

# French-Pass Dhaulagiri Base Camp Trekking

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Dhaulagiri Circuit trek via French-Pass is quite challenging and goes through the off beaten path with encircled Mt Dhaulagiri which is the seventh highest mountain in the world.

This trek begins from Beni which is the district headquarter of Myagdi where Magars are the main ethnic group living in the area. After following, Myagdi Khola trail goes through many settlements and thickly forest jungles through endless Dhaulagiri moraine for several days till you reach Dhaulagiri Base Camp. As we reach there we will get ourselves ready for crossing “French Pass (5630m)” which is the main highlight of the trip which ultimately leads us to Hidden valley. This exhausting straight forward pass is situated with the northern slopes of Dhaulagiri (8167m) offering fabulous views of Himalayas in the vicinity.

We will stay overnight in the Hidden valley and next day we will trek down to Marpha in the Kali Gandaki Valley and cross Dhampus pass. After crossing Dhampus pass we will trek to Jomsom where the trek comes to an end.

## Itinerary

### **Day 01: Kathmandu arrival / Transfer to Hotel.**

Arrive at Kathmandu International Airport and get transferred to a hotel. Our Tour Manager will give you the briefing about the trip upon arrival in the Hotel.

### **Day 02: Kathmandu Sightseeing**

After breakfast, proceed for a city tour of Kathmandu visiting Durbar Square, a complex of palaces, courtyard and temples, built between the 12th and 18th centuries used to be the seat of the ancient Malla kings of Kathmandu. In the afternoon visit the Swoyambunath Stupa and Patan City. Swoyambhunath Stupa, atop the hillock is one of the holiest Buddhist sites in Nepal enlisted in the World Heritage Site. Patan City is an enchanting melange of palace buildings, artistic courtyard and former palace complex. One remarkable monument here is a 16th century temple dedicated to the Hindu God Lord Krishna, built entirely of stone.

### **Day 03: Fly Kathmandu to Pokhara (980m) then drive to Beni & Trek to Durbang 1110m.**

This morning we will take a flight to Pokhara, Nepal's second largest town (820m) and make our way to our first night's camp. On arrival we are greeted with sights of the entire Annapurna Range. We drive through pitch road until Beni and then off road after that. We make our way to Darbang (1110m) for the night; today's journey takes approx. 6-7 hours.

### **Day 04: Trek to Dharapani 1200m. Walk approx. 7 hours**

It is initially an easy walk as we follow the valley upstream but then we take a steeper route in the afternoon from the village of Phedi. The trail winds through conifer forests and then levels out as we head into Dharapani. At this busy Magar village time can be taken to explore while camp is set in the schoolyard on the far side of the town. Dhaulagiri dominates to the northeast while the Gurja Himal is to the northwest.

#### **Day 05: Trek to Muri 1800m. Walk approx 7 hours**

An ascent of the ridge initially brings us out onto broad hillsides of cultivated fields and an open view of the Myagdi Khola. We traverse down towards it, crossing the Dhara Khola and climbing steeply to Muri, a traditional Magar village. As we approach Muri, numerous valleys open before us to provide vistas of Dhaulagiri I (8167m) and the Gurja Himal (7193m).

#### **Day 06: To Bogare 2080m. Walk approx 6 hours**

A solid day of walking. Dropping first to the Dhola Khola, we climb a ridge to Gorban Dhara. The view from the passes is excellent and Ghustang (6465m) rises from the valley head. We descend to the Myagdi, ascend steeply and descend again to the river as the valley narrows to form a spectacular gorge.

#### **Day 07: Trek To Dobang 2430m. Walk approx 7 hours**

Another excellent walk as we traverse through the gorge with its many short up and downs, the result of parts of the trail regularly being washed away by the monsoonal rains. The trail leads through temperate forests to the beautiful setting of Dobang. There are few villages now and we trek in dense rhododendron forest and across high pastures.

#### **Day 08: Trek to Sallaghari 2820m. Walk approx 7 hours**

Some steeper climbing today as we head up towards the moraine and barren terrain of the glaciers which originate from Dhaulagiri. Firstly we descend to cross the Choriban Khola and trek through temperate forest. As we descend we enjoy glimpses of the west wall of Dhaulagiri, an inspiration for our efforts so far. We cross the Myagdi Khola and trek high above the river to Chartare.

#### **Day 09 - 10: Trek To Italian Base Camp 3500m. Walk approx 4 hours & rest day**

Our route takes us through the rhododendron and conifer forest and above the tree line. This is a short and very pleasant day's walk. The southwest face of Dhaulagiri I looms above us and the snow-covered flanks of Manapati (6380m) rise to the south. The huge rock parapets of Tsaaurabong Peak (6395m) are to our west and the huge peaks of Dhaulagiri II (7751m), Dhaulagiri III (7715m) and Dhaulagiri V (7618m) fill the western sky.

**Day 11: Trek To Japanese Base Camp or Deposit Camp 4100m. Walk approx. 4 hours**

We ascend and cross the glacier to our camp in the moraine. It is quite steep in places and it will be necessary to travel together to ensure a safe and steady passage across. It is a spectacular camp with Manapati, Dhaulagiri and Tsaaurabong Peaks surrounding us. The past few days' walk have been short to allow full appreciation of the spectacular views, and to acclimatise well for the tough day ahead.

**Day 12 - 13: Trek To Dhaulagiri Base Camp 4550m. Walk approx 4 hours & rest day**

A very solid day of walking as we trek across the glacier and up towards the pass. The day commences with a gentle walk across lateral moraine to the head of the Myagdi Khola and then on to the Chonbarban Glacier. As we round the bend of the valley, Tukucho Peak West is revealed for the first time. Our camp is spectacularly situated at the end of the glacier with views of Dhaulagiri I, II, III, V, Tukucho Peaks and the imposing icefall that cascades from the north east col of Dhaulagiri I.

**Day 14: Trek To Hidden Valley 4860m via French Pass 5360m. Walk approx 8-9 hours**

Our route leads off the glacier and ascends rocky scree to the pass. French pass is named after a French reconnaissance expedition in the 1950s which set out to climb an 8,000 metre peak. Dhaulagiri was chosen but found to be too difficult. Maurice Herzog and his team then attempted Annapurna I. Being the first to reach the summit of an 8,000m peak they achieved international acclaim. It was not without a high price though, as retold by Herzog in his book Annapurna I. As we approach the pass the terrain becomes steeper and it may be necessary to fix ropes for a small section, (approx 100m) depending on snow conditions. It will take at least half a day across undulating terrain to reach the pass from the Base Camp. As we reach our goal the mountains surround us; Sita Chuchura and Tukucho Peak West flank us, Dhaulagiri I is behind, and Mukut Himal and Tashi Kang are to the north. As we descend into Hidden Valley the landscape changes to stark, dry lands with snowy peaks. There is a true sense of isolation here and it is quite possible we might sight the elusive blue sheep.

**Day 15: Trek To Alubari or Yak Kharka 3900m. Walk approx 7 hours**

Another long day, depending on conditions, to our camp just below Thapa (or Dhampus) Pass (5250m). It is a short climb to the pass (approx. an hour), followed by a long traverse and descent upon loose scree to our camp amongst vegetation once again. Now on the other side of the pass, we can enjoy frontal views of the Nilgiri range and the broad valley of the Kali Gandaki.

#### **Day 16: Trek to Jomsom 2670m via Marpha 2667m. Walk approx 5 hours**

Descending towards the Kali Gandaki Valley, the trail through forest is well defined and makes a pleasant change from the high alpine terrain we have been in for the last few days. We descend steeply all day and enter the main trail for trekkers of the Annapurna Circuit. Marpha is a substantial town of the valley and a good stopping off point for trekkers/pilgrims and traders between Muktinath/Jomsom and Pokhara. The paved, winding footway and closely built terrace-like housing makes the town very picturesque. Many apples are grown in the area, there is a good chance we may have apple pie tonight! Continuing north we reach Jomsom and our lodge for the night.

#### **Day 17: Fly Jomsom to Pokhara & Kathmandu**

We board the early morning flight to Pokhara savouring magnificent views of the Annapurna and Dhaulagiri ranges. On arrival at Pokhara airport we will have a couple of hours before the onward flight to Kathmandu. On arrival we transfer you to your hotel.

#### **Day 18: Kathmandu Departure**

Free for adequate personal activities till departure transfer from hotel to the International Airport.