



The alarm goes off in our room, it's 4 am and it's time to leave Kathmandu. As we head towards the airport my mind was racing with thoughts.

For the past 10 months, I had been thinking of this moment and the flight that lay ahead to Lukla. Although the Tenzing-Hillary Airport in Lukla is known as the most dangerous airport in the world, I had been told the journey is one of the most scenically beautiful flights you can experience.

It turns out that what I was told was spot on! After a few nervous moments assessing the plane that would take us there, I said to myself – *You need to enjoy every moment of this flight.*



The next destination on our journey to Mt Everest Base Camp: the stunning Namche Bazaar.

Touching down in Lukla

Once we got up in the air, all my concerns were wiped away as I was completely lost in awe of the views – and our first glimpse of the Himalayas. I think that's because I was sitting on the left-hand side of the plane, which gave me the best view on the way in.

As we came into land our guide, Gelu, pointed out where the plane had to land. It took me a while to actually see it, and when I did – the concerns I had about landing quickly came back! However, as we came into approach and eventually touched down, it ended up being one of the smoothest landings I've ever felt. And I have I've flown a lot! Relieved we had arrived safely in Lukla, I managed to ask the pilots how often they did the flight. They said they did it six to seven times a day, and could basically do it with their eyes closed! Why was I so concerned?

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Beginning the trek to Base Camp

After gathering our bags and enjoying a quick breakfast, it was finally time to begin our trek to Everest Base Camp. Our first destination was the small village of Phakding. It was only about a three to four-hour trek away, and we would descend down around 200m from Lukla. Surrounded by beautiful alpine landscapes with the Dudh Koshi River rushing beside us, it was the perfect way to start our trek.

It ended up being quite an easy walk to Phakding as there were no steep ascents. Lukla is around 2,860m above sea level, so the altitude didn't cause any problems with my breathing which meant I could enjoy the walk more.



Kids at the local school in Phakding getting stuck into a game of soccer.

Our guide, Gelu, took us to a nearby school where the kids were out playing soccer. It's funny, no matter where you go in the world, I've found we're all unified by the game of soccer. It didn't matter that we couldn't communicate with the kids, the enjoyment of playing was purely universal. Before we knew it, play time was over and the kids had to go back to class. They were learning how to count in English. We were lucky enough to be invited in to



have a listen. One child called (more like shouted) out the number and the rest of the class would repeat it. They were so good, they managed to count to 100!


First night inn Phakding

Our first night in our tea house at Phakding was pleasant, although as expected in a Himalayan December, it was cold. But, we all got a good night's sleep. As it turns out you need a good night's rest before the second day, as we were in for a seven-eight hour day of trekking as we made our way to Namche Bazaar (or simply named Namche).

Trekking to Namche Bazaar

The trek itself was unbelievable. The alpine scenery continued, however, it became lush, denser and more majestic the further we trekked. As we came up to our first swing bridge crossings and started seeing more donkey packs carrying large amounts of goods up and down the mountain, we really felt we were on our way.

On a side note, whenever a pack of transporting animals comes your way, make sure you always move to the mountain side. One nudge could send you plummeting down the slope!

 *A swing bridge crossing over the Dudh Koshi River on the trek up to Namche Bazaar.*

The day was thoroughly enjoyable, however, the final ascent up to Namche was the first big challenge of our trek. All in all, it took us around 1 ½ to 2 hours of constant uphill trekking to reach Namche. This was made all the more challenging with the effects of altitude kicking in. The key was to go slow and find our own pace as we gradually made our way up.

First glimpse of the peak

It was tough but we got a boost in our step just before reaching Namche – our first glimpse of Mount Everest and its peak. That was an incredibly special moment to finally see the roof of the world right there in person. It took my breath away.

Eventually, we made it to Namche feeling fairly worn out but excited to see what the town had to offer. We were in for a couple of nights for some rest, and acclimatisation before we took the next step onto Lobuche, and then the big one – *base camp*.

The journey to the gateway of Everest is a long and at times risky route. To what lengths would you go to reach your dream destination? Leave your thoughts in the comments below.