

# Annapurna Circuit

## Mythical Valleys of Nar & Phu

Friday October 9<sup>th</sup> - Saturday October 31<sup>st</sup> 2009

Saturday October 31<sup>st</sup> - Sunday November 22<sup>nd</sup> 2009

Saturday October 9<sup>th</sup> - Sunday October 31<sup>st</sup> 2010

**US\$3150 from Kathmandu**

All the highlights of the famous Annapurna Circuit  
Dhaulagiri(8167m), Manaslu(8163m), Annapurna(8091m).

Trek to the remote Buddhist settlements of Nar & Phu.

18 Days Fully Supported trekking. 4 Nights Hotel Kathmandu.

The Annapurna Circuit in Nepal is an amazingly varied trekking route, offering a spectacular array of magnificent mountain scenery and ancient settlements. It truly is, one of the 'Greatest Treks in the World'. We start out in the lush, green Nepalese foothills and gradually ascend to cross 5000m passes, with awesome views of three of the world's highest mountains. The diversity of Hindu and Buddhist villages and ancient sacred sites reflect the ever changing physical landscapes. Complementing the justifiably popular Annapurna Circuit trails are the seldom visited Valleys of Nar and Phu. Only recently opened to foreigners these rock gorges and snow covered mountain passes are home to the Tibetan speaking peoples who have lived for centuries in the Mythical stone built villages of Nar and Phu, We have the opportunity to experience the unique feeling of being some of the first trekkers to explore these ancient trails.

After crossing the classic Himalayan pass, the Kang La (5306m), we rejoin the main Annapurna Circuit at Braga. Depending on the prevailing weather and snow conditions we may take the exposed rocky trails, to Tilicho Lake and cross the Mesokanta La before descending to the mountain airstrip at Jomsom. Or we may take the classic crossing of the Thorung La (5416m) and descend through the sacred settlement of Muktinath to finish our trek at Jomsom. Here we stay in one of the many mountain lodges and say farewell to our local crew with a traditional meal and a jug or two of the local 'chang' beer. Our mountain flight back to Kathmandu goes via the lakeside town of Pokhara and rewards us with our final view of the breathtaking Annapurna mountain range. Back in Kathmandu there is time for some bargain hunting or further exploration of the many fascinating shrines and temples in the Kathmandu Valley, before our final meal together in one of the city's finest restaurants. Following our reconnaissance trip in 2007, Wilderness Trekking owner, Mick Bromley declared this the finest Himalayan trek he has ever undertaken.

# Itinerary

## **Day 1: Group arrival and briefing in Kathmandu (1300m) – Hotel.**

On arrival at Tribhuvan International airport on the outskirts of Kathmandu, you will be met and escorted to our hotel in the heart of this vibrant city. We will get together this evening and enjoy our first meal together as a group, where there will be plenty of opportunity to discuss the finer details of our Himalayan journey.

## **Day 2: Sightseeing and 'fine tuning' in Kathmandu (1300m) – Hotel.**

This morning we take an expertly guided tour of some of the most fascinating sacred sites in the Kathmandu Valley. The great Buddhist temple of Swyambunath, and the most important Hindu temple and cremation site of Pashupatinath are an eye opening introduction to the complex cultural traditions of Kathmandu. We take a leisurely lunch in the 'tranquil gardens of 'Mike's Breakfast' and spend the afternoon exploring the vibrant heart of Kathmandu on foot. There is the opportunity for last minute shopping and equipment checks before we head out on trek. This evening we can relax in one of the City's finest restaurants, maybe even indulging a night cap at the expeditions favorite, Sam's Bar.

## **Day 3: Drive to Bhulbhule (840m) – Camp.**

We take an early breakfast in preparation for our 6 hour bus journey to Bhulbhule. The scenic Pokhara highway makes a fascinating drive through the foothills of the Himalaya and the road has been greatly improved in recent years. Two hours before the reaching Pokhara, we head north from the town of Dumre, and continue to Beshishar. On reaching Beshishar, we continue along the Marsyangdi River to Bhulbhule and our overnight camp beside the river and a couple of picturesque tea houses.

## **Day 4: Trek to Bahun Danda (1310m) – Camp.**

Today's walk begins on an easy winding path for about an hour and then some short but steep climbs follow the banks of the Marsyangdi River. We take a leisurely lunch on the way, before reaching our overnight camp at the ridge top village of Bahun Danda.

## **Day 5: Trek to Chamche (1680m) – Camp.**

The trail now climbs above the river for a couple hours to Jagat. Continuing on through this fertile river valley brings us to camp at Chamche.

## **Day 6: Trek to Dharapani (1860m) – Camp.**

A stiff climb after breakfast and we start to see a change in the landscape as we are slowly gaining altitude. A more leisurely couple of hours trekking and a few bridge crossings bring us to Dharapani. Depending on our trekking pace we may decide to head direct to camp for a later lunch, allowing us a free afternoon to explore or relax around camp.

## **Day 7: Trek to Koto (2600m) – Camp.**

The air begins to cool a little as we climb through forests to Bagarchhap, the first village on the trek with typical Tibetan architecture. Continuing to climb through forests of pine and oak, we pass through Danakyu before coming to a thundering waterfall, where we turn left and head up the high trail to Koto. After an hour or so we reach the Gurung village of Timang and looking back we may have views of

Manaslu (8163m) one of the world's 8000m peaks. Heading back down to the village of Koto, the gateway to Nar and Phu, we can look straight up at nearby Annapurna II (7937m).

**Day 8: Trek to Dharamsala (3230m) – Camp.**

A very exciting morning as we branch off from the main Annapurna Circuit trail and enter the side canyon heading to Nar and Phu. We complete some check post formalities and begin our walk through beautiful pine forests above the Phu Khola. The route sometimes gets washed away and we continue slowly up to our tiny camping place in the trees at the pilgrims resting place of Dharamsala.

**Day 9: Trek to Kyang (3720m) – Camp.**

A fantastic challenging trek today as we head for the next reliable water source at Kyang. A steep 300m climb takes us above the tree line and onto a 3,500 meter plateau. We pass by the scenic kharka of Meta, 3560 meters, a winter settlement of Nar. A kharka is a high altitude grazing area and we may see our first yaks. The mountains around us are spectacular and the Phu Kosi is now far below us. We pass through Chyako another winter settlement, one where Khampa freedom fighters from Tibet sometimes sheltered. Beautiful but tiring undulations on rocky trails eventually bring us to Kyang, the extensive winter settlement of Phu, on a plateau high above the river. A classic Himalayan trekking day ends at a stunning Himalayan campsite. A day to remember.

**Day 10: Exploration day at Kyang (3720m) – Camp.**

A well earned rest day and an ideal opportunity for acclimatizing and exploration around Kyang. Most people take the chance to relax and take in the stunning scenery from our camp. We will arrange a gentle walk up one of the hills around Kyang to help with our acclimatization process, following the old mountaineering practice of 'climb high, sleep low'. Kyang is an ideal place to relax and reflect on our journey so far, tomorrow we reach our 'Mythical' destination of Phu.

**Day 11: Trek to Phu (4050m) - Camp.**

A gentle and magical day as we follow the rocky trail to Phu. Sometimes the pathway is carved into canyon walls and we will pass many Chortens and Mani walls reminding us of the strong Tibetan Buddhist influence on this remote region. A short, steep climb brings us to Phu gateway. An old stone doorway through which all that have ever been to Phu must have passed. After a short while we see the unbelievable sight of Phu, a stone built settlement on top of crumbling rocky towers. Just before the bridge to Phu, a line of wonderful chortens color the landscape and lead the way to the main village. Above the houses is an old Buddhist Gompa or Monastery. We set up camp just below the village and may head up to Tashi Lhakhang Gompa to pay our respects to Lama Karma Sonam Rimpoche, who came to Nepal with HH the Dalai Lama back in 1959.

**Day 12: Exploration around Phu (4050m) – Camp.**

A fantastic opportunity to explore in the village of Phu and its spectacular surroundings. Last time we were here the villagers were busy threshing the recently harvested crop of barley. We can take an energetic hike to a small summit above the village or relax and take in the atmosphere and honor of being in a visibly unchanged, ancient environment. We have earned this day to enjoy a unique area. Photographers will be in paradise.

**Day 13: Trek to Yughat (3800m) – Camp.**

We must leave Phu behind and trek back through the ancient gateway as we descend all the way to the river. Crossing the Phu Khola pass an enormous Chorten before a tough climb up to the spectacular campsite of Yughat. One of the most magical camping spots of the trek.

**Day 14: Trek to Kang La Phedi (4530m) – Camp.**

We continue yesterday's climb up to Nar, passing another series of colorful Chortens and old gateway, eventually coming into view of the barley fields that surround the village. We have time to explore the old settlement before continuing up the gently sloping Ghatte Khola to our camp below the pass at Kang La Phedi.

**Days 15: Crossing the Kang La (5300m) to Ngawal (3660m) – Camp.**

The Kang La at 5300 meters is an absolutely spectacular pass looking over Annapurna II, Gangapurna and Tilicho peak. It also has all the features of a classic Himalayan pass crossing and although not technically difficult we will certainly feel the altitude on the way over. The pass is permanently snow covered and our progress will be dependent on the snow conditions, so an early start is essential. The trail down is initially steep and we take time to ensure all our team descends safely. Ahead, the panoramic views of the Annapurna Massif are truly magnificent. We descend a vertical mile to Ngawal beautiful old village of cobbled streets and prayer wheels, obviously a hub of religious activity.

**Day 16: Trek to Braga (3360m) – Lodge.**

We are now in the dry arid region of Manang which is situated in a localized rain shadow. We take a very relaxed, short walk to Braga, where we stay to avoid the more developed settlement of Manang a further ½ hour up the trail. Tonight we make use of one of the lodges and take the opportunity to sort our equipment and clothes, maybe even getting hold of some hot water for a shower! There are numerous exploration possibilities around the village.

**Days 17: Trek to Tilicho Base Camp (4150m) – Camp.**

From Braga we will find the most accurate, recent information on the snow conditions up at Tilicho Lake. If there has been recent snow fall we may take the main Annapurna Circuit trail over the Thorung La, via Muktinath to Jomsom. If conditions allow we can take the far less travelled trails to Tilicho Lake and over the Mesokanto La to Jomsom. The trail to Tilicho Base Camp is stunning and crosses many vertiginous scree slopes, walking poles or a stick may be helpful on these sections. The base camp itself is a single tea house situated in a cold rocky basin.

**Day 18: Trek Tilicho Lake (4960m) – Camp.**

Another one of those short steep climbs, up to the stunning mountain amphitheatre of Tilicho Peak and Tilicho Lake, one of the highest lakes in the world. The scenery is truly awesome; we have arrived at one of the Himalaya's most eulogized sites.

**Day 19: Cross the Mesokanto La (5121m) and trek to High Kharka (4500m) – Camp.**

The crossing of the Mesokanto La is a non-technical snow crossing, but due to the snow conditions and altitude we need an early start. This pass is one of the only routes across the great mountainous walls surrounding Tilicho Lake. The scenery is incredible, making today's walk, true high altitude Himalayan trekking!

**Day 20: Trek to Jomsom (2720m) – Lodge.**

The views from High Kharka are stunning and we may be treated to a spectacular sunrise over Dhaulagiri, at 8167m another one of the world's 8000m peaks. We make a very relaxed and spectacular descent to the warmth and relative hustle and bustle of Jomsom. Tonight we will stay in one of the many lodges close to the airstrip, and say our final farewells to our new found friends and trekking crew. Our departure may well take the form of a celebration, with a few jugs of local brew for our crew and the chance to give some gifts and words of thanks for a fantastic journey through the Himalaya.

**Day 21: Fly via Pokhara to Kathmandu (1300m) – Hotel.**

An early start with bags packed for our mountain flight via Pokhara, back to Kathmandu. Our route takes us down the Kali Gandaki, the deepest river gorge on the planet, and offers us our final views of the Annapurna and Dhaulagiri Massifs. In the unlikely event of poor weather delaying our flight, we do have a contingency day built into our itinerary. On our arrival in Kathmandu we will be met and transferred to our hotel where we can make use of all the facilities that the city has to offer.

**Day 22: Exploration of the Kathmandu Valley and farewell dinner (1300m) – Hotel.**

There are endless possibilities for exploration and relaxation in the Kathmandu Valley. A visit to the ancient Durbar or central squares of Patan and Bhaktapur are architecturally fascinating and the shopping possibilities are endless. The day is free to spend entirely as you wish and there is plenty of advice available to help you make the most of your final day in the Capital. Tonight we will share our final meal together in one of Kathmandu's finest restaurants.

**Day 23: Group departure.**

Farewells, as we pack our bags and are escorted to Tribhuvan International Airport for our homeward journey.