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Amadablam Expedition with Gokyo Lakes and Lobuche Peak Climbing - 26 Days

Amadablam Expedition with Gokyo Lakes and Lobuche Peak Climbing is combined trekking, peak climbing and expedition that takes us to almost every part of the Khumbu region. Trekkers will get every taste of Khumbu and Gokyo valley throughout the journey. Climbers will not get much difficulty as they get plenty of chances to walk in the high elevations and mountain passes such as Cho La.

Mt Ama Dablam



Mount Ama Dablam is a beautiful mountain in the eastern Himalayan range in the Solukhumbu district of Province no. 1, Nepal. There are major two peaks; the main Ama Dablam (6,812 m/22,349 ft) and the lower western peak (6,170m/20,243 ft). Ama Dablam literally ‘means Mother’s Necklace’ where the long ridges on each side seem as the arms of Ama (mother) protecting her child, and the hanging glacier thought as the Dablam, the pendant containing pictures of the gods, worn by Sherpa women.

Ama Dablam covers the eastern sky for those who travel towards Everest Base Camp. Due to its soaring ridges and steep faces, Ama Dablam is sometimes referred to as the ‘Matterhorn of the Himalayas’ and it is also featured in one rupee banknote of Nepal.

Classified as one of the technical mountains, Ama Dablam was first climbed on 13 March 1961 by Mike Gill (NZ), Barry Bishop (USA), Mike Ward (UK), and Wally Romanes (NZ) via the Southwest Ridge. They were well-acclimatized to altitude, having wintered over at 5800 meters near the base of the peak as part of the 1960–61 Silver Hut expedition, led by Sir Edmund Hillary. After this hundreds of people have summited the peak of this mountain and the number of adventurers wishing to climb it is increasing in increasing way each year.

Gokyo Lakes



Gokyo Lakes are the pristine freshwater lakes inside Sagarmatha National Park, that sit at the altitude of 4,700–5,000 m (15,400–16,400 ft) above sea level. The name Gokyo Lakes was taken from Gokyo Ri peak (5484 m) which lies just above the lakes. Popular as the world’s highest freshwater lake system, Gokyo Lakes comprise 19 lakes altogether and among them, six are the main lakes of which Thonak Lake is the largest. The lakes are designated in a Ramsar Site in September 2007 that covers wetlands of 7,770 ha (30.0 sq mi) area in total.

The teahouses for the visitors who wish to explore Gokyo Lakes and Gokyo Ri, wish to pass Chola and take the long

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adventure of Everest High Passes lie on the eastern shore of Gokyo Cho, also called Dudh Pokhari, the main lake of the entire lakes system. Other lakes Gyazumpa Cho, Thonak Cho, Tanjung Cho, and Ngojumba Cho lie nearby the main lake. Trekkers wishing to explore those lakes take the alternative hike of Gokyo Ri of their second day in Gokyo Valley. Gokyo valley is a peaceful, fresh, and glacial valley that offers panoramic views of different mountain peaks, glaciers, and lakes.

Lobuche Peak

Lobuche top

Image not found or type unknown

Lobuche also spelled Lobuje, is one of the mountain peaks that sits nearby the Khumbu glacier and just above the settlement of Lobuche. There are two main peaks; Lobuche east and Lobuche West. Lobuche East is kept under a trekking peak and Lobuche West is classified as an expedition peak. As the easier, trekking peak, the East peak is climbed far more frequently than the West peak. As there is a long, deeply notched ridge, though a steep drop and considerable between two peaks, climbing both peaks at a time is impossible.

Upon reaching the top of Lobuche, trekkers get the jewel of the Himalayas which offers perhaps the best summit view in the world. Magnificent sceneries of Mt. Everest, Lhotse, Nuptse, Makalu, Pumori, Ama Dablam, Cho Oyu, Thamserku, and many other peaks are visible vividly from the top. This is the best climbing practice before high mountain peaks such as Ama Dablam, Manaslu, and Everest.

Trekking Route

High Camp of Lobuche

Image not found or type unknown

Our journey to Ama Dablam via Gokyo Lakes and Lobuche Peak Climbing begins with a wonderful flight to Lukla from Kathmandu. Following the classic route to Everest Base Camp, we hike to Namche Bazaar.

Now, leaving the way to EBC, we choose the Gokyo Valley trek route and continue the journey towards Dole, Machhermo, and ultimately to Gokyo valley. Exploring the entire valley and Gokyo Ri, we hike towards Chola and further to Lobuche peak. After climbing Lobuche peak, we trek to Ama Dablam to summiting it. After the successful expedition of Ama Dablam, we hike back to Namche and further to Lukla to end our trekking/climbing adventure. But your trip will be ended after the international departure from Kathmandu.

The route will be Kathmandu – Lukla – Namche Bazaar – Dole – Machhermo – Gokyo Valley – Thagnag –Cho La – Dzongla – Lobuche – Pheriche – Ama Dablam Base Camp – Namche Bazaar – Lukla – Kathmandu

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Top of Ama Dablam

Image not found or type unknown

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PRICE INCLUDES

Transportation

- All the ground transfers (hotel and airport transfers, sightseeing) via private vehicle
- Kathmandu - Lukla - Kathmandu via domestic flight

Accommodation and Food

- Four nights in Kathmandu in a 3-star category hotel (Twin Sharing)
- Fifteen nights in the best available local lodge/ teahouse during the trek (Twin Sharing)
- Five nights at a tented camp during the climb
- All standard meals [Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner] throughout the trek and climb
- Available seasonal fruits throughout the trek/climb
- Breakfast in a hotel in Kathmandu
- Farewell Dinner in Kathmandu

Staff

- A Government licensed English-speaking trekking guide including wages, meals, insurance, lodging, transportation, flight, and other necessary gear equipment.
- For more than six trekkers, one assistant guide includes wages, meals, insurance, lodging, transportation, flight, and other necessary gear equipment.
- A porter for two trekkers/climbers including wages, meals, insurance, lodging, transportation, flight, and other necessary gear & equipment
- A climbing guide during the climbing including his accommodation, transportation, food, salary, transportation, and insurance

Permits and Taxes

- Sagarmatha National Park Entry Permit
- Khumbu Pasang Lhamu Rural Municipality Entry Permit
- Ama Dablam Expedition Climbing Permit
- Lobuche Peak Climbing Permit
- All other government, local taxes, and official expenses

Additional

- A Gortex (100% Waterproof) Duffle bag to keep your personal belongings to be carried by the porter
  Assistance in arranging rescue operations in case of complicated health conditions (funded by travel insurance)
- A Trekking map covering the entire Everest Region, an Outward Adventure t-shirt,
- Outward Adventure Appreciation Certificate after the successful trek

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- A First Aid Medicine bag in each group (carried by trekking leader)

PRICE EXCLUDES

- International Flight Cost
- Nepal Entry Visa Fees
- Extra baggage check-in during the flight (Kathmandu-Lukla-Kathmandu) if more than 15 KG, 01 USD per KG extra, can pay directly to the airline.
- Extra night accommodation in Kathmandu due to early arrival or late departure, or early return from the trek
  Personal expenses such as alcoholic drinks, shopping, snacks, boiled bottle water, hot (Tea/ Coffee) and cold drinks, hot shower, alcohol, Wi-Fi, telephone call, battery re-charge fee, extra porters, etc
- Additional costs suffered due to causes beyond our control, such as natural disasters, weather conditions, itinerary modifications due to safety concerns, emergency evacuation, changes in government policies, strikes, and so forth.
- Summit Bonus for the Sherpa Guide ($700) after the successful ascent.
- Tips for guides and porters (Tips are expected and appreciated)

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ITINERARY IN DETAIL

Day 1: Arrival in Kathmandu (1338m/4390ft)

As your plane descends into the Kathmandu Valley, the first glimpse of terraced hillsides and sprawling cityscape signals the beginning of your Himalayan adventure. Our team welcomes you at Tribhuvan International Airport with traditional marigold garlands and transfers you to your comfortable hotel. The afternoon offers time to recover from your journey - perhaps enjoying your first taste of Nepali tea on the rooftop terrace as the sounds of the city drift up from below.

In the evening, you will meet your expedition guide/Sherpa and he will check your gears and equipment. The if needed, he will recommend you to hire/buy the gears the following day. He will take you to the place where the gears are obtained to buy/hire. The air buzzes with anticipation as we outline the coming weeks' itinerary, ensuring everyone is prepared for the extraordinary journey ahead. After dinner, the vibrant streets of Thamel beckon for those who wish to explore, though we recommend an early night in preparation for tomorrow's sightseeing.

Day 2: Kathmandu: Sightseeing and Trek Preparation

Morning sunlight filters through the intricately carved windows of Kathmandu's ancient temples as we begin our cultural immersion. At Swayambhunath Stupa, known as the Monkey Temple, we climb 365 steps past mischievous macaques to reach the hilltop complex where prayer flags flutter in the breeze and the all-seeing eyes of Buddha gaze across the valley. The spiritual journey continues at Boudhanath, one of the world's largest stupas, where we join pilgrims circling the massive white dome, spinning prayer wheels as the scent of juniper incense fills the air.

After lunch, we shift focus to practical preparations - checking and distributing gear in our hotel's conference room. Our lead guide demonstrates proper equipment use while assistants help adjust backpack straps and crampon fittings. The afternoon concludes with final permit checks and a Q&A session where we address any last-minute concerns before tomorrow's flight to the mountains.

Day 3: Fly Kathmandu to Lukla (2,860 m/9,384 ft) and trek to Phakding (2,610m/8,562ft): 9 km/3-4 hours

Dawn breaks with palpable excitement as we transfer to Kathmandu's domestic terminal for our flight to Lukla. The 35-minute journey offers jaw-dropping views as our Twin Otter aircraft weaves between Himalayan peaks before making its dramatic landing on Lukla's famously sloping runway.

After meeting our porter team at **Tenzing-Hillary Airport**, we begin trekking through the lush Dudh Koshi Valley. The trail descends gently past traditional **Sherpa villages** where yaks graze in terraced fields and colorful prayer flags mark every bridge crossing.

By midday, we reach our first riverside teahouse in Phakding, where we enjoy a hearty lunch of **dal bhat** on a sun-drenched patio. The afternoon offers time to explore the village, visit the local monastery, or simply relax by the river as we acclimatize to our new altitude. As evening falls, we gather in the cozy dining room for our first trekking briefing,

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discussing tomorrow's climb to **Namche Bazaar** over steaming mugs of ginger tea.

Day 4: Trek Phakding to Namche Bazaar (3,440 m/11,283 ft): 12 km/5-6

The day begins with the melodic rush of the Dudh Koshi River as we cross the first of several suspension bridges, their steel cables draped with wind-tattered prayer flags. The trail alternates between pine-scented forest paths and exposed riverbanks where we catch glimpses of snow-capped peaks between the valley walls.

At Monjo, we complete our Sagarmatha National Park entry formalities before beginning the steep ascent to Namche. The Hillary Suspension Bridge marks the start of our most challenging climb yet - nearly 600m of switchbacks that test our stamina but reward us with ever-expanding mountain views. Just when the climb feels endless, a strategic viewpoint reveals our first unobstructed sighting of Everest's summit pyramid between Lhotse and Nuptse.

Reinvigorated, we push on to reach Namche's colorful gateway arch by mid-afternoon. This bustling Sherpa trading hub clings to the mountainside in terraced layers, its cobbled streets lined with bakeries, gear shops, and cozy lodges.

After check-in, we might visit the Sherpa Culture Museum or simply relax on our lodge's sun terrace, watching the evening light paint the peaks gold as the temperature drops and the stars emerge in the thin mountain air.

Day 5: Acclimatization Day in Namche bazaar – Hike to Everest View Hotel

Our first acclimatization day begins with a leisurely breakfast in Namche, allowing our bodies to adjust to the 3,440m altitude. We set out mid-morning on a scenic hike to the Everest View Hotel, the world's highest-placed hotel at 3,880m. The trail winds through fragrant rhododendron forests and traditional Sherpa villages, with ever-expanding views of Everest, Lhotse, and Ama Dablam emerging as we gain elevation.

Reaching the hotel's sun-drenched terrace, we're rewarded with an unobstructed panorama of Himalayan giants while sipping hot ginger tea. After soaking in the views, we descend to Khumjung village to visit its ancient monastery, home to a purported yeti scalp. The walk back to Namche gives our bodies the perfect "climb high, sleep low" acclimatization experience.

The evening is free to explore Namche's vibrant markets, where we might pick up last-minute gear or souvenirs. We gather for dinner at our lodge, where our guides brief us on tomorrow's trek toward the less-traveled Gokyo Valley route. The comfortable beds and thick blankets provide welcome rest after our first proper taste of high-altitude hiking.

Day 6: Trek Namche Bazaar (3,440 m/11,283 ft) to Dole (4,200 m/ 13,780 ft)

We wake to crisp mountain air and the sound of yak bells echoing through Namche's stone alleyways. This crucial acclimatization day begins with a hearty breakfast before our gentle hike to Everest View Hotel. The trail climbs steadily through rhododendron forests, offering expanding panoramas of the Himalayan giants.

At 3,880 meters, we sip tea at the famous hotel's terrace, with Everest, Lhotse, and Ama Dablam spread before us.The descent allows our bodies to adjust while visiting Khumjung village's ancient monastery.We return to Namche with plenty

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of time to explore its vibrant markets and bakeries. The evening briefing prepares us for tomorrow's trek toward the Gokyo Valley region.

Day 7: Trek Dole [4,200 m/ 13,780 ft] to Machhermo (4,470 m/ 14,663 ft)

Morning sunlight illuminates the trail as we continue our ascent into the high alpine zone. The path climbs steadily above the tree line, offering breathtaking views back down the valley toward Namche. We pass through the tiny settlements of Lhabarma and Luza, where stone-walled fields and grazing yaks demonstrate how locals have adapted to this harsh environment.

By midday, we reach Machhermo, situated beside the glacial river that flows from the Ngozumpa Glacier. After lunch, we visit the Himalayan Rescue Association clinic, where volunteer doctors give an informative talk about altitude sickness prevention and treatment. Their real-world experience with high-altitude medical issues proves invaluable for our continuing ascent.

The late afternoon offers time to explore the valley or simply rest and hydrate. As temperatures plummet after sunset, we gather around the dining room stove, sharing stories with other international trekkers. Our guides outline the coming days' itinerary, including our approach to the stunning Gokyo Lakes. The star-filled sky visible through the lodge windows reminds us of our remote mountain location.

Day 8: Trek Machhermo (4,470 m/ 14,663 ft) to Gokyo Valley (4800 m/15,744 ft)

Today's trek brings us into the heart of the Gokyo Valley, following the lateral moraine of the massive Ngozumpa Glacier. The trail climbs gradually past the first small lake, revealing ever-more dramatic mountain views. As we round a bend, the second lake (Longponga Tsho) appears like a jewel set between rugged peaks, its waters shimmering in the sunlight.

The final ascent to Gokyo village beside the third and largest lake (Dudh Pokhari) takes our breath away - both from the altitude and the stunning scenery. At nearly 5,000m, the village consists of a handful of lodges clustered beside the turquoise waters, with Cho Oyu's massive bulk dominating the northern skyline. After checking into our lakeside lodge, we have time to explore the shore's surreal beauty.

As afternoon clouds roll in, we rest in the dining hall, drinking endless cups of lemon-ginger tea to stay hydrated. Some team members might brave the cold for photos of the lake's mirror-like reflections at sunset. We retire early, knowing tomorrow's pre-dawn climb to Gokyo Ri will be challenging but immensely rewarding.

Day 9: Gokyo Valley (4800 m/15,744 ft): Acclimatization Day – Hike Gokyo Ri (5357 m/17,570 ft)

We wake early to begin our ascent of Gokyo Ri in the freezing darkness, headlamps illuminating the steep trail. The climb proves strenuous at this altitude, requiring frequent rest stops as we zigzag up the mountainside. Just as fatigue sets in, dawn breaks over the Himalayas, revealing Everest, Lhotse, Makalu, and Cho Oyu glowing in morning light - a sight that reinvigorates our spirits.

Reaching the summit prayer flags, we're treated to what many consider the finest panoramic view in the Khumbu region.

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The Gokyo Lakes sparkle below us while the world's highest peaks stretch to the horizon in every direction. After taking countless photos and celebrating our achievement, we descend carefully to the village for a late breakfast and well-earned rest.

The afternoon offers options - some may hike to the fourth and fifth lakes, while others prefer to relax by the shore. As evening falls, the lake's surface becomes a perfect mirror for the surrounding peaks. We enjoy a special dinner celebrating our successful acclimatization climb, knowing the challenging Cho La pass crossing awaits in the coming days.

Would you like me to continue with the subsequent days in this same detailed 3-paragraph format? I can maintain this level of detail through the entire itinerary, including the climbing sections on Lobuche Peak and Ama Dablam.

Day 10: Trek Gokyo Valley [4800 m/15,744 ft] to Thagnag (4,690 m/15,387 ft)

The morning sun casts golden light across the turquoise waters of Gokyo Lake as we pack our gear for the journey toward Cho La Pass. Leaving the village behind, we follow a rocky trail along the Ngozumpa Glacier's lateral moraine, the largest glacier in Nepal. The stark, high-altitude landscape feels almost lunar, with boulder-strewn paths and distant peaks reflecting in small glacial ponds. After a few hours, we reach Thagnak, a remote settlement of basic lodges nestled beneath the imposing wall of Cho La.

The afternoon is dedicated to preparation—checking crampons, ice axes, and packing essentials for tomorrow's high-altitude crossing. Our guides conduct a thorough briefing, emphasizing the importance of an early start and steady pace. As the temperature drops, we gather in the dining hall, sharing nervous excitement over steaming mugs of ginger tea. The looming silhouette of Cho La dominates the horizon, a silent reminder of the challenge awaiting us at dawn.

Sleep comes fitfully, a mix of anticipation and the thin air at nearly 4,700m. Outside, the wind howls through the valley, and the stars blaze with an intensity only seen in the high Himalayas. We set alarms for 3 AM, knowing the pass demands respect—its steep, icy slopes and potential for rapidly changing weather making it one of the trek's most demanding sections.

Day 11: Trek to Thagnag to Dzongla (4,855m) via Cho La Pass (5,420m)

We rise in darkness, pulling on layers and strapping crampons to our boots by headlamp light. The initial climb is steep and relentless, zigzagging up loose scree before transitioning to snow and ice as dawn breaks. Roped together for safety, we navigate the final ascent to Cho La's crest, where prayer flags snap in the wind, and the world seems to open beneath us. The reward? A breathtaking view of the Khumbu's giants—Everest, Lhotse, and Ama Dablam—gleaming in the morning sun.

The descent proves just as challenging, requiring careful footwork down a steep, crevassed glacier. Ice axes in hand, we move methodically, the Sherpa team expertly guiding us through the most technical sections. By midday, we reach the valley floor, legs trembling with exertion, and follow a gentle trail to Dzongla, a cluster of lodges beneath Cholatse's sheer face. The sense of accomplishment is overwhelming—we've crossed one of the trek's major hurdles.

That evening, we celebrate with a hearty meal, swapping stories of the day's trials and triumphs. The lodge's windows frame Ama Dablam's iconic silhouette, now closer than ever—a preview of the climbing challenge ahead. As fatigue sets in, we sleep deeply, lulled by the distant rumble of avalanches echoing through the valley.

Day 12: Trek Zong La (4,855m) to Lobuche Peak High Camp (4,950m/ 16240ft)

The morning trail winds through a surreal landscape of moraines and glacial streams, with Ama Dablam's north face dominating the skyline. The air grows thinner as we approach Lobuche East's base, where our high camp perches on a rocky outcrop. Tents already pitched by the Sherpa team await, their bright colors a stark contrast against the barren terrain. After settling in, we conduct a gear check—harnesses, ice axes, and crampons laid out for inspection.

The afternoon is spent reviewing climbing techniques: how to ascend fixed ropes, self-arrest with ice axes, and move efficiently on steep snow. Nervous laughter mixes with focused determination as we practice near camp. The guides emphasize pacing and hydration—keys to success at extreme altitude. As the sun dips behind the peaks, we melt snow for water and force down calorie-rich meals, knowing rest is crucial before the midnight summit push.

Sleep is elusive, a mix of excitement and altitude-induced restlessness. Outside, the wind whispers across the glacier, and the temperature plummets. We drift in and out of consciousness, visualizing the climb ahead—the rocky lower slopes, the icy headwall, and finally, the summit ridge where the Himalayas stretch endlessly in every direction.

Day 13: Early Morning Summit to Lobuche Peak (6119m/20,070 ft) and trek back to Pheriche (4250m/13943ft)

The 1 AM wake-up call jolts us into action. We layer up, tugging on down suits and balaclavas, then gather in the mess tent for a quick breakfast of porridge and tea. Headlamps pierce the darkness as we rope up and begin the climb, crampons crunching on frozen scree. The first hours pass in a rhythm of steady steps and labored breaths, the Milky Way arching overhead. By dawn, we reach the glacier, where the angle steepens dramatically—ice axes and fixed ropes now essential.

The final summit ridge feels like walking a knife's edge, with the world dropping away on both sides. At 6,119m, the air is devastatingly thin, but the view is unparalleled: Everest's Southwest Face, the Khumbu Icefall, and Ama Dablam's razor-sharp ridges all visible in the crisp morning light. Tears freeze on cheeks as we embrace, the months of preparation culminating in this euphoric moment. After photos and prayers, we begin the careful descent, rappelling down the headwall before retracing our steps to high camp.

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Exhausted but exhilarated, we pack up and continue down to Pheriche, where thicker air and warm lodges feel like luxuries. That evening, over plates of dal bhat and celebratory snickers bars, we relive the day's highs and lows. The knowledge that Ama Dablam—our ultimate challenge—lies just ahead lingers in the background, but for now, we savor this hard-earned victory.

Day 14: Contingency Day in Case of Bad Weather Conditions

The luxury of sleeping in feels surreal after yesterday's summit push. As sunlight filters through the lodge windows, we take stock of minor aches and sunburnt faces, grateful for this buffer day in the itinerary. Some team members visit the Himalayan Rescue Association clinic for final health checks, while others wander through Pheriche's stone-walled fields, where hardy crops defy the altitude. The doctors remind us that recovery is as crucial as climbing - hydration and rest now will pay dividends on Ama Dablam.

By midday, clouds roll up the valley, bringing the familiar afternoon mountain weather. We gather in the lodge dining room, where our guides use the downtime to conduct an in-depth briefing about the coming days. Maps spread across the table trace our route up Ama Dablam's Southwest Ridge, with special attention given to the Yellow Tower and Mushroom Ridge sections. The mood shifts between excitement and quiet contemplation as we study the mountain's challenges.

As evening falls, we repack our climbing kits with meticulous care - sorting gear between what's needed for Ama Dablam Base Camp and what will go higher. The lodge's wood stove crackles while we write postcards home, trying to articulate experiences that already feel dreamlike. Outside, the last light catches the tip of Ama Dablam, its hanging glacier glowing pink - a silent reminder that our greatest test still awaits.

Day 15: Trek Pheriche (4250m/13943ft) to Ama Dablam Base Camp (4,600m/15,100 ft)

The trail descends gently through rhododendron shrubs before crossing the Imja Khola on a swaying suspension bridge. At Pangboche, we detour to the ancient monastery, where a revered lama blesses our expedition. The prayer ceremony's chanting and ringing bells seem to echo off Ama Dablam's face, now towering ominously close. As we ascend the moraine toward base camp, the mountain's scale becomes overwhelming - its famous "dablam" (pendant) glacier glistening like a jeweled necklace.

Base Camp buzzes with international expeditions at various stages of their climbs. Our Sherpa team has already erected the mess tent and personal tents in a prime location with jaw-dropping mountain views.

That evening, we meet our personal climbing Sherpas who will partner with us on the ascent. Over garlic soup (a high-altitude staple), they share stories of previous climbs while subtly assessing our fitness. As the temperature plummets, we retreat to tents, where the mountain's silhouette blocks the stars. The occasional boom of serac fall reminds us this is no ordinary peak - Ama Dablam demands respect.

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Day 16: Rest Day at Amadablam Base Camp - Worshipping Ceremony

Today, we attend the formal puja ceremony - juniper smoke curling around the altar as the lama ties protective strings around our necks. The climbing Sherpas add their rituals, burying ceremonial rice at the camp's corners for protection.

That evening, we meet our personal climbing Sherpas who will partner with us on the ascent. Over garlic soup (a high-altitude staple), they share stories of previous climbs while subtly assessing our fitness. As the temperature plummets, we retreat to tents, where the mountain's silhouette blocks the stars. The occasional boom of serac fall reminds us this is no ordinary peak - Ama Dablam demands respect.

Day 17: Climb Amadablam Base Camp (4,600m/15,100 ft to Ama Dablam Camp I (5,700m/18,700ft)

The clinking of climbing gear wakes camp before dawn. After a carbohydrate-heavy breakfast, we rope up at the base of the route, where fixed lines disappear into the cliffs above. The initial slopes are deceptively gentle, but soon we're front-pointing up 45-degree ice, relying on our jumars to ascend the fixed ropes. The famous Yellow Tower looms - 30 meters of near-vertical rock that requires every ounce of concentration.

Camp I perches on a knife-edge ridge so narrow that tents must be anchored to the mountain on both sides. The exposure is breathtaking - literally and figuratively - with the Khumbu Valley stretching thousands of feet below. Our Sherpas perform minor miracles, melting enough snow for hydration at this altitude. As the sun sets, we watch headlamps of other teams moving like fireflies on the route above - tomorrow that will be us.

Sleep is nearly impossible between the altitude, exposure, and anticipation. The wind howls through the tent guylines, occasionally drowned out by the eerie crack of the hanging glacier. We check and recheck our summit gear by headlamp, down suits, mittens, chemical warmers - knowing tomorrow's push to Camp II will test our limits.

Day 18: Ascend Ama Dablam Camp I (5,700m/18,700ft) to Camp II (6,000m/19,685ft)

Dawn reveals the terrifying beauty of our position - tents clinging to the ridge like barnacles on a ship's hull. The day's climb begins with the Grey Tower, its mixed rock and ice requiring precise tool placements. Above it, the Mushroom Ridge earns its name, a corniced snow arete with stomach-churning drops on both sides. At this altitude, every movement feels like running a marathon, our oxygen-starved muscles screaming with effort.

Camp II's tents are pitched on tiny platforms carved from the ice, overlooking the entire Western Cwm. The view is surreal - Everest's Southwest Face dominates the horizon while Pumori's sharp pyramid floats in the distance. Our Sherpas insist we drink two liters of fluids each, knowing dehydration at this altitude invites disaster. As the sun dips below the peaks, the temperature plummets to -25°C (-13°F), freezing water bottles solid within minutes.

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The summit briefing is solemn - our lead guide reviews emergency protocols and turnaround times. We'll start climbing at midnight, aiming to summit by dawn before solar radiation loosens the hanging glacier's ice. As we force down freeze-dried meals, the reality sets in: tomorrow we either summit or turn back. The wind's moan through the tents sounds like the mountain itself whispering warnings.

Day 19: Early night summit push (6,812m / 22,349ft) and back to Camp II (6,000m/19,685ft)

The midnight alarm feels like a bucket of ice water. Dressing in the cramped tent is a comical struggle with down suits and frozen boots. At 1 AM, clipped into the fixed lines, we begin the final ascent, headlamps illuminating only the next few meters of steep ice. The Dablam glacier looms ominously to our left, its seracs creaking in the darkness like a living thing.

Dawn breaks as we reach the summit snowfield, revealing the entire Himalayan range spread below like a relief map. The last 100 meters to the summit feel endless, each step requiring three breaths in the thin air. Then suddenly - there's no higher to go. We stand on Ama Dablam's tiny summit, tears freezing instantly as we embrace. Everest, Lhotse, and Makalu form a royal court around us, their summits glowing in the morning light.

The descent is a blur of exhaustion and elation. Back at Camp II by late morning, we rest in our tents before continuing down to Camp I and further down the next day. Every muscle aches, but the knowledge of our accomplishment dulls the pain. That night, even the mountain seems to approve - the wind dies, and the stars blaze with uncommon brilliance above our exhausted but triumphant team.

Day 20: Contingency Day in Case of Bad Weather Conditions

This extra day proves its worth as high winds prevent some team members from summiting yesterday. While half our group descends to Base Camp, the others make a second summit attempt in better conditions. The morning is spent melting snow and reorganizing gear, the mess tent filled with quiet determination.

By noon, the second team succeeds, returning to Camp II with the same mix of exhaustion and joy we felt yesterday. Their stories of the climb - now in perfect weather - make us almost jealous enough to consider going up again. Almost. As evening falls, the entire team is reunited at Base Camp, where the cook staff prepares a celebratory feast.

Laughter and toasts fill the mess tent late into the night. The Sherpas receive well-earned praise - without their skill and encouragement, none of this would have been possible. Later, lying in our tents, we realize this marks the true end of our climbing. The remaining days will be all descent, returning step by step to the world below.

Day 21: Descend Ama Dablam Camp II (6,000m/19,685ft) to Base Camp (4,600m/15,100 ft)

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The predawn glow silhouettes Ama Dablam's summit as we begin our careful descent from Camp II at 6,000m. After securing our harnesses, we clip into the fixed lines one final time, rappelling down the steepest sections of the Mushroom Ridge. The exposure still takes our breath away - one misstep would send us tumbling thousands of feet down the mountain's southwest face. But with the summit behind us, our movements feel more confident, the ropes sliding smoothly through our descenders as we methodically work our way downward.

By midmorning, we reach the relative safety of Camp I, where we pause to hydrate and shed layers. The Yellow Tower demands full concentration on descent - we lower ourselves backward down the near-vertical rock face, feeling for footholds as ice crystals sparkle in the morning sun. Below the technical sections, the trail becomes a knee-jarring scree slope, each sliding step sending plumes of dust into the thin air. Base Camp appears like a mirage below, its colorful tents beckoning us home after days in the death zone.

The final hour to base camp feels endless, our legs trembling with exhaustion. When we finally stagger into camp, the Sherpa crew greets us with steaming mugs of lemon-ginger tea and warm towels. As we collapse in the mess tent, the reality sinks in - we've successfully climbed and descended one of the world's most technical peaks. That evening, the cook prepares a celebratory feast, but most of us barely stay awake through dinner. Crawling into our tents, we sleep the deep, uninterrupted sleep of those who have given their all to the mountain and returned victorious.

Day 22: Trek Ama Dablam Base Camp (4,600m/15,100 ft) to Namche Bazaar (3,440 m/11,283 ft)

Breaking down Base Camp feels bittersweet - folding tents that have been home for nearly a week, packing away gear that's kept us alive in extreme conditions. The initial descent is joyous, our lightened packs and oxygen-rich air making movement effortless. At Pangboche, we stop to thank the monastery's lama, leaving offerings and prayer scarves.

The trail down the Imja Valley seems transformed - the rhododendrons are brighter, the streams more musical than we remembered. In Tengboche, we celebrate with fresh apple pie from the bakery, a luxury after weeks of instant noodles. The final descent to Namche feels like returning to civilization after months in the wilderness.

That evening, hot showers work miracles on tired muscles. We gather at the Namche pub, where cold Everest beers have never tasted better. The dining room buzzes with trekkers sharing stories, but our sunburnt faces and knowing smiles mark us as those who've touched something extraordinary. Sleep comes easily tonight - no summit alarms, no howling wind, just the satisfied rest of those who've tested themselves and prevailed.

Day 23: Trek Namche Bazaar (3,440 m/11,283 ft) to Lukla (2,860 m/9,384 ft)

The final trekking day dawns clear, the mountains giving us a perfect farewell. Descending through the Dudh Koshi Valley, we cross familiar suspension bridges - now without the nervousness we felt weeks ago. At Monjo, we pause to stamp out our Sagarmatha National Park permits, the official end of our time in the Everest region.

The last hours to Lukla are a parade of memories - the teahouse where we first tasted yak steak, the bend in the trail where Everest first appeared, the spots where we struggled and triumphed. Lukla's arrival is emotional - this airstrip, where our adventure began, now marks its conclusion. We celebrate with our Sherpa team, presenting tips and gifts in a

heartfelt ceremony.

That night, the lodge dining room echoes with laughter and toasts. Passports reappear after weeks in backpacks, and talk turns to flights home and reunions with loved ones. But first, one final early morning, one last thrilling flight through the Himalayan foothills back to Kathmandu.

Day 24: Fly Lukla (2,860 m/9,384 ft) to Kathmandu (1,338m/4,390ft)

The Twin Otter's engines roar to life at first light, cutting through Lukla's morning chill. As we accelerate down the sloping runway, the plane seems to fall off the mountain before catching air - a heart-stopping moment now met with cheers rather than white knuckles. The 35-minute flight treats us to a final aerial view of our route - the **Gokyo Lakes, Cho La Pass, and Ama Dablam's** distinctive profile sliding past the windows.

Kathmandu's chaos greets us like a cultural shockwave - honking traffic, vibrant markets, and the sudden luxury of abundant oxygen. At the hotel, long showers wash away weeks of grime, revealing tanned faces marked by wind and sun. The afternoon is free for souvenir hunting in Thamel or last-minute spa treatments for aching muscles.

Day 25: Rest day in Kathmandu and preparation of final Departure

The morning sun streams through the hotel windows, and for the first time in weeks, there are no alarms, no summit pushes, no crampons to strap on. The luxury of sleeping in feels surreal after the relentless pace of the expedition. As we slowly wake, our bodies remind us of the ordeal we've endured—aching muscles, sunburnt faces, and fingertips still sensitive from the cold. Yet there's an overwhelming sense of accomplishment humming beneath the fatigue.

Breakfast in the hotel garden is a revelation—fresh fruit, crisp pastries, and real coffee replacing weeks of instant noodles and powdered drinks. Some of us head to the spa for deep tissue massages to ease battered muscles, while others wander Thamel's vibrant streets, marveling at how different the world feels after standing atop a Himalayan giant. The afternoon is spent sorting gear—dusty down suits and well-worn boots packed away as souvenirs, while loaned equipment is returned with heartfelt thanks to our Sherpa team.

That evening, we gather for our final celebration dinner at one of Kathmandu's finest restaurants. Toasts are made—to the mountains, to our guides, to each other. The conversation flows effortlessly between uproarious laughter and quiet moments of reflection. As the night winds down, there's an unspoken understanding that while this adventure may be ending, the bonds forged and lessons learned will last a lifetime. The hotel bed that night feels impossibly soft, the air thick with oxygen, and for the first time in memory, no part of us is cold.

Day 26: International Flight (Final Departure)

The hotel lobby at dawn is a mix of sleepy farewells and last-minute contact exchanges. Our once-burly expedition team now looks almost civilian-like in clean travel clothes, though our wind-chapped faces and mountaineer's gait give us away. The ride to the airport is quieter than the enthusiastic arrival weeks ago—each of us lost in private reflection as Kathmandu's chaotic streets scroll past the windows.

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At the terminal, final handshakes with our guides turn into bear hugs—these men who safely shepherded us to the roof of the world now feel like family. As the plane lifts off, we press against the windows for one last glimpse of the Himalayas, their snow-capped peaks piercing the morning haze. Somewhere over India, it truly hits us—we stood on one of those summits, breathed that thin air, touched the sky.

The journey home begins, but the mountains travel with us—in the calluses on our hands, the fading tan lines from glacier glasses, and the quiet confidence that comes from having faced such immense challenges. As we scatter to different continents and time zones, we carry an unshakable truth: we are capable of far more than we ever imagined. The Himalayas have given us their greatest gift—not just the summit, but the knowledge that we can return to our daily lives with the same determination, patience and courage that got us up that mountain. Until next time, Nepal. Until next time.