

Ama Dablam 6856m

- **Multi Camp ascent using fixed rope and anchors**
- **One of the finest viewpoints in the Himalaya**
- **Trek into the heart of the Khumbu**



EXPEDITION OVERVIEW

This expedition will give you the opportunity to gain a fascinating insight into the lives of the Sherpa people, as well as the sights, sounds and smells of Kathmandu.

The South West ridge of Ama Dablam is a Himalayan classic and involves some steep, exciting climbing on one of the worlds most beautiful mountains.

A near perfect climb on a near perfect mountain, was how American Sue Giller described her ascent of the SW ridge in 1982. This route was the line of the mountains first ascent in 1961 by Ward (UK), Bishop (US) and Gill (NZ). The expedition was led by Sir Edmund Hillary who had

earlier declared it 'unclimbable', later modifying this to 'fantastically difficult!' Today, with fixed rope in place, it is considered a much more reasonable proposition and has become a popular mountaineering route.

The mountain is well named. Ama Dablam means Mother's Charm Box. Ama (mother) refers to the two great ridges above base camp, they are like the enfolding arms of a mother. A Dablam is a pendant worn by Sherpa women that contains pictures of the Buddhist gods & this refers to the huge hanging serac high on the West Face. Our route is essentially the mother's left arm.

Participation Statement

Adventure Peaks/Walks recognises that climbing, hill walking and mountaineering are activities with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions and involvement.

Adventure Travel – Accuracy of Itinerary

Although it is our intention to operate this itinerary as printed, it may be necessary to make some changes as a result of flight schedules, climatic conditions, limitations of infrastructure or other operational factors. As a consequence, the order or location of overnight stops and the duration of the day may vary from those outlined. You should be aware that some events are beyond our control and we would ask for your patience.

Recommended Previous Experience

Ama Dablam's SW ridge is quite technical and people should be comfortable with operating on steep ground in exposed situations. There are sections of steep rock which are usually jumared and some experience of this before the expedition will prove beneficial. To move efficiently and enjoyably on the SW ridge of Ama Dablam Adventure Peaks recommend that you have experience of Alpine AD routes and / or an ability to climb Hard Severe rock and Scottish grade II/III winter routes.

The climbing days between the three camps on the mountain are relatively short (3-6 hours) and the summit day is not huge (6400m-6856m, 5-8 hours). However most people will find climbing at this altitude extremely demanding and should prepare for this with fitness training and be able to cope with long hill days in the UK and, ideally, The Alps. Grade 5C.

The Trekking Day

Starts between six and seven am (not a problem as it is usual to go to bed very early!). As you get up its easy enough to pack all your overnight gear into a kit bag before enjoying a hearty breakfast. Your tents will be packed away for you by the local staff and the porters will arrange their loads and get a head start. Leaving camp whilst its still fairly cool the pace on the trek will be leisurely with plenty of time to enjoy the scenery, take photos, chat to the locals and keep hydrated. Lunch is usually in a fine spot by the side of the trail and cooked by the catering team for you. Again a pleasant relaxed affair that will help your acclimatisation programme. Another couple of hours trekking after lunch and, most days, you will be arriving at camp, already set up by the local staff. After tea and biscuits this leaves an hour or so to either rest or explore around the camp before a fine three course evening meal. It is quite remarkable what the cook team can produce in these remote circumstances. Although it rapidly gets chilly in the evenings it is quite cosy enough to sit around chatting about the day in the mess tent.

The Climbing Day

It would be impossible to produce an itinerary that suited all the people all the time. Climbing a mountain like Ama Dablam involves a lot of different stresses on the body and folk will respond to this in different ways and at different rates. Through utilising a good ratio of UK leaders and Sherpas to clients we can allow people to progress up the mountain at a rate appropriate to their own needs. A description of the route is included and the programme is flexible enough for people to listen to their own bodies and rest, climb high or sleep low or go for it accordingly.

Base Camp (4450m) to Camp 1 (5700m)

This is quite a long walk and may take five to six hours on the first journey. This is likely to reduce considerably with improved acclimatisation. Unusually there is no glacier approach and you can walk in trainers along pleasant grassy ridges that curve around behind the SW ridge. As you gain height superb views open up to the whole of the Western Himalaya, most notably Cho Oyu (8201m), Numbur (6859m) and Taweche (6367m). Just before reaching camp 1 we cross a granite boulder field and scramble easily up some huge boiler plate granite slabs.

Camp 1 to Camp 2 (5950m)



Camp 1 is situated at the foot of the SW ridge and so you embark on the climb as soon as you leave camp and clip into the fixed ropes. Initially there is some quite easy traversing of rocky terraces and snowy ledges. Then there are some superb compact granite slabs to cross and these lead into equally enjoyable slabby buttresses to ascend. Just before Camp 2 is reached The Yellow Tower must be climbed/jumared and this provides the technical crux of the whole route. The climbing is extremely enjoyable but it is hard work at this altitude. Three to five hours.

Camp 2 to Camp 3 (6400m)

As soon as you leave Camp 2 you start gaining height. Its hard work but the climbing is good and the ascent of The Grey Tower provides the next obstacle. Easy snow and ice then leads to the Mushroom Ridge, the corniced snow crest that links the mixed SW ridge below with the summit snow fields above. Your composure with exposure will be tested here! However the ground is not technically difficult, Scottish II, and you will soon reach the broad snow shelves that provide the site of Camp 3.

Camp 3 to Ama Dablam Summit (6856m)

The site of Camp 3 is quite cold, high and exposed and you are unlikely to have a great night's sleep! As we are now essentially on the West Face the sun does not arrive until around 9.30am. We will probably set off from the high camp at around 7.30am and be aiming to reach the summit after about 3-4 hours of ascending the fixed ropes up the grade I summit snow fields. There is one short steep section over an icy bulge that provides a welcome

contrast in climbing style! The summit of Ama Dablam is a truly outstanding viewpoint.

We would aim to descend as low down the mountain as possible after summiting, ideally camp 1 or if you are going really well, Base Camp!

Weather Conditions

The Post-monsoon and pre-winter conditions experienced from October into mid-December are usually very fair, dry and stable. Daytime temperatures are pleasantly warm in the valleys (20-30C) whilst cool to very cold (especially with wind chill) high on Ama Dablam. Night-time temperatures are cold to very cold (possibly as low as minus 25C) and you should make sure you have a warm sleeping bag. A down jacket and good quality mitts are highly recommended (these are available to buy quite cheaply in Kathmandu).

Catering Arrangements

The Trek and Base Camp food is excellent and designed to stimulate your appetite and keep you going despite frequent altitude induced loss of appetite. Breakfast includes porridge and cereal followed by eggs (fried, boiled poached or omelettes!) and either bread or chapattis with jam, honey, peanut butter etc. Lunch starts with juice followed by a hot meal which may include some of the following: chips, rice, lentils, vegetables, salad, sandwiches, beans, tinned fish and tinned meat. Dessert is usually fresh or tinned fruit and tea. The evening meal always starts with soup (often with a healthy dose of garlic to aid acclimatisation) accompanied by poppadums, pop corn or prawn crackers. The main meal varies from local style *ó Dal Bhat* (rice and lentils with an onion and vegetable sauce), Yak stew, momos etc. to western style *ó yak burgers, chips, pasta, even pizza!* Desserts are equally appealing and include apple pie, cake, custard etc. You will not be hungry!

On the mountain we will aim to travel light and meals will mainly be boil in the bag style supplemented by noodles, salami, cheese and chocolate as required. Most folk experience some kind of appetite loss and we mainly aim to just keep as hydrated as possible with fruit teas, soup and powdered fruit drinks.

What to Carry

On the trek you should aim to carry a very light rucksack. A 35L sack is ideal and this should contain 1-2L of water; waterproofs; a spare warm layer; camera; mini first aid kit; sun hat, cream and glasses; a warm hat and gloves. The rest of your gear can go in your kit bag and larger rucksack to be carried by the porters. On the mountain your rucksack will also contain crampons, ice axe, sleeping bag, a few snacks and possibly a down jacket. Adventure Peaks will be using strong Khumbu Sherpas to assist our progress. This will include establishing the camps, maintaining the in-

situ ropes and anchors and helping to carry gear. These are inspirational folk to have with you on the mountain and you will be amazed by their stamina and dedication.

Extra Costs

There are a number of good bars in Lukla, Phakding, Namche and Pangboche selling a variety of beers and spirits. Along the trek it is possible to buy hot drinks (very cheap) soft drinks, beer and spirits (not recommended on the way up) It is traditional to tip the local staff including the porters, Sherpas and cook staff. These folk work incredibly hard and will do almost anything to help you throughout the expedition. You will probably want to make a reasonably generous tip at the end of the trek and we recommend allowing about \$100 for this.

SUGGESTED ITINERARY

This is a suggested ideal itinerary, changes may well be necessary according to weather, client fitness and rate of acclimatisation as well as difficulties with transportation. A number of rest days are programmed and these are an important part of our structured acclimatisation programme. This does not mean you shouldn't do anything *ó non strenuous walks around the camp, gaining some height and then descending again is likely to be beneficial if you feel you have the energy.*

Day 1: Flight to Kathmandu

Day 2: Arrive Kathmandu early evening. Transfer to hotel close to famous, bustling Thamel district of Kathmandu and within easy walking distance of the Monkey Temple, a place with lovely gardens where one can relax.

Day 3: Day enjoying the bombardment of the senses *ó that is Kathmandu.* Sightseeing tours can be arranged and would include visiting the temples of Bodnath, Swayambhunath (The Monkey Temple), Pashupatinath and Durbar Square. Simply wandering around the huge array of shops, markets, cafes, bars and restaurants in Thamel is a fascinating experience.

Day 4: Fly to Lukla (2800m). A spectacular short internal flight takes us to this tiny airstrip town and the gateway to the Sherpa Kingdom. After lunch we can explore the streets, visit the porters. Progress and find a bit more about the area we are about to travel through.

Day 5: Lukla to Phakding (2610m). This is a very short day along the typically stony path that descends from the forested terraces of Lukla right into the Dudh Kosi valley and the brightly painted lodges of Phakding. Good views of Kusum Kanguru *ó North Face (6367m)*

Day 6: Phakding to Namche Bazaar (3440m). Into the Sherpa capital and the heart of the Khumbu. You will now be becoming familiar with local protocol for passing chortens, mani stones, yaks, spinning prayer wheels etc. and enjoying the hustle and bustle of trekking and everyday life that exists on the Everest Trail. At Monjo we enter Sagarmartha National Park and can visit the small visitor centre there. Four hours.

Day 7: Rest Day in Namche Bazaar. It is important to have a couple of nights and a rest day in Namche before proceeding any higher. You can spend the day taking short walks up to Thami or Khumjung, visiting the Everest and Ama Dablam viewpoints or just relaxing and exploring the narrow streets of the busy Sherpa capital.

Day 8: Namche Bazaar to Pangboche (3930m). We climb steeply out of Namche, turn the corner and are immediately presented with superb views of Everest, Lhotse, Nuptse and our destination, Ama Dablam. Crossing the Dudh Kosi involves a steep descent to Phunki Thanghka and its fine water driven prayer wheels before re-ascending to Thyangboche. The famous Sherpa monastery can be visited here and the surrounding panorama is rightly deemed to be one of the most magnificent mountain viewpoints in the world. The going is easy now and Pangboche, the highest year round settlement in the valley, is soon reached. Six hours.

Day 9: Pangboche to Ama Dablam Base Camp (4450m). We leave the busy Everest trail and cross the Imja Khola. Climbing steeply out of the valley and above the tree line we enter the alpine meadows that provide such a fine location for a base camp, no cold and scrappy glacier moraine sites here!

Day 10: Rest Day at Base Camp. Another acclimatisation day spent exploring the alpine meadows and views around camp, packing gear for higher on the mountain and relaxing in this very pleasant spot.

Day 11-25: Ascent of Ama Dablam, South West Ridge. See section entitled 'The Climbing Day'.

Day 26: Base Camp to Thyangboche (3860m). On the return trek folk have the option of staying in places not visited on the way up or returning to the more western style luxuries available in Namche.

Day 27: Thyangboche to Monjo (2840m). You will now really feel the warmth and rich air of the forest zone.

Day 28: Monjo to Lukla. The Alpine mountain hut atmosphere of Paradise Lodge in Lukla is the ideal place to relax and celebrate your journeys end.

Day 29: Fly Lukla to Kathmandu. Back to the comforts of our hotel in Thamel and the enjoyable hustle and bustle. This is a good time to buy souvenirs and try your hand at haggling with the local shopkeepers. We will dine in one of Kathmandu's finest restaurants and experience some local dancing styles!

Day 30: Return flight from Kathmandu. The flight usually departs late afternoon so you will have a final morning free in Kathmandu.



INSURANCE

Insurance which covers mountain rescue, helicopter evacuation and medical expenses is essential. This is available through Ault Insurance (0121 569 8772) or the BMC. We will require a copy of your insurance prior to departure

IMPORTANT – The small print

Please note, if for any reason you need to return to Kathmandu separate from the whole group, there will be costs incurred which you will need to pay. These might include jeep transfer costs, leaving the border without the group, transfer from the border to Kathmandu, cost to change flight. In this situation you should claim back any cost through your insurance policy.

CHANGE OF INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS

We allow several extra days in the itinerary for bad weather. If you do summit or come back early we can re-book your international flight but additional costs will be incurred. Tickets can be changed according to availability and the class of ticket. All additional payments would need to be paid for in Kathmandu (card payments accepted).