

## ISLAND PEAK (IMJA TSE), TREK and CLIMB



*Sunset at Island Peak Base Camp, looking towards Baruntse on the right*

This is one of the most popular trekking peaks in Nepal, and with good reason. “Imja Tse” not only provides an enjoyable climb but also some of the most spectacular scenery to be found in the Everest region. It provides novice climbers the opportunity to attain a Himalayan Summit.

The summit is interesting and attractive, with a highly glaciated west face rising from the Lhotse Glacier. One of the main reasons for its popularity is its technically straightforward ridge, which attracts a lot of novice climbers who have little or no experience of snow and ice climbing. A physically fit & acclimatised person is well qualified to make an ascent in the company of a qualified mountain guide. In the absence of previous rope and crampon work, a short orientation and demonstration on ice climbing performed by the guide at Base Camp is considered sufficient.

**Trek Duration:** A minimum of 22 days is recommended for this trip, with arrival in Kathmandu on Day 1 and departure from Kathmandu on Day 22.

**Grade:** Strenuous - this is a high altitude trek, culminating in a climb over snow and ice to over 6000m. As a guide, participants should be physically fit, capable of enduring 5-6 hour outings on consecutive days over terrain akin to the Lake District or equivalent in the UK, and feel competent to grasp basic snow and ice footwork under supervision. Previous Experience of trekking above 5000m is preferred.

**Altitude:** Much of the trek is spent at altitudes in excess of 4000m. In addition to summiting at 6189m, two acclimatisation points will also be reached:

Ama Dablam Base Camp (4600m) and Chhukhung Ri viewpoint (5400m).

**Style:** The trek and climb will be lead by an experienced, personable “climbing” guide, supported by a team of porters. You will stay in Tea Houses/Local Lodges en route to the peak, then camp at Base Camp and High Camp (2-3 nights).

## Lead Climbing Guide:

We will always assign a fully qualified Sherpa climbing guide who has extensive experience on Island Peak. Ang Dawa Sherpa is one the guides we regularly engage:



Ang Dawa Sherpa has been a “climbing” guide since 1999 and has climbed over 40 peaks above 6000m in his career. He has summited both Makalu I (8462m) and Makalu II (7678m) as lead guide, and Cho Oyu (8201m) as climbing Sirdar. In 1997 he reached 7,800m on Everest as a climbing Sherpa in support of a successful Malaysian expedition. Other than being a highly effective and organised trekking and mountain leader, Ang Dawa is extremely personable and fun to be with. He speaks good English and Spanish and is a master at Himalayan Rummy - Beware of bear-hugs on departure!

## Approach

The approach follows the traditional trekking route in to Everest up to Dingboche, then branches off right up to Chhukhung, a tiny settlement located at the toe of Lhotse glacier. To give climbers the best chance of attaining the summit of Island Peak, a carefully planned acclimatisation itinerary is essential. A range of acclimatisation side trips assist in this process and provide enjoyment; possible options include Lobuche and Kala Patthar (Everest viewpoint), Ama Dablam Base Camp and Chhukhung Ri.



*View from Dingboche to Island Peak (right) and Lhotse (left)*

## The Climb (South East Flank & South-West Ridge)



The name "Island Peak" was coined by Shipton, who thought this peak looked like 'an island in a sea of ice', wedged between the Lhotse and Lhotse Shar glaciers and surrounded on three sides by major peaks at the head of the Chhukhung valley. The mountain itself is the extension of the South Ridge of Lhotse Shar separated by a small col; the massif ridge formed by Nuptse (7,879m), Lhotse (8,501m), and Lhotse Shar (8,383m) dominates the view to the north. In the east, a good view of Makalu (8475m) is enjoyed, rising above the intervening ridge. To the south east lies Baruntse and to the south west, Ama Dablam; the Amphu Lapcha Pass (5845m) crosses the ridge running between and lies immediately to the south.

Normally, the base camp is set at Pareshaya Gyab (5,087m), on the south side of the mountain, between its base and the lateral moraine of the Imja Glacier. Camp should be positioned away from the main gullies in the event of heavy snowfall, owing to the potential risk for avalanche.

From base camp, a well acclimatised party in good condition can make the summit and return to the base camp in a day, having set off in the early hours of the morning. However, most climbers prefer to establish a high camp which facilitates a safe and less demanding ascent. From the base camp the route skirts south east around the base of Island Peak and climbs steep grassy slopes and scree to reach a series of rocky terraces at around 5600m in a protected position below a rock bluff. It is important for climbers to set off for the summit in good time before dawn to reach the toe of the glacier around sunrise, as high winds and cloud can often set in later in the morning.



A steady climb up a system of rocky gullies and broken scree leads to a short ridge before a wide platform at the toe of the glacier. Once on the glacier a path is found through a mildly crevassed section, bringing one out onto a large ice field which ascends gently towards the main summit ridge. To gain the ridge, climbers have to scale a short, but relatively steep face (50-55 degrees), clipped in to fixed ropes. Although this section is very straightforward, going is tiring! At the top of the face, the ridge is then climbed all the way to the summit, a distance of some 100m. Although not technically difficult, the ridge falls away steeply on both sides, enhancing the feeling of commitment; overall, the ridge is straightforward and fixed ropes are used to protect this final section of the climb, although strong winds coming over the top have turned less sure climbers back at this point.



## Itinerary

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| Day 1 | Arrive in Kathmandu (Hotel in Kathmandu)   |
| Day 2 | Free Day in Kathmandu (Hotel in Kathmandu) |
| Day 3 | Fly to Lukla and trek to Phakding (2610m)  |
| Day 4 | Trek to Namche Bazaar (3440)               |
| Day 5 | Rest day in Namche Bazaar                  |

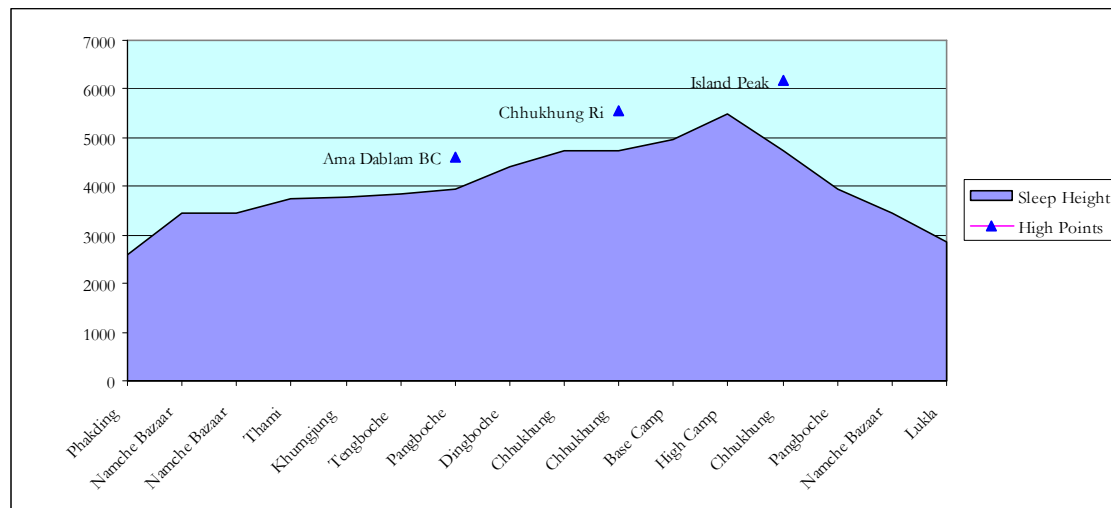
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| Day 6  | Trek to Thami (3750m)   |
| Day 7  | Trek to Khunde/Khumjung (3790m)   |
| Day 8  | Trek to Tengboche (3860m)   |
| Day 9  | Trek to Pangboche. Acclimatisation climb to Ama Dablam Base Camp (4600m).<br>Return to Pangboche (3930m). |
| Day 10 | Trek to Dingboche (4410m)   |
| Day 11 | Trek to Chhukhung (4730m)   |
| Day 12 | Acclimatisation climb to Chhukhung Ri (5550m). Return to Chhukhung.                                       |
| Day 13 | Trek to Island Peak Base Camp (4970m). Acclimatisation climb to High Camp (5500m). Return to Base Camp.   |
| Day 14 | Climb to Island Peak High Camp (5500m). Acclimatisation climb above High Camp. Return to High Camp.       |
| Day 15 | Climb to Summit (6189m). Descend to Chhukhung.  |
| Day 16 | BUFFER DAY  |
| Day 17 | Descend to Pangboche  |
| Day 18 | Descend to Namche Bazaar.   |
| Day 19 | Descend to Lukla.   |
| Day 20 | Fly Lukla-Kathmandu (Hotel in Kathmandu)  |
| Day 21 | Free (buffer) day in Kathmandu (Hotel Kathmandu)  |
| Day 22 | Depart Kathmandu  |

## Important Note

As you will be travelling in a mountain environment, please note that actual travel may alter owing to factors such as prevailing weather conditions and group acclimatisation. Activities and timings may vary slightly from those outlined, and decisions relating to pace and route will be at the discretion of your guide, who will at all times endeavour to enable the group to meet its objectives safely. All of our treks have been designed to ensure that proper acclimatisation takes place, and a buffer day has been built in to give you the best chance of attaining objectives in the event of a bad weather delay.

Chart Showing Trek Gradient

*height given in metres*



## Price:

The price for tailor-made expeditions depends upon group size, and the prevailing US\$/£ exchange rate at the time of booking. Please consult the Traverse Line Website ([www.traverseline.co.uk](http://www.traverseline.co.uk)) for current price guidelines, or contact our office directly for an accurate quotation, and more detailed information.

From time to time we run fixed date group treks, and when we do so, the price, and dates, for these expeditions will be shown on our website.

### Price Includes:

Airport pick up and departure service (4 times) - Kathmandu to Lukla return Airfare (including guide's fare) - 4 nights at a hotel in Kathmandu with breakfast (2 pre-trek, 2 post-trek) - Accommodation with all meals during trek (tea house trek then camping at Island Peak Base camp and High Camp) - Climbing Guides (1 for every 4 guests), porters and their Insurance (including mountain rescue), and all expenses on trek - National Park entry fee - Domestic airport taxes - Island Peak Climbing Permit - Camping & climbing gear hire and its transportation to and from Base Camp - TIMS Permits

### Price Excludes:

International flights and taxes - Personal and medical insurance - alcoholic and mineral beverages during the trek - international departure tax (NRS 1665 in 2008) - all gratuities.

## Group Size

In Traverse Line's view the best treks and climbs are made with small groups. The small guide-to-client ratio makes for more personal contact and a greater sense of involvement. Not only are small groups more intimate and more flexible, we believe that they are also safer in a high altitude environment. The maximum group size that we recommend for this climb is 10 persons. An additional climbing guide will join the party if the number of participants exceeds 4, and another if the group exceeds 8. The minimum group size for we will organise tailor-made expeditions for is 2 persons.

## International Porter Protection Group



The well-being of porters in Nepal is very important to us. Our partners in Nepal strive to ensure that their porters are properly clothed in the mountains and have medical insurance cover. Many of their porters rely on the [International Porter Protection Group](http://www.ippg.org) for access to low-cost equipment, as well as medical care, and our commitment is to make a small contribution to IPPG on behalf of each client who travels to Nepal with Traverse Line. We would encourage everyone travelling to Nepal to spare a few moments to read about the efforts of the IPPG, and make a further voluntary donation if they feel inclined.

## When to go

In general, Nepal's weather patterns are largely governed by the movement of the Asian monsoon, which gives rise to Nepal's wet season between June and September - the remainder of the year is predominantly dry. The period falling between the end of September/start of October until the end of November is one of the best times to visit. The vegetation is lush after the monsoon rains and the air is dean and fresh, with good visibility. Another excellent time to visit is between February and May; the terrain is very dry at this time of year, and visibility can be

limited owing to haze below 4000m. However, the weather is warm and pleasant and it's a great time to see many wildflowers in bloom. Visibility is usually excellent above 4000m and trails are less busy than the autumn period. December and January are still good in terms of climate and visibility but temperatures are lower; evenings in Kathmandu can be chilly and those trekking to high altitudes need to be properly prepared and equipped for comparatively lower temperatures.

## **Notes:**

1. It must be remembered that Glaciers change continuously and their features can vary considerably from one season to the next. We are mindful to update itineraries on a seasonal basis using feedback from our guides and clients. However, clients travelling out in a new season must bear in mind that both glacial features and snow conditions may have altered over the previous 6 months, and they may be asked to make a different approach to the summit than those described in the itinerary. In some instances, the summit may have become more awkward.
2. In certain circumstances, the guide assigned to our treks may need to be changed, and we reserve the right to assign a leader other than the one named on the itinerary. In such cases, we will always ensure the replacement guide meets the high standards we expect.