

Sunrise from Gurung Lodge,  
Annapurna



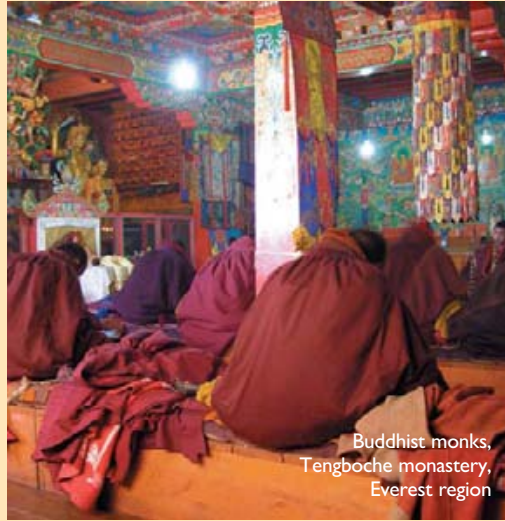
# HIMALAYAN



Views from the Mahabharat range,  
Nepal's middle hills

## Beatrice Bowen explains why trekking in Nepal is not the preserve of backpackers and mountaineers.

Mountains hold a special appeal for many people, and I am certainly one of them. In Nepal, I have been lucky enough to experience many different treks in some of the most awe-inspiring mountain scenery in the world, most of them less strenuous and more comfortable than the word “trek” usually conjures up. Quite apart from the views (which held my gaze for so much of the time that I found myself regularly tripping over rocks in my path), the trekking experience also gives you a fascinating insight into a way of life far removed from our own, where the only trains are made up of yaks and mules; a place where religion (generally Buddhist, Hindu and the animist Bon faith) is the central focus.



Buddhist monks, Tengboche monastery, Everest region



Steep trails in the Everest region

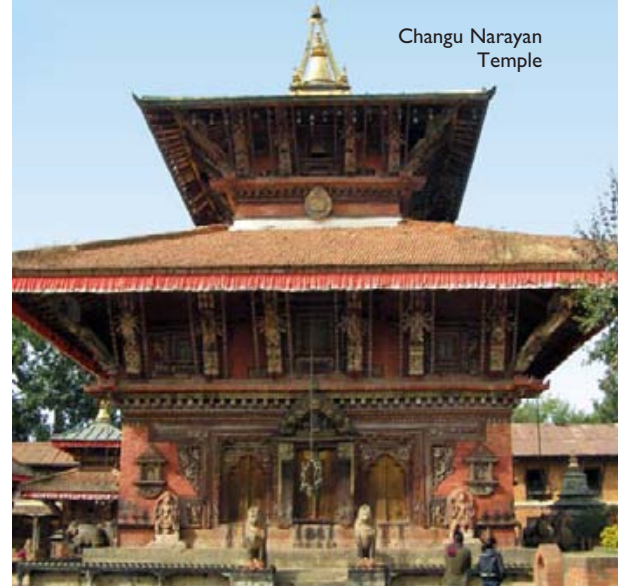
# highways

### Day treks

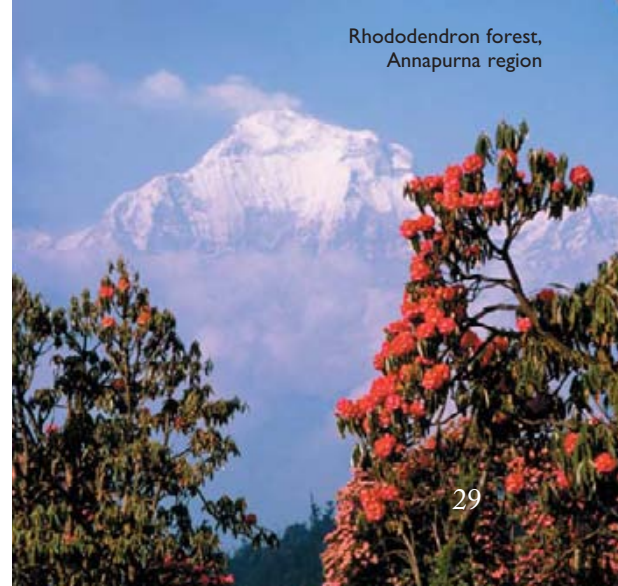
For those not keen on overnight stays or for those wanting to acclimatise before a longer trek, there are some lovely day walks in the Kathmandu Valley. The walk to Champa Devi from the Haatiban Resort (a hotel set up on a ridge overlooking Kathmandu city) takes about three hours, and commands fantastic views of the Himalayas. There is also the walk from Nagarkot to the ancient temple at Changu Narayan which takes about four hours and, for the most part, is a fairly easy walk on level terrain, taking you through several small villages. There are great views of the terraced fields and the rural life of the people of the Kathmandu valley, as well as of the magnificent Himalayas, when the weather permits! The stunning Changu Narayan temple has a history dating back to the 4th century. The building itself dates from 1702 but many of the images to be found here have a much longer history, and its relatively untouristy nature makes this one of the more atmospheric temples to visit in the Kathmandu valley.

### Two to six-day “comfortable lodge treks”

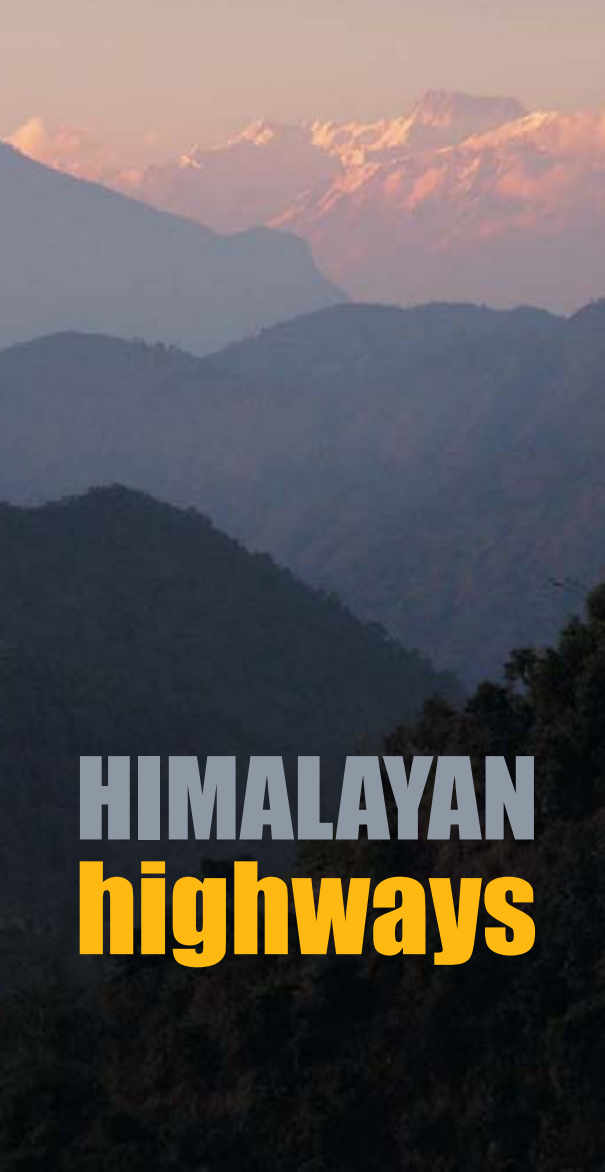
The four comfortable lodges built by Ker & Downey in the Annapurna region offer a number of different trek routes and lodge combinations, from five-night treks walking an average of five hours a day to one- or two-night treks walking for approximately three hours a day, the latter being more than suitable for children. These treks start at the road head not far from Pokhara, but all roads are soon left far behind as you walk deep into the hills. The views of the Annapurna range from the lodges on this trek are fantastic, the small villages you walk through are full of friendly and curious Gurung people (we had a basket of oranges given to us by one generous lady who refused payment), and the lodges themselves are extremely comfortable, with a roaring log fire in the dining room, hot water bottles in your bed at night, and wonderful three course meals. ▶



Changu Narayan Temple



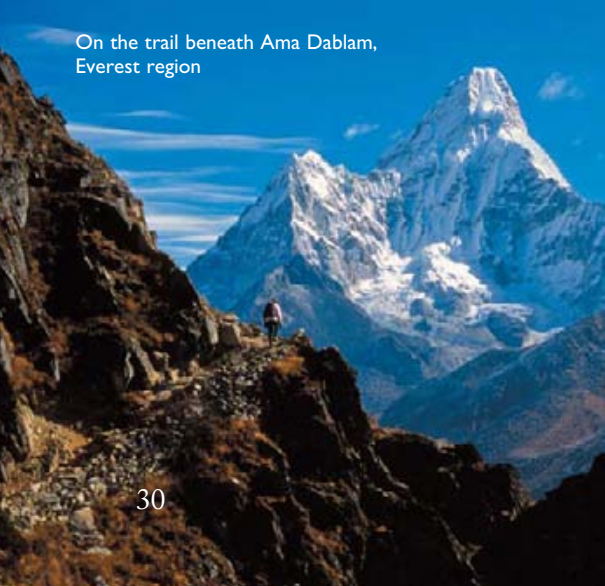
Rhododendron forest, Annapurna region



# HIMALAYAN highways



On the way to the Kingdom of Mustang, Annapurna region



On the trail beneath Ama Dablam, Everest region



Local settlement in Nepal's middle hills



Beatrice enjoying breakfast, Mahabharat range

## Camping treks

For those who want to really get off the beaten track, a camping trek is a fantastic choice. Although the level of nightly comfort is certainly less than you would experience on the two- to six-day lodge treks, you may be surprised to hear that for comfort and attention to detail I would choose a camping trek over one using local tea house lodges every time. This is because your team of porters and guides take extremely good care of you, you only carry a day pack, and you sleep in high quality tents with down sleeping bags, good quality foam mattresses, pillows, wonderful food cooked fresh by your team, and even portable toilet tents with sit-down loos. And all of this set up in a different spot each night with unrivalled views which no lodge can match! The camping trek that I did was four days and three nights, and took us through the middle hills of Nepal, without another foreigner in sight for the entire time. We trekked through small villages and dense forest, and traversed open hilltops with panoramic views of the Himalayan range on one side and the flatlands of the Terai on the other side.

We stopped for chai (local tea) at a tiny shop in one village, and camped next to an old fort on one of the highest points around; the pink sunset lighting up the Annapurna range that dominated the horizon. The camping treks we offer can be as short as two nights and as long as 14 nights. We have been working with a small Nepali company who have personally developed a number of treks in parts of Nepal which are easily accessible, despite rarely being mentioned in guidebooks. One of the most exciting 12-night camping treks we can offer is in the Mustang region. Mustang is a small and isolated Trans-Himalayan "kingdom" belonging to Nepal but geographically and culturally more similar to Tibet. This trek's main destination is the medieval walled capital of Mustang, Lo Manthang, where foreigners are still a rare sight. There is even the possibility of meeting the King of Mustang – Jigme Parbal Bista - in his palace.



Tengboche, Everest region

## Seven to twelve-day “comfortable lodge treks”

If camping doesn't appeal but you want a longer trek, I can personally recommend the Everest Summit Lodge trek, which I did earlier this year. The trek itself loosely follows the route of the first week of the Everest Base Camp trek, so there are plenty of other likeminded trekkers en route, although few of them will be bedding down in quite as much comfort as you! The five lodges that we use have en suite bathrooms with hot water showers, comfy beds, filling and delicious three-course meals each night and attentive staff. The lodges are decorated in the typical Tibetan style, most have great views and all are welcoming places to relax after a few hours' walking. The trekking will suit people of all ages who are keen walkers here in the UK. Though the terrain is rocky, the paths tend to be quite steeply ascending or descending, and the relatively high altitude does make the effort harder. However, the views, the colourful monasteries (we got a blessing from a lama at Tangboche Monastery, which sits on a plateau looking out towards Everest), the smiling local people and the fresh air more than compensate for the very satisfying hard work. As with most Audley trips, all the arrangements, no matter what type of trek you choose, are private. This means that you can walk at

your own pace, ask questions of your guide (whether you're a bird enthusiast, a botanist, or you simply want to know the name of each 8,000 metre-plus peak you see on the horizon), pause to take pictures or stop just to rest. Trekking in Nepal may sound strenuous, and there is no doubt that it would not suit everybody, but for any lover of the outdoors it is an experience that cannot be beaten. Trekking really can be done in a very comfortable manner, you don't need to be super-fit or athletic to do it and we can always tailor a trek to suit your abilities and requirements.

**Beatrice Bowen**  
Nepal Specialist

### WEB PLUS

[www.audley.co.uk/traveller/spring2008](http://www.audley.co.uk/traveller/spring2008)

For further information about some of the lodges featured and a slide show of the scenery

All the treks featured employ local porters and guides who are knowledgeable, friendly and looked after under the guidelines of the International Porter Protection Group. You will never have to carry more than a day pack as the porters will carry your main baggage as well as any camping equipment.

## FACT FILE

A two-week trip to Nepal including return flights, sightseeing in the Kathmandu valley, tiger safaris in Chitwan National Park and a few days walking starts from £2,300 per person. For further details please contact Beatrice or Emma on 01993 838 315.

