

Ama Dablam 6856m



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 world's 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. 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 'mothers' 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 climbed with an ascender on fixed ropes 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), the summit day being the longest day is typically 7- 9 hours (6080m-6856m). 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.



The Climbing Day

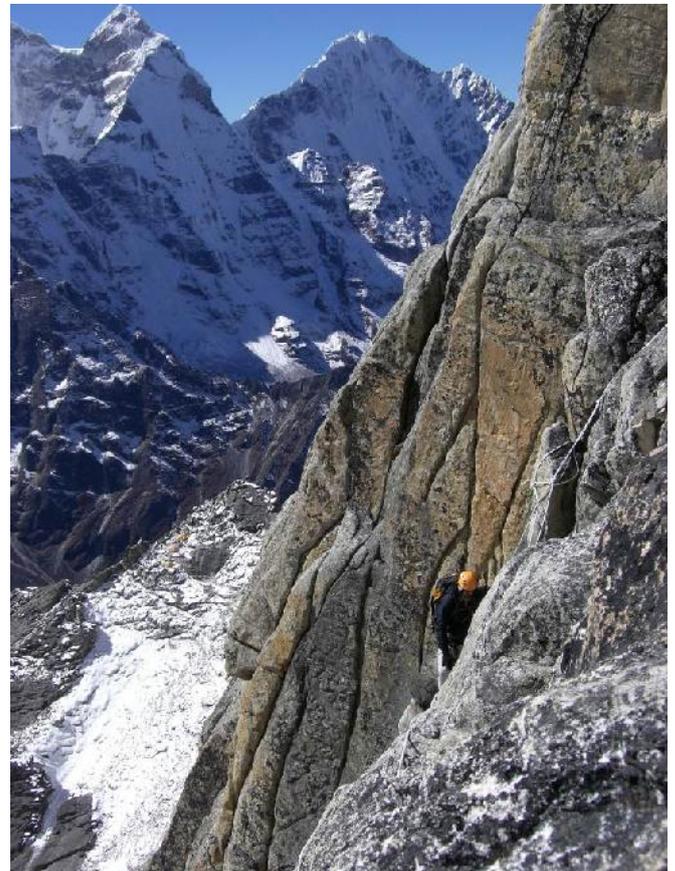
It would be impossible to produce an itinerary that suited all people's abilities & preferences. Climbing a mountain like Ama Dablam involves a lot of different stresses on the body and folk will respond to this in different ways and at different rates. Through utilising a good ratio of UK leaders and 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 – sleep low, or 'go for it' accordingly.

Base Camp (4750m) 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 (6080m)

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 2.9 (6200m)/ Ama Dablam Summit (6856m)

Most teams these days make their summit bids from camp 2, however there is an option of very limited camping space at the end of Mushroom Ridge, Camp 2.9, which offers an airy launching platform for a shorter summit day. The group will make a decision whether to use this camp or not. As soon as you leave Camp 2 you start gaining height. It's 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 grade II, and you will soon reach the broad snow shelves that provide the site of the old Camp 3. As we are now essentially on the West Face the sun does not arrive until around 9.30am, so this can be a cold place until the sun hits. From here it takes around 3-4 hours to reach the summit 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. Typical ascent time 7 – 9 hours from camp 2. 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 (20-30°C) 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 25°C) and you should make sure you have a warm sleeping bag.

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 – Dal Bhat (rice and lentils with an onion and vegetable sauce), Yak stew, momos etc. to western style – yak burgers, chips, pasta, even pizza! Desserts are equally appealing and include apple pie, cake, custard etc. You will not go 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 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, sun 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 down jacket. Adventure Peaks will be using

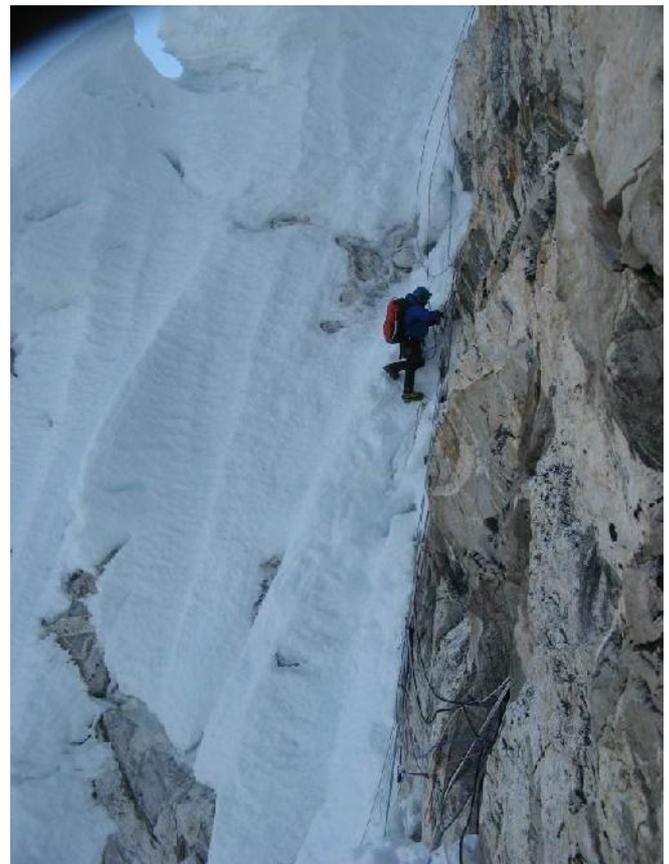
strong Nepali Sherpas to assist our progress. This will include establishing the camps, maintaining the in-situ ropes and anchors and helping to carry gear. These are inspirational folk to have with you on the mountain and you will be amazed by their stamina and dedication.

Extra Local 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, please see the Nepal Background Travel Sheet in your Welcome pack for more information.

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 – 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 the famous, bustling Thamel district of Kathmandu, a place with lovely gardens where one can relax.

Day 3: Day enjoying the ‘bombardment of the senses’ 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) Trek to Phakding (2610m). A spectacular short internal flight takes us to this tiny airstrip town and the gateway to the Sherpa Kingdom. After lunch we start our short trek 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. There are good views of Kusum Kanguru’s North Face (6367m)

Day 5: 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 6: 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 7: 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 8: Pangboche to Ama Dablam Base Camp (4750m). 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 9: 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 10-25: 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. We will require a copy of your insurance prior to departure

Delays – Lukla Flights

We allow extra time in the itinerary for bad weather causing delays at Lukla. If you are delayed longer our agent will try to secure alternative seats or obtain options on helicopters which can fly in less good weather. If the flights are delayed over night, accommodation can be provided on a B+B basis at an extra cost. If helicopter flights are utilised you will need to cover this cost inclusive of your leader’s portion (variable cost depending on group size but approx: \$400 p/p in total each way). Where required we can re-book/change your International flights but additional costs may/will be incurred. All additional payments would need to be paid for in Kathmandu (card payments accepted). If you are unable to accept this, you may want to consider an alternative trip less dependent on weather e.g. The Annapurna Region.