

## MERA PEAK CLIMB



*Summiteers April 2008*

### Overview

Mera Peak is situated in the Makalu Barun National Park on the edge of the Khumbu region. At 6476m it is the highest of the Nepal Trekking Peaks, and commands one of the best viewpoints in Nepal; there are panoramic views taking in, among others, Everest, Lohtse, Nuptse, Makalu, Cho Oyo, Kanchenjunga, Ama Dablam, Chamlang and Baruntse. However, Mera is technically easy to climb, attainable by non-climbers who are fit and who have an out-going sense of adventure, who are able to meet the challenges of trekking to significant altitude in the presence of a competent guide, supported by a team of porters. Climbers will need to make use of crampons to make the ascent, will carry a long ice axe for support, and will be roped to a guide across the glacier on summit day. First time users of these aids will be given instruction on their use below base camp. The ascent from the Mera La is gradual and sustained, before reaching a short, but straightforward climb up a 40 degree slope to Mera's central summit. Note that the slightly higher North Summit is presently heavily crevassed and expeditions currently head for the Central Summit nearby (6461m).

Our approach route to Mera avoids crossing the Zatrwa La (4610m), and follows a very attractive route through farming settlements and beautiful forest. However, the Zatrwa La is crossed on the return journey, providing further interest and contrast before your return to Lukla.

## Approach Route



Direct approaches to Mera are blocked by high passes: the Inkhu valley to Mera's west is relatively free of permanent habitation with the exception of some seasonal lodges, and the Honggu valley to Mera's east is completely wild. Our approach route deliberately avoids crossing the Zatrwa La (4610m) into the Inkhu, which many commercial operators use, but which causes all sorts of problems for groups flying in to and

ascending from Lukla. Most people get away with it, and make the crossing without serious difficulty, although very few enjoy the doing so and many experience nausea and headaches. However, all too often, trekkers using this route get seriously sick, and have to be rushed down. Our itinerary follows a side route via Phoiyou, Pangkongma and the forests of the lower Inkhu valley. This offers much better and above all safer acclimatisation - it's also an infinitely more pleasant approach to Mera, and you pass through unspoiled forests rich with rhododendron and magnolia. There are also far fewer people, with adds to the overall enjoyment.

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

**Grade:** Very Strenuous - this is a high altitude trek and climb in a less habited section of the Himalaya, involving camping on most nights. The trek passes through uninhabited forests, across rough glacial terrain, and involves a climb over glacier to almost 6500m. Team members must be fit before travelling out for this expedition.

**Altitude:** Much of the trek is spent at altitudes in excess of 4000m. The North summit of Mera Peak is 6476m, making it the highest trekking peak in Nepal. Presently the North summit is heavily crevassed, and expeditions currently make for the Central Summit at 6461m.

**Style:** This is a camping-style trek as it takes place in an undeveloped region featuring only a handful of basic lodges.

**Group Size:** The maximum group size we recommend for ascending trekking peaks is 10. A second climbing guide is engaged if the group size exceeds 4, and third if it exceeds 8.

## Lead Climbing Guide:

We will always assign a fully qualified Sherpa climbing guide who has extensive experience on Mera 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!



*En route to High Camp*

## Itinerary

### **Day 1 - Arrive in Kathmandu (1300m)**

You will be met in the arrivals hall by our representative, and will be transferred by vehicle to your hotel located either in the centre or very close to the centre of Kathmandu. We use a range of hotels which we know, and will make a suitable booking following a discussion about your preferences. Once you have settled in, you will be given a short briefing to help you orientate in Kathmandu and about your forthcoming journey into the high Himalaya.

*Overnight in a Hotel in Kathmandu on a bed and breakfast basis*

### **Day 2 - Free Day in Kathmandu**

On your first day in Nepal it's useful to have free time in Kathmandu to pick up any last minute bits of gear that you might wish to hire or buy, get over your jet-lag, and take in some sightseeing in this fascinating city. Centrally-located hotels are ideally located for exploring the principal cultural sanctuaries of the city, and the thriving tourist district of Thamel, where many restaurants and bars are located. Kathmandu Durbar Square is a 15-20 minute walk from Thamel and other important cultural and religious sites are easily

accessed by taxi or rickshaw. In Thamel one can stock up on personal supplies and rent any specialist equipment required.

*Overnight in a Hotel in Kathmandu on a bed and breakfast basis*

### **Day 3 - Fly to Lukla. Trek to Phoiyou (2835m), 4½ to 5 hours**

You will be collected from your hotel early and transferred to the airport in time for a morning flight from Kathmandu to Lukla (2,840m), where there is a dramatically positioned, upward-sloping airstrip situated below imposing mountains. On arrival you will make for Paradise Lodge for refreshment, and depending upon your time of arrival, lunch, before setting off on foot. You'll start your trek by heading south out of Lukla, towards the foothills, on the main footpath to Jiri (the closest road head, about a week's walk away), which initially makes a longish descent to Surke (2290m), where you cross the Surke Khola. From here, you make a steady climb for a few hours to the Chotak La (2945m), before contouring for about an hour to the small settlement of Phoiyou (2835m), where you'll sleep in one of the small lodges, and be catered for by your camping crew. Your route for the first four days passes through rhododendron and magnolia country, which fill the landscape with colour in the spring.

*Overnight in a small lodge at Phoiyou*

### **Day 4 - Trek to Pangkongma (2898m), 7 hours**

Today you begin by climbing gradually, and will get a sighting of Cho Oyo (8153m) as you look back up the Dudh Koshi river. After about an hour you leave the main Jiri route, taking a left hand fork that climbs quite steeply through bamboo and rhododendron forest to a small tea house situated on the Khari La (3091m). As you round the corner, you look across to the small farming settlement of Pangkoma, situated on a short plateau near the head of the valley. Laid out below is an extensive patchwork of farming terraces and small settlements, including Kharikhola, where there is a hospital built by the Himalayan Trust. There are extensive views over the foothills as you descend through attractive forests to a small tea-house perched on a prominent shoulder near Karte. From here you make a steep descent to a small river, before a steady pull-up for just under an hour on a stepped trail to Pangkongma. Once again, you'll spend the night in a small lodge, and be cooked for by your camping staff.

*Overnight in a small lodge at Pangkongma*

### **Day 5 - Trek along forest trail and camp in a farm clearing (2842m), 4½ hours**

Wake up to superb views across the Dudh Koshi River to Shorong Himal (6959m), which will catch the early morning light. After a leisurely start, you'll cross the Pangkongma La (3150m), situated a 40 minute climb above the village, before contouring round and descending to the small settlement of Sibuje (2822m), where you'll take an early picnic lunch. . It's an idyllic spot on a prominent spur, and you'll look straight up the steep-sided Inkhu valley to the rising Himalaya beyond (once over the Pangkongma La, you'll start getting your first views of Mera). At Sibuje you break from the main trail, and enter deep forests. From here on in, with the exception of the small farm clearing where you'll camp tonight, it's very possible you won't encounter anyone until you reach Kote. The narrow trail winds through dense, mixed forest, undulating high above the Inkhu, before bringing you to a sheltered clearing after about an hour and a half. Here, a few terraced farming enclosures in a wide clearing provide an excellent camping spot.

*Overnight in tents on a small farming terrace*

### **Day 6 - Continue through forests and camp in a forest clearing (3200m), 8 hours**

Today you continue to follow the beautiful forest trail than winds its way up the left hand side of the Inkhu, high above the deep cleft of the valley floor. The trail passes through deep juniper, bamboo and rhododendron, and has an ancient, little used feel to it - it's

narrow in places with moss-covered steps laid in an older time. One has the feeling of an old-style approach to the Himalaya - no tea houses, high wire bridges or gates, just a winding route that bends to the geography. At the top of the first spur above camp there are superb views of the imposing south face of Mera. After 3 hours a steep descent is made to a river, which makes a good stop for lunch (2853m). After lunch, a 15 minute climb leads to a contour path which undulates through attractive forests. After an hour a "false" campsite is reached where there are several tent terraces, but no water. The path ascends steeply from here, much of it stepped, for about 260m. Descend briefly to a flattish contour path, which passes beneath a tall nose of rock suspended about 100m above the path. Ascend again to a high point at around 3350m, then descend steeply for 15 minutes to a river, which tumbles through a broad stand of pines, littered with boulders. From here it's a short climb of a few minutes to a campsite situated behind bamboo lying to the left of a broad rock (it's easy to miss!). 6 or 7 terraced pitches occupy a shady clearing below an imposing rocky overhang, at an altitude of approximately 3200m.

*Overnight in tents in a forest clearing*

### **Day 7 - Trek to Kote (3643m), 6 hours**

Today you continue through forests on a sometimes broken trail that gradually trends upwards, with frequent undulation, to reach a small group of huts at Takthok (3578m) after 3 hours. Expeditions descending the Zatrwa La will pass through the settlement *en route* to Kote, and you can expect to meet other trekkers from here on in to Mera. Each of the next three settlements leading to Mera consists of a small group of tea houses, with Thangnak probably being the largest. You can purchase soft drinks and chocolates at each, but all the tea houses are much more basic than those in the Khumbu, and provide simple bunking platforms for porters and woodstoves around which to gather. After lunch at Takthok, there's a descent of about 1 hour to the Inkhu Khola, which you follow for around half an hour before cutting up through tall forests for the last 45 minutes before Kote. The Inkhu is an impressive site when you descend to it - in the late 1990s a lake burst its wall above Thangnak, causing devastation in the valley - the subsequent catastrophic erosion is very evident along the riverside. Overnight camp

*Overnight in tents at Kote*

### **Day 8 - Kote to Thangnak (4289m), 5 hours**

Today you continue to ascend the Inkhu Khola, the trail picking its way along the boulder-strewn river valley floor. The scenery changes today as the forest zone gives way to moraine and open scrub. As the valley swings left you look directly to Kyashar (6770m) rising abruptly at the head of the valley above Thangnak, with the twin summits of Kusum Kanguru (6367m) drawing your eye to the left. After two and a quarter hours you reach a small croft (3999m) on the scrub plain which offers some shelter for lunch. You are almost certainly going to be feeling the altitude at this point. It's another 1hr 45mins gradual slog over scrub and lateral moraine to Thangnak, which consists of a variety of small, basic lodges, camp terraces and walled fields.

*Overnight in tents at Thangnak*

### **Day 9 - Rest day at Thangnak, and acclimatisation walk**

For acclimatisation, a good outing here which enables you to gain height relatively quickly, is a foray onto the eastern flanks of Kusum Kanguru, which affords reasonable views of the western wall of Mera, the southern wall of Kyashar and of your forthcoming approach route to Khare. An alternative is to hike to Dig Kharka (4659m), although this lies on the trail to Khare, and will be repeated tomorrow.

*Overnight in tents at Thangnak*

**Day 10 - Thangnak to Khare (5045m), 3¾ hours**

Camping in Thangnak is a joy as the sun hits the tents early! Today you ascend to Khare, via Dig Kharka, a small broken croft on a flat plain surrounded by magnificent peaks. From Thangnak you climb up a winding path over boulder-strewn slopes for about an hour, before ascending more easily alongside a stream until you reach Dig Kharka (4659m). Behind you there are wonderful views back down the valley to Thangnak and Kusum Kanguru behind, and especially the cathedralesque spire of Kyashar, which dominates the skyline. The north face of Mera and its summit rises imposingly to your right, and you start getting good views of your route upwards. The final climb up to Khare at the head of the valley is relatively steep and there are wonderful views all round from its vantage point high above the valley. Late lunch served in a tea house.

*Overnight in tents at Khare*

**Day 11 - Rest day at Khare (acclimatisation walk and ice work practice)**

Today you'll ascend the moraine above Khare to the start of the Mera Glacier (5300m) - the trail is generally quite steep, save for a short flat section about half way to the glacier, and is strenuous in plastic boots (which you'll need to wear today). The climb will aid with acclimatisation and you will also be able to practice using crampons and ice axe, as well as ascending a fixed rope (set up by your guide) with a "jumal" and descending using a "figure-of-8 ring" or belay device - all simple things but essential to get a feel for if you have not used these before. Having crested the first ridge above Khare you gain excellent views of your route via the Mera La to high camp and the summit, with views continuing to open as you ascend. Afterwards, descend for a late lunch back at Khare.

*Overnight in tents at Khare*

**Day 12 - Khare to Mera Peak Base Camp (5340m), via Mera La (5415m), 4 hours**

Today you repeat the climb made yesterday to the foot of the Mera Glacier, and continue up to the Mera La. The toe of the glacier is initially quite steep, but you quickly reach a wide, gently sloping plateau which you traverse to the Mera La, a broad glaciated pass giving access to the Honggu valley on the far side, and Mera Peak itself. As you traverse the glacier, the route to high camp and Mera's summits spreads out before you. You may make out the specks of climbers descending the glacier to high camp after a summit attempt. Once at the Mera La, drop down a short way on the other side to base camp situated on sheltered terraces.

*Overnight in tents at Base Camp*

**Day 13 - Mera La to Mera Peak High Camp (5780m), 2¾ hours**

In the morning, you head back to the Mera La and turn left towards high camp. The glacier steepens quickly, and it's then a long, sustained slog up a winding path to the camp, which is situated behind a rocky outcrop high on the left. As you ascend, tremendous views open up behind you, revealing (as you scan from west to east) the peaks of Cho Oyu, Ama Dablam, Nuptse, Everest, Lhotse, Baruntse, Makalu I, and Kanchenjunga in the far distance. The dramatic west face of Chamlang rears up in the near foreground, on the opposite side of the Honggu Valley. High Camp is situated on narrow sloping scree terraces, in a protected position with superb views.

*Overnight in tents at High Camp*

**Day 14 - Mera Peak Central Summit (6461m) and descent to Mera Peak Base Camp (5340), 9-10 hours**

On summit day you will be woken with tea at around 02h00, giving you time to kit yourself up, have a hot breakfast and then make final preparations for a departure between 03h00 and 03h30. In April 2008 the approach to the North Summit (6476m) was heavily crevassed, and expeditions headed for the slightly lower, though no less dramatic, Central Summit (6461m). The ascent is gradual (15-20 degrees) and sustained

over glacier, requiring about 4½ hours to reach the top. It's extremely tiring work in the oxygen-depleted air, and you have to dig deep to attain the summit. As you ascend, it's wonderful to see the sun rise over Kanchenjunga in the east, and light the tip of Everest and Makalu to your right as you climb. On reaching a short plateau, the final 40m involves ascending a 45 degree slope, stepping over two narrow crevasses (which will be protected by fixed ropes) before reaching a wide, gently sloping summit. From the summit there are superb views across the Nepalese Himalaya, taking in Kanchenjunga, Makalu I and II, Lhotse, Everest and Cho Oyo. Mera's position on the edge of the Himalaya means that you also get a real sense of height as you look out precipitously over the foothills to the south west. Descend to high camp in about 1hour 45mins, where you have lunch, and a short rest, before packing up. Descend to Mera La, and drop down to Base Camp. Depending upon the team's fitness, it is possible to descend to Khare. A decision will be made the evening before as to which camp you will descend to.

*Overnight in tents at Mera Peak Base Camp*

### **Day 15 - Descend to Thangnak (4289m)**

*Overnight in tents at Thangnak*

### **Day 16 - Rest Day at Thangnak**

Thangnak is a good place to take a well-deserved rest. There are a handful of basic lodges, some selling chocolates and drinks. The location is more dramatic and pleasant than Kote, lower down, and a better place to rest up. This day can be used as a spare day in case of a summit delay.

*Overnight in tents at Thangnak*

### **Day 17 - Descend to Kote (3643m)**

*Overnight in tents at Kote*

### **Day 18 - Trek from Kote to Tuli Kharka (4300m), 7 hours**

Today you deviate off the route by which you approached Mera, heading up towards the Zatrwa La (4610m) from the tiny hamlet of Tak Tok. As you are now fully acclimatised, the Zatrwa La provides a safe, interesting and speedy return route to Lukla. From Tak Tok the path heads steadily up to some huts, and zig-zags through lovely forest. The final stage is narrow and more precipitous, and you'll eventually traverse round to a small col situated just before Tuli Kharka, a small group of huts and tea houses.

*Overnight camp at Tuli Kharka*

### **Day 19 - Trek from Tuli Kharka to Lukla (2840m), via the Zatrwa La (4610m), 7 hours**

From Tuli Kharka it's a straightforward pull up of about 2 hours to the pass. However, the descent on the other side is fairly steep and can be a little treacherous if it's snow-covered. Your guide will carry a rope, and you must ensure that you are carrying crampons and ice axe. Descend to a tea shop for a well-earned rest, then continue through rhododendron forest, and eventually cultivated farmlands to Lukla. Once in Lukla, you'll head for old-established Paradise Lodge. The lodge is an institution, having been frequented by famous climbing names, and is very cosy and welcoming.

*Overnight in Paradise Lodge or equivalent*

### **Day 20 - Return flight to Kathmandu**

Following a relatively early start, take your return flight to Kathmandu. Transport will meet you and you will be escorted back to your hotel, which you'll reach late morning.

*Overnight at a Hotel in Kathmandu on a bed and breakfast basis*

## Day 21 - Free day in Kathmandu

Having a free day in Kathmandu enables you to relax after your long trek (there's a pool at the hotel), catch up on any shopping, and maybe do some gentle sight-seeing. A worthwhile excursion is to spend a day at Braktapur, a medieval town located a few kilometres from the city periphery. It's more laid back than Kathmandu, features some wonderful architecture in the pedestrianised old city, and is a good place for shopping (this is one of the best places to buy *Thangkas*).

*Overnight at a Hotel in Kathmandu on a bed and breakfast basis*

## Day 22 - International Departure

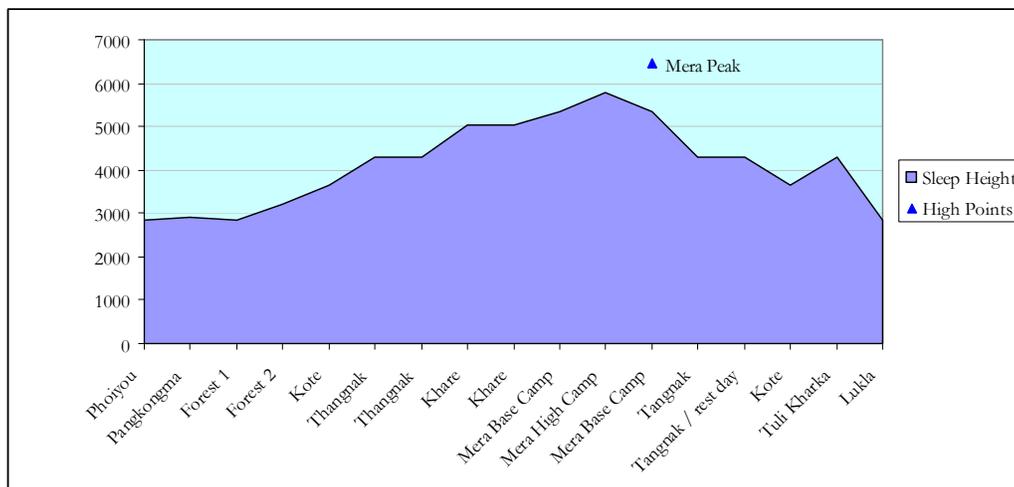
You will be collected from your hotel at a time arranged by your guide, and transferred by vehicle to the airport in time for your international departure.

## 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.

Please note also that a **Satellite Phone** and **Hyperbaric (Gamow-Type) bag** are carried for safety on this trek.

Chart Showing Trek and Climb Gradient



## 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 nights pre-trek and 2 nights post-trek) - Accommodation with all meals during trek (camping style trek, except the final night which is spent in a tea house) - Climbing Guides (1 for every 4 guests), porters and their insurance (including mountain rescue), and all expenses on trek - Domestic airport taxes - Mera Peak Climbing Permit - Hire of all communal camping and climbing gear - transportation of gear and trekking staff - TIMS Permits

**Price Excludes:**

International flights and taxes - Personal and medical insurance - alcoholic and mineral beverages during the trek - international departure tax (NRS 1665) - 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](#) 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 that 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.