

4 The Nepal route

4.2 Tengboche to Base Camp

Tengboche to Pheriche or Dingboche (4-5 hours)

Continue through the forest, enjoying the fresh scents of the vegetation: this will be your last chance for several weeks. After crossing the river to its north bank you climb to reach Pangboche (3950m) within about 2-3 hours of Tengboche. It's a good place to rest and take some milk tea.

Cross a small river and continue another hour until you reach Tsuo Og, which has just a few houses. The route divides here, left for Pheriche (4275m) or right to Dingboche (4360m). If you keep going on the left of the river (crossing it 1 km ahead) you will arrive in Pheriche about 2 hours after leaving Pangboche.

Alternatively, cross the river and head uphill towards Dingboche (4360m), a larger village in a side valley leading toward Island Peak and Lhotse. You could stay two nights here and hike up the valley on the day between, or even climb Chukhung Ri (5500m), which would help you to acclimatize.

Pheriche or Dingboche to Lobuche (3-5 hours)

Leaving Pheriche, follow the valley trail for 1.5km until it branches up, slightly to the right. Continue until you cross a small bridge leading into Dughla (4620m/15,150ft), a perfect place for refreshment after 1-2 hours of hiking.

The hike from Dingboche takes about the same time. You head west, climb the sandy track up the short steep hill and head down the other side. From here you are basically walking parallel to the Pheriche variant, but 150m higher, looking over fields with great views of Cholatse and Taboche Peaks on the other side of the valley.

Ama Dablam, with chorten in foreground





From Dughla you head uphill for an hour over a tough rocky moraine path, gaining 200m until you reach a small pass and plateau. This is the end of the Khumbu Glacier and all the piles of rocks you see in front of you are memorials for sherpas who died on Everest. It's a sombre reminder of their hard work and the dangers they face, all to assist affluent tourists.

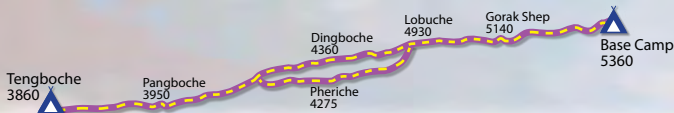
A few hundred metres after this pass you may notice a track leading left and up (back). This is a great variation for the return journey and a classic trek in itself: via Dzonghla and over the Cho La pass (5368m/17,611ft), then down into the Gokyo Valley, leading back to Namche. This pass is a tough trek and sees much less traffic.

For now, keep on going along a trail that's usually muddy, until you reach the collection of lodges known as Lobuche (4930m). It's a desolate and windy place with few diversions, although you can visit the Italian Pyramid research centre up the road, scramble up the glacier or climb the hills around the village. Then you can settle in front of a yak-dung-powered stove with a big bowl of soup: always remember to stay hydrated.

Lobuche to Gorak Shep (2-3 hours)

Continue along the north-west side of the Khumbu Glacier. If the sky is clear you will see the shape of Pumori looming in front of you. Climb any of the tracks up towards the U-shaped Lobuche Pass (5110m/16,765ft) and continue over a crossing of three glaciers until you reach Gorak Shep, a series of guesthouses. Like Lobuche, this settlement is here just to service the trekkers and climbers.

Most trekkers stay 1 or 2 nights in Gorak Shep (5140m), making two excursions from there: a visit to BC and a climb up Kala Pattar. As you will spend plenty of time in BC anyway, you may want to focus on Kala Pattar. If you arrive early enough, it can be climbed the same day, although the view is often obscured in the afternoons.



The hike is about a 3-hour round trip. The summit is really just an accessible part of Pumori's south ridge, at 5545m/18,190ft. Hike across the old lake, now a valley, and up the other side on sandy switchbacks. Continue upwards by going north and carefully scramble up the final exposed section. The main attraction is the view from the top, the best view of Everest's summit you can get without climbing a serious mountain: see the photograph below.

Gorak Shep to Base Camp (3-4 hours)

The section from Gorak Shep to Base Camp is strenuous in both directions. If you are just visiting BC as part of a trek, leave early because the hike down takes almost as long as uphill. The track meanders beside and then across the Khumbu Glacier. It appears closer than it is due to all the Himalayan giants around you, confusing your sense of scale.

Base Camp is located at the snout of the infamous Khumbu Icefall. Although not as jumbled as the Icefall, the BC area isn't very flat. Over the years, many good camping spots have been developed, and once the spring snow has melted it can be warm and pleasant here.

From Kala Pattar: the route starts through the Icefall, with Everest at right

