



We spent two nights in Namche Bazaar at an altitude of 3440 metres for acclimatisation and rest. The village of Namche has a population of around 1,700 and is the main trading centre for the Khumbu region.

The steep steps throughout the village soon take your breath away, which makes for good acclimatisation exercise, and there are a number of shops in which you can buy pretty much anything you may have forgotten.

The Himalayan Java coffee satisfies caffeine cravings, the chocolate brownies are fantastic and there is even an Irish pub and an ATM... which unfortunately does not accept Mastercard.

## The first acclimatising trek

The next morning we went for our first acclimatisation trek entailing 3-4 hours of climbing to roughly 4000m. The steep climb out of Namche soon takes your breath away... it was quite humorous. However, over the next few days, we walked up and down these stairs many times, each time becoming easier.

About 10 minutes out of Namche is the Sherpa Culture Museum and Tenzing Norgay Sherpas memorial statue, both situated in front of a stunning Mt. Everest backdrop.



*The Tenzing Norgay Sherpa memorial statue near Namche Bazaar*

## Leaving Namche

On our fifth day, we left Namche, starting with an initial climb out of the village before reaching mostly flat ground along the main track. Aside from this track, we came across an elderly man raising money to build a better trail to base camp. The government does not fund this work so he sits on the side of the track all day every day with his wife and a donation box. Trekkers are encouraged to sign the registry book and provide a donation, even a hundred rupees is appreciated (about \$1.95 AUD).

## The village of Tengboche

Soon we were heading down into the valley and walking alongside the glacial river with an amazing view of Mount Ama Dablam. After descending for two hours, we stopped for lunch before ascending to 3860m at the village of Tengboche. Situated on a ridge, Tengboche has a stunning view of Mt Everest, Lhotse, Ama Dablam and is home to the well-known Tengboche Monastery, first constructed in 1915. We stayed here for one night in a large teahouse and experienced the best star-gazing of my life.



*Rocky landscapes and thin air, the environment becomes harsh and bare at altitude.*

## Arriving at Dingboche

The following day we climbed above the tree-line to a small village called Dingboche, we stayed here at an altitude of 4300m for two nights of acclimatisation in the Everest Resort Guest House. Now that we were out of the valleys, everything was rockier, there was less



greenery, and the air was thinner. The teahouse in Dingboche is decorated with flags from all over the world, it has a warming fireplace and a lovely dining room with cushion lined windows that you can sit on to soak up the warm afternoon sun. We were joined by other trekkers and it was nice to share plans and stories so far.

## Acclimatising in Dingboche

We had the choice of two hikes for our acclimatisation day in Dingboche, one short and one long which we chose dependent on how we were feeling. As I felt pretty good I took the longer option... an 800m climb on a steep zig-zag track from the village to an altitude of 5100m. At this height, we couldn't ignore the shortness of breath. Even after the first few steps our lungs were heaving and hearts pumping, it was just a matter of one foot in front of the other. Although challenging, it was a very enjoyable and satisfying climb.

The last 200m ascent was the hardest, but we eventually reached the top where we were greeted by a pole covered in prayer flags. For me, this was the most satisfying moment of the trek so far, it had taken almost 3 hours to reach the top and it was spectacular! We could see the valleys behind us and frozen glacial lakes among the mountains.

It was stunning and a perfect spot to enjoy a well-earned Snickers before descending for another hour back down to Dingboche, just in time for lunch. We then enjoyed the rest of the afternoon in the tea houses as a group, along with our Sherpas. We were reading, writing, playing cards and relaxing.



*A typical teahouse scene.*

## En route to Lobuche – the last stop before Base Camp

The next morning we were ready at 8 am, leaving Dingboche en-route to Lobuche, our last stop before base camp. We enjoyed mostly flat ground in the morning, walking along a ridge that took us to Dughla where we stopped for lunch. Then the uphill began again, with a rocky ascent for an hour before reaching a high point where there were memorials for the Sherpas and climbers who had lost their lives on Everest.

We appreciated the time spent reading their stories, in particular, Scott Fischer from the famous 1996 Everest disaster, and the incredible story of Babu Chiri Sherpa who summited Everest over 10 times, twice in 2 weeks and held the record of reaching the summit in 16 hours.

It was just over an hour from here to Lobuche at an altitude of 4910m, right near the Khumbu glacier and the two Lobuche mountain peaks. As the sun was setting, the orange light was hitting the ice on the mountains and creating a spectacular view.

It was about -10 degrees overnight but the fire in the dining room kept us all warm.

Excitement was setting in as tomorrow we would reach Everest Base Camp! Following a generous helping of Dal Baht, it was off to bed to rest our bodies in preparation for the day ahead.

***Do you have experience in trekking at altitude? Tell us your tips and tricks for preparing your body for an oxygen-depleted environment.***