

Mera is the highest of the official 'trekking peaks' in Nepal and because of its status also one of the most popular. The access is relatively straight forward and the climb uncomplicated bar a few small crevasses that do open up now and then.

The easiest route to Mera – the one we will be taking starts at a lonely spot called Mera La (5415m) and follows the broad northeast ridge of Mera towards the central summit.

Climbing Mera Peak (6,476m) as with all other high altitude activities is a challenging endeavor but the concession with Mera is that it does not require serious mountaineering skills as this is one of the least demanding peaks at this altitude. A wide expanse at the summit – uncommon for most mountain peaks provides ample space for the WHG party to do what they set out to do – play the WHG.

Mera offers fantastic vistas of Mt. Everest (8,848m) Cho-Oyu (8,201m) Lhotse (8,516m) Makalu (8,463m) Kangchenjunga (8,586m) Nuptse (7,855m) Chamlang (7,319m) Cross over from the Mingbo La pass (5815m) and walking through the Hinku Valley; the South Face of Ama Dablam loftily greets those attempting Mera.

To climb Mera, one needs to be reasonably fit and have ample stock of determination and will. A concert / gig at Mera will be a true world record event because other than pursuits of pure mountaineering, people as a general rule avoid such places for a Saturday night gig. The spot is ideal and no other stage offers so spectacular a view of the highest reaches of the earth. There probably won't be much of an audience to hear you desperately wheeze out a song at this altitude but the mountains have been waiting millions of years for the laugh.

To get to the summit for the gig, we will pass through the spectacularly beautiful Hinku valley – unpopulated besides a few mountain hutments that provide refreshments to those on the way to the summit.

You will be following in the footsteps of the late Mr. Jimmy Robert and Mr. Sen Tenzing who were the first people to stand astride the summit of Mera on the 20th of May 1953, just nine days before the more illustrious Sherpa Tenzing and the Edmund Hillary did the same on Everest.

The plan simply is as follows; after two nights of madness in Kathmandu you will take a 35 minute flight from Kathmandu and land in an impossible looking airstrip at a place called Lukla. The trek begins here and it winds through beautiful villages and valleys to Mera Base Camp (5,099m) situated at the base of an immense glacier leading to the Mera La Pass.

Upon reaching a place called Khare, the Sherpa climbing guides will literally teach you how to walk. Since you probably have not had any walking experience with crampons, they will teach you a thing or two about walking with these medieval looking contraptions attached to your boots. If you make it through the drill without slicing open an artery in your leg, you will be deemed competent enough to walk to the summit on your own.

After Khare there are two more High Base Camps which are set up at 5,385m (a little below Mera La) and a higher one at 5,750m from where the summit ascent can be attempted. Mera has

two distinct summits, the main one being the Northern Summit (6,476m) which is reached by skirting the Central Summit (6,461m) and following a classic snow ridge to the top.

Even though the climb is technically straightforward, there are some crevasses to maneuver and the route can be long and demanding after a fresh snowfall. The climb from Mera La to the Summit is gradual with outstanding mountain panoramas of the Eastern Nepal Himalayas always in sight. We reach the summit, perform the gig for about half an hour to forty minutes and walk down to the base camp for the return to the madness of Kathmandu.

Day to Day Itinerary for Mera Peak

Day 1 Kathmandu 1300 meters

You arrive in Kathmandu and after the initial culture shock, you will be transported to your hotel. Evening will start with a briefing on the trip and will be followed by a complimentary dinner in a very comfortable restaurant offering mouthwatering Nepali food. Just to give you a taste of things.

Day 2 Kathmandu 1300 meters

In Kathmandu – for those who have come fully prepared and do not need to stock up on equipments and gears from Kathmandu will have the day free to absorb the rich cultural aspect of Kathmandu with planned sightseeing trips. Those that have left it till the last minute can take the opportunity this day to buy or hire whatever they might need for the summit bid to Mera and for the trek there.

Day 3 Chuthok (35 minutes flight 2780 meters – 5 hrs. walk)

We take the early morning flight to Lukla which in itself gives you a great view of the Himalayan range and land at Lukla which is an experience in itself. We will be met here by our climbing staff and after quick photo ops, we start our trek. It is a five hour walk today by the end of which we reach a place called Chuthok where you will find your campsite ready and the staff waiting with hot tea and sandwiches. Lunch will happen at a scenic spot along the walk but dinner at the camp will be a first night to remember.

Day 4 Chuthok to Pangoma 2850 meters / 6 hrs. walk

For every uphill, there is a downhill in the Himalayas and this proves to be a good lesson in life as well. This day like many other days to come will follow this pattern. We cross Chuthok la and descend 300 meters to camp site at Pangoma.

Day 5 Pangoma to Ningswa 2900 meters / 5 hrs walk

Today your trek north along the ridge of the river Hinku Khola. It takes the whole day to reach Khure but you are rewarded with fantastic views of 6,500m (21,325ft) peaks, Sanu Himal, Mojang Himal and Mera Himal. Overnight in Khure(Ningswa).

Day 6

Ningswa to Chatra Chu 3500 meters / 6 hrs. walk

Today is a very rewarding day in terms of the views. Like before it is a roller coaster kind of day but the stunning views of the Mera range along with Mojang Himal and the beautiful campsite awaiting at Ningswa will give those tired legs and extra impetus.

Day 7

Chatra Chu to Kothe 3700 meters / 8 hrs. walk

We will truly feel some of the altitude today and today is quite a long day to reach Kothe. However the ascent upto 3500 meters will not be too difficult as we go through scenic pine forests. Lunch today will be packed to save time.

Day 8

Kothe to Thangna 4356 / 7 hrs. walk

Another long day today but you will be resting tomorrow giving you time to heal and do some checking to see whether your guitars have handled the trip as well as you have had. Along the way in a small but old monastery built in a cave – a quiet spot for you to reflect on all your sins till date. Thangna is a lonely outpost with a few houses, all in place to service tired climbers with dreams of Mera in their eyes. The place is rewarding though with a huge moraine and a lake close by. You are truly above 4000 meters today, meaning you will be at a higher altitude than all the souls on this earth –

bar a few thousand.

Day 9

Rest day – free to play

Day 10

Thangnak to Khare (Base Camp) 4919 meters / 5 hrs. walk

We will be above 5000 meters today at certain places so the going will be very slow – plus things will be a bit more difficult because we will be walking along a moraine of a glacier close by. We ascend the moraine and reach the top of the Hinju and Shar glaciers which makes up the campsite at Khare.

Day 11 – Rest Day

The rest day today and tomorrow will be key acclimatization days for us. However rest does not mean we will be sitting around - today you will feel like a true mountaineer for we walk up to the ice and practice our crampon and ice axe techniques.

Day 12 – Rest Day

Day 13 Khare to Mera Base Camp 5500 meters / 4 hrs walk

Today is a short day but we ascend very slowly, giving ourselves as much time to acclimatize ourselves to the rare height you will find yourselves in. Today we reach the Mera Base Camp by crossing the Mera pass and descending about a 100 meters to set up camps.

Day 14 – Rest Day

Rest Day today for you will truly need one. For those who would like to acclimatize better for the gig at the top, they can take short walk up to higher elevations and come back down to the camp. Those less inclined can of course strum on a guitar or go breathless trying to blow a balloon.

Day 15 Mera Base Camp to high camp 5800 meters / 5 hrs walk

Another short day in terms of distance but the altitude will of course slow things down a bit. 4 to 5 hrs. walk will bring us to our high camp where we spend a restful night in anticipation of what is to come tomorrow – the World's Highest Gig. Early dinner and early to bed because we wake up at 2 am to start the long march to the

Summit.

Day 16

Summit day / WHG day 6476 meters / 10 hrs

Today is going to be the most testing for it can take upto 6 hrs. to get to the summit and then do the gig and after it walk back down to Mera base camp. However this is the day you signed up for. The summit of Mera is truly an amazing spot where you can see five of the world's highest peaks. The summit area is broad in its expanse and this is where you will pull out your choice of instruments and do your stuff.

After the gig, we walk down to Mera Base camp below the High camp and take stock of what you have achieved that day – a name in the Guinness Book of World Records.

Day 17 to Day 22

Walk back with a renewed spring in your step towards Lukla

Day 23 Fly back to Kathmandu for a much needed bath