starting our climb to ABC. Walking along the quiet trail and watching the sunrise on the Annapurna Range is an experience that will stay with us the rest of our lives. Part way up we begin to encounter the hikers traveling down. With most people descending from ABC in the morning we will arrive at Annapurna Sanctuary and have it mostly to ourselves, a rare treat. Enjoying breakfast at our highest point in the sanctuary, we hold great feelings of accomplishment and awe for our mountainous surroundings. After we are satisfied with photos and food we begin our descent back into the Modi Khola canyon. Watching the river grow, we gradually descend back down the trail we worked to climb up the this morning. A relaxing lunch at MBC and we depart the high alpine Annapurna Sanctuary for the forest below. A leisurely paced downhill walk back down the upper reaches of the canyon has us reminiscing in the views of yesterday's climb as we descend to our resting place for evening at Deurali. We have accomplished a lot by this point and it feels natural to celebrate in our stories and reflect on our journey thus far.



A small part of the awe-inspiring 360 degree view from Annapurna Base Camp



## Day 7: Deurali to Sinuwa

6 hours 30 minutes, 3.7 miles (6km), + 754 feet, -2006 feet

After breakfast at Deurali we re-enter the forest and have approximately an hour of “Nepali Flat” with a few steeper sections. After these steep descents we arrive at the town of Himalaya and the trail gradually flattens out for our final steps down to Dovan. Ready for a break we stop here for lunch, enjoying the views now even more as continue to traverse back down the canyon we climbed only days before. After lunch we continue our day with a short downhill that traverses through the bamboo forest. It is a pleasant and peaceful section of trail as we are back in dense greenery filled with the sounds of birds. After an hour on the trail, a short steep descent brings us to Bamboo, one of the towns we stayed in on the way up. From here we begin the steep stair climb to Kuldigar. At the viewpoint of Kuldigar we traverse slowly back through the forests of Rhododendrons and Orchids. Our “Nepali Flat” trail eventually opens up at Sinuwa where we stop for the evening.



Admiring where we came from

## **Day 8: Sinuwa to Komrong or Ghandruk**

6 hours 30 minutes, 7 miles (11.2 km), +1590 feet, -2400 feet

While eating breakfast we can look across the canyon and see where we are heading today. Rested and re-fueled we begin our descent from Sinuwa all the way down to the Chhomrong Khola. Once at river level we climb over 1,700 steps to get back to almost the same elevation we started the day at. Just past Chomrong, at the top of one of the steepest sections of trail we climbed a few days ago, we divert from our previous trail and veer to the right heading off on a trail in the direction of Ghorepani and Poon Hill. After traversing up and over Chomrong Pass we turn left on a steep descending trail all way down to the Kimrong Khola. This section of trail is “off the beaten path” and while passing old flats that trekking groups once pitched camp on we get insight into how traveling in this country used to be. A well deserved lunch break welcomes us along the banks of the river at the town of Kimrong. Re-energized we look forward to one of our final uphill climbs. We cross the river and switchback our way up numerous false summits to the town of Komrong. Here we will either call it a day and enjoy the views of high saddle pass looking down into Ghandruk or continue a few more hours on the trail to the largest “city” in the region, Ghandruk.



One final view of Fishtail (Machhapuchhre) from the trail



## Day 9: Komrong or Ghandruk to Pokhara

2 hours, 1.5 miles (2.4 km), + 0 feet, - 1,300 feet

Today we finally get the slow start to the day we have been desiring all trip long. If in Komrong we will continue our downhill traverse from our beautiful viewpoint to the largest Gurung settlement in the Annapurna region. If we made it to Ghandruk last night we have this morning to relax and do some sight seeing in the “metropolis” of Ghandruk. After lunch in Ghandruk we walk on the trail until it drops us onto the newly constructed road. From here we get into our private transport and begin our bumpy journey to Pokhara. The road is slow going and after 3-4 hours of bumping and twisting down the canyon we arrive to the friendly atmosphere of Pokhara with hot showers and comfortable beds awaiting us.



A bed never looked so inviting...and hot showers too. So this is what heaven looks like.

## Day 10: Free day in Pokhara

The entire day here in Pokhara is yours to enjoy. Go for a walk around the lake, take an afternoon adventure up to a local estupa or relax in the wonderful atmosphere of this lakeside town and do some souvenir shopping. We are happy to arrange any activities you may want to enjoy while here including yoga, paragliding, rafting, and/or boat rental for the lake. Take the day to enjoy it however you wish. In the evening we will reconvene and enjoy our final meal together as a group in one of our all time favorite Pokhara restaurants.



Our group in celebration of a successful trek

## Day 11: Fly to Kathmandu

This morning starts early. After a delicious breakfast in the hotel we are off the airport. A short flight from Pokhara lands us back into Kathmandu. From here we return to our familiar hotel with feelings of success and happiness. The rest of the day is yours to tour the sights of Kathmandu or finish up any additional shopping you may want to do.

If you wish to extend your vacation in or around Pokhara we are happy to delay this flight (on an individual basis) as long as you would like to stay in the area.

\*Note: Our flight from Pokhara is early in the morning on Day 11 and most international flight itineraries (your flight home) will leave in the late afternoon or evening. It will depend on *your* specific itinerary but it is possible to depart for home on Day 11.

\*Please note that this itinerary is just an **example**. Although it may be followed it is also very possible that we will change our day to day trail plans based on the weather, the group, etc.

\*\*The distances and elevations (location, gain, and loss) are all approximate. While the numbers were recorded from my GPS they do not always align with other figures from other GPS's, maps etc. One of the many lessons to be learned from the Nepali culture is do not bother oneself with insignificant, uncontrollable details such as *exact* elevations, times, etc...learn to go with the flow. This is why many of the published maps of Nepal have conflicting distances and elevations. However I have done my best to accurately describe the trail everyday. Although some of the biggest discrepancies exist in distances the values given should provide some insight into each day.

\*\*\*The average trail times are not specific to our group. They are an average to give you an idea of how long a day we can expect. It is possible that you may walk faster or slower than the time given.

\*\*\*\*The trail time given does not reflect total time on the trail. It has been adjusted to reflect only the time walking. All rest areas, tea stops, lunch, etc were taken out of this time measurement to give you an idea of how long we will be on our feet each day.

