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Everest, Helambu & Langtang - panorama-photographs and poems from the Annapurna area, Everest nationalpark and Langtang/Helambu area



Extract of day descriptions from the book: www.AroundAnnapurna.de

a photographic and poetic journey around the Annapurna
eine photographisch-poetische Reise um die Annapurna



Photographs by Andreas Stimm

Poems by Yuyutsu R. D. Sharma

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PANORAMA
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I. Annapurna Circuit-classic (Around Annapurna)

1. Day From Besisahar to Ngadi

The small city Besisahar is our starting point at about a height of 900 m. From here the trek leads along a field path to the place Khudi where the Khudi Khola meets the Marsyandi river. We cross a branch of the Marsyandi and go up through the place, approximately at a height equal our starting-point's height, continue to walk along the broad way, cross a long suspension bridge and reach the place Bhulbhule. Finally we find ourselves on narrow ways now and walk along the orographical right side of the Marsyandi up to the place Ngadi at about a height of 900 m.

2. Day From Ngadi to Ghermu

The first ascent waits. After a flat, short, calm section above the river and along distinct farms and small villages, the way rises steeply up after Bahundanda (1270 m). It crosses innumerable rice terraces, which nestle magnificently against the slopes of the area. Here in September after the end of the monsoon the full green of the rice plants still shines, and during the harvest in the middle of November the fields light up in gold-yellow color. Bahundanda is enthroned on a crest and after lunch it goes through a small bamboo forest, again down to the Marsyandi river. Along it we continue to Ghermu (1100 m).

3. Day From Ghermu to Chamje

The second rise is approaching. After we left Ghermu, we descend to the river, cross it on a suspension bridge and begin slowly to master the rise, up to the settlement Jagat. In the meantime the fields yielded smaller tree vegetation, the steep slopes at our side are narrowing the valley, a view to the foothills point that we are still deeply in the ravine. In the second half of the day we run now constantly upward to the small place Chamje (1380 m) in which we stay well-deservedly overnight.

4. Day From Chamje to Bagarchap

A varied day expects us. From Chamje it goes down through dense forest to the river, to cross it over a suspension bridge. The way coils the valley along and here and there white orchids in full bloom are to be found within ranges of unspoiled forest land. Steeply the way climbs up a powerful rockslide area shortly before the place Tal, in order to run into a hamlet in a small plain. Worthwhile is here a short break, before one

continues to rise the close valley to Dharapani at the crossroad of the Makalu Trekking. We walk on to Bagarchap (2140 m) and notice that the valley has opened so that larger settlements exist and agriculture is possible.

5. Day From Bagarchap to Chame

The direction is clear - it continues to go up the valley. We leave the village and arrive into an area of unspoiled forest with large, powerful trees and dense undergrowth. Here it goes steeply up to Temang to a height up to 2600 m. Now the way winds itself along on the slopes, until we arrive in the village Chame at a height of 2700 m.

6. Day From Chame Lower to Pisang

In the course of the day we reach the open and wide, highly situated valley of Manang; Lower Pisang forms the beginning and the first place. We start in Chame, walk through a coniferous forest high to Thaleku and in kind weather we are able to admire the snowy mountains of the Lamjung Himal (6988 m). The valley is narrowing until behind the place Bhratang we take a path, struck into the rock-face. Along it, descending, we arrive at the Marsyandi river again, cross it on a suspension bridge and rise steeply through the opposite coniferous forest into the high situated valley of Manang to the village Lower Pisang (3250 m). Pisang peak enthroned above the valley and the glacier-covered slopes of Annapurna I and IV appear on our side of the slope.

7. Day From Lower Pisang to Braga

We are now constantly above a height of 3000 m and walk today the wide valley towards the village Braga. Hereto we have sufficient time, so that we can enjoy the far landscape now extensively. But first it just goes over a small hill to a height of 3400 m and from there we have a free view along the valley. Completely at the end the "Grande Barriere" announces itself as a white glacier wall, to whose feet the Tilichio lake lies. Below us we catch sight of the place Humde with a landing strip for small airplanes.

8. Day From Braga to Manang

Braga and Manang are neighbouring villages and one covers the distance in good an hour. The day is meant as a day of acclimatization, and that's why we don't go immediately on the

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trek, but very early ascend the path only with the daily luggage behind Braga. Somewhere on the way we encounter a sign: "Ice Lake", showing the direction we would like to go and because we are in good condition we even try to reach the lake. As the name already interprets: the lake is frozen in winter. The height amounts to about 4600 m; whose feeling is well at such a height has obtained a suitable degree of acclimatization and needs no further thoughts about his condition for the Thorung La. From a height of about 4000 m upwards the view is however already enormously because one stands opposite the summits of the Annapurna II, IV, III and the Gangapurna (7454 m). Our descent is rapidly and after an ample refreshment in Braga we reach through an impressive entrance the small cottage Manang in the early evening.

9. Day From Manang to Gunsang

A further small stage calls and we want to stay overnight at a height of about 4000 m. We go behind Manang through the small place Tankimanang and in the early afternoon we reach the small settlement Gunsang (3940 m), which consists only of a handful lodgings. The day's remaining hours one should use to recharge one's batteries, because the following days will become cumbersome by the increasing height and the long rise to the Thorung La.

10. Day From Gunsang to Thorung Phedi

We start from Gunsang towards Yak Kharka. The enormous massif of Annapurna lies behind us, the straight view falls at the powerful Gangapurna, the Tarke Kang and the "Grande barrier". Constantly the way now leads up the valley and after lunch time in Yak Kharka we get ready to hike the last piece of way to Thorung Phedi (4520 m) at the foot of the Thorung La pass.

11. Day From Thorung Phedi to Thorung La-Muktinath

The longest day expects us, and so this night in 4500 m height is quite short, because we start already very early in the morning hours, in order to have sufficient time for the way. Equipped with forehead lamps we rise immediately behind Thorung Phedi steeply in the debris field upward to the higher lain Thorung Phedi High Camp at about 4800 m height. A short rest with a

hot tea creates miracles and we are again on the move in order to cross the magic contour of 5000 m. After Thorung Phedi High Camp the steepness of the slope yields an area more open and follows now the gentle back constantly upwards. With increasing height the mountains of the Pukhung Himal with the massif of the Chulu summits in the east move clearly closer. The air has become considerably thinner and breathing is a difficult matter, so that the small tea house at a height of about 5000 m is welcome for a recovery break. After a refreshment we tackle the ascent's last section up to the pass's height, and after arduous hours, innumerable steps and with gasping lungs we suddenly stand on the broad saddle between the mountain Khatung Kang (6484 m) and Yakgawa Kang (6481 m) in front of fluttering prayer flags at 5420 m height. Over the pass we look in western direction into the far dry valley of Kali Gandaki; from here some distance northward lies the border of the "kingdom" Mustang. A small tea house, surely one of the highest in the world, makes it possible to take a short refreshment and after the shooting of these provisional passport photos we set off for the long, but technically simple descent to Muktinath.

12. Day From Muktinath to Kagbeni

Two highlights expect us here: first, the view at the Dhaulagiri (8167 m) and second, the pilgrim place Muktinath-Chumig Gyatsa. Muktinath-Chumig Gyatsa is one of the most important pilgrim places of Nepal both for Buddhists and for Hindus. At this place one shows by a remarkable example that different religions get along harmoniously with one another, and it is very possible that we meet innumerable groups of pilgrims, which are on a pilgrimage up the way via Kagbeni. Muktinath-Chumig Gyatsa represents not only the elements earth, air and holy water, but possesses additionally a burning flame within a temple, and so this location represents for many believers an important point for meditation or reflection. We should take up sufficient time for a stay before we step down the way from Muktinath via the medieval Jharkot to Kagbeni. Well acclimated and in oxygen-rich air this is a scarce half-day stage or with other words a cosy walk after the supreme performance of the past days.

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13. Day From Kagbeni to Marpha

We have been entering one of the "deepest" ravines of the earth: Kagbeni. The high summits' relief such as Dhaulagiri or Nilgiri from the peaks to the bottom is enormously, and the summits high above the ravine seem to be within reach despite its height. Caused by this morphology it can be extremely draughty as the Kali Gandaki is acting like an enormous fireplace and forms the connection from the warm-damp central country to the very dry, cold Tibetan high plateau. In the morning till about eleven o'clock it's usually calm, but afterwards the so called "nozzle-effect" often begins. In order not to have constantly to run against the wind, we start the next days early in the morning. In winter the Kali Gandaki leads little water, compared with other times and so there is mostly a more comfortable winterway on the riverbed and a more arduous one above. We also encounter a low water level and run in the endless plain with crushed stone to Jomsom (2730 m), which forms the largest village in the valley. Here a recently tarred runway exists and many tourists choose this place as starting point or endpoint of their treks. After an extensive lunch we continue our way in the crushed-stone-plain to the small place Marpha (2700 m) with its lime-whitewashed houses.

14. Day From Marpha to Lete

The valley surprises us in comparison with the valley beyond the Thorung La with a cultural and architectural completely different appearance. This is understandable, because we are here in the area of an old salt-commercial-route, that was settled by peoples coming from Tibet such as Bhotia, Thakali or Tibetan step by step since the eleventh century from Nepal's northern boundaries. In particular however the Chinese cultural revolution in 1956 brought an immense stream of refugees of the last mentioned group into the Kali Gandaki valley, where at this time dramatic scenes took place. The valley got overpopulated, and these rolling in people had nothing except their clothing; the situation was critical because of an arising famine. A disaster could be averted at that time by settlement and other remedial measures, whereby this to a large extent is to be owed to a Swiss Toni Hagen, who was active under the leadership of the international committee of the red cross. He had the imaginative idea to distribute an assuring message from the Dalai Lama by means of a simple tape recorder to the Tibetan refugees in the Kali Gandaki, so that these - calmed down by the voice of their religious head - could begin to develop a new life. Here a positive history of refugees can be seen and many of these people are now prosperously and at any time all are friendly to us.

From that radiating white city Marpha we walk today through the village Tukuhe on the endless gravel-stone-plain of the Kali Gandaki until Lete (2510 m). We pass apple-tree-plantations again and again, and even in Kathmandu in the supermarkets we will find deliciously tasting dried apple-disks from Marpha. Towards the end of the day and shortly before Lete the valley narrows itself, the far crushed-stone-plain withdraws and we hike along a way, that leads us to the foot of the Dhaulagiri to the small settlement Lete.

15. Day From Lete to Tatopani

After the relatively simple stages of the preceding days a long walk expects us today, which brings us to the place Tatopani, "hot water", and where we finally can take a bath in the hot springs. First however it goes downhill to Gasa, through the narrowing valley at about a height of 2000 m. We walk again into a landscape, which is substantially more humid and warmer, as the upper Kali Gandaki valley, and the fields and farms increase continuously. Against late noontime we reach Dana, a place, which possesses some stately business houses, which are completely out of bricks and more rarely to be met in the Annapurna area. Then after lunch we walk downhill until we reach the tropical looking place Tatopani (1200 m) in the early evening, where we find mandarintrees and bananaplants and where we move into our accommodation.

16. Day From Tatopani to Ghorepani

We change today our direction and move up again. Briefly behind Tatopani we cross the Kali Gandaki river and a branch on suspension bridges and walk steeply up the slope which is shaped by terraces and fields to Sikkha (1930 m). During the harvest time we see everywhere people working on the fields; only behind the village Chitre at about a height of 2400 m the beautiful rhododendron forest begins, which is like a paradise in its bloom time in April/May. Now we go up steeply through it to the saddle where the village Ghorepani (2880 m) lies.

17. Day From Ghorepani Poon Hill to Ulleri

Our departure time is today before sunrise, because it is worthwhile, standing at the viewpoint Poon Hill (3180 m), to see the day starting. In the northwest the enormous Dhaulagiri massif towers with Dhaulagiri I-V, northerly,

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aside the Tukuche peak, in the northeast Annapurna South and Machapuchare. After the impressive panorama we descend again and set off on the way through the dense rhododendron forest to Ulleri (2050 m). We are now above the river Bhurugndi Khola, a branch of the well-known river Modi Khola, which flows then again into the Kali Gandaki.

18. Day From Ulleri to Naya Pul

The last trekking day starts; on innumerable steps it goes down there to Tirkhedunga at a height of 1500 m, the way follows the river until we reach Birethanti with the Modi Khola and there river downwards we encounter the main street from Pokhara to Baglung after some time. Since the existance of the street here the Around Annapurna walk ends and altogether we have covered about 200 km distance and we have achieved ten kilometers ascent.

II. Annapurna Basislager (ABC)

No classical point of beginning or ending a trek exists for the route to the Annapurna basis camp. Here the route from the starting place Dhamphus is described, which will be reached easily by car from Pokhara if the road conditions are good ones.

1. Day From Dhampus to Landrung

We start at the small place Dhampus; the weather is beautifully; the view automatically rambles to the powerful Annapurna South and the Machapuchare that looks slimly against it. The way rises slowly to a height of 2100 m behind Bhichok Deurali and exceeds a small pass. Thus we are in the Khola valley, which winds up itself to the basis camp, so that we follow it for the next days. High above the valley along terraced tendencies we run via the place Tolka to Landrung (1700 m), where we arrive in the late evening hours.

2. Day From Landrung to Chomrong

We walk upwards the slightly rising valley along small, tilted fields, passing some farms, arrive the bank of the rushing river Khola and cross it on a bridge. Here a steep rise follows via the settlement Udi to the village Chinudanda lain on a rock. After lunch time we continue our steeply rising way to a height of about 2000 m above the river and from there we pace at an nearly equal height to the place Chomrong.

3. Day From Chomrong to Dhovan

Chomrong consists of a relatively large settlement nestling against the terraced tendencies. It is worthwhile to search for an accommodation with view of the Annapurna South, Hiunchuli and the Machapuchare; the mountains stand frontally to the place and are a feast for the eyes. After breakfast we pass through the village first and progres then very steeply down to the Chomrong Khola, far again steeply upward to the settlement Sinuwa (2340 m). From there we contiuie the easily rising way via Khuldi Ghar and Bamboo to Doban (2500m).

4. Day From Dhovan to Deurali

The valley contracts now and the mountain flanks steepen closing the valley. We reach today a height of 3200 m. The way leads constantly uphill, the vegetation grows bearly and in winter one has to be alert to the first snow from here on.

5. Day From Deurali to Machapuchare Basecamp

A short day, because the hiking trail is not very long; however we pass the benchmark of 3500 m and the air's oxygen content decreases now noticeably. Who feels sufficiently fit at this height, is also able to continue the way to the Annapurna basecamp.

6. Day From Machapuchare Basecamp to Annapurna Basecamp

Now the close valley has opened again shortly before the Machapuchare basecamp and we stay in an enormous bowl surrounded by Machapuchare, Singu Chuli, Fang, Annapurna south and Hiunchuli. The further we approach the Annapurna basecamp the more we have an insight into the enormous Annapurna south wall.

7. Day From Annapurna Basecamp to Chomrong

During sunrise it is worth to walk towards the Annapurna south wall. There we discover the enormous end moraine, and look into the former bed of Annapurna's glacier. Far away the wall foot of the Annapurna south wall streches, the summit ridge of the Annapurna I seems to be still more unattainable with a height of 8000 m. At the moraine's break-off edge, where we are deeply impressed by the

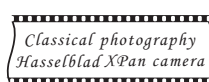
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whole enormous arena, a richly-decorated chorten stands. After a short refreshment in one of the lodgings of the Annapurna base-camp we start the return route. We pass rapidly the Machapuchare basecamp, the settlements of Deurali and reach again Chomrong.

8. Day From Chomrong to Ghandrung

We leave the well-known Chomrong now, pass the small settlement Taglung (2050 m) and this time we don't cross the Kali Khola river, but walk along it till we ascend steeply high to Ghandrung.

9. Day From Ghandrung to Naya Pul

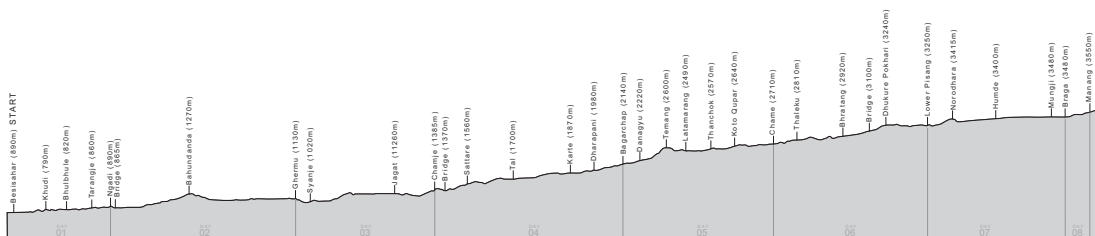
The last section of our trek runs from Ghandruk to Naya Pul along the Kali Khola. We returned finally into the area, in which more pleasant, warmer climate prevails, and walk between banana plants, mandarin-trees and magnificently flowering Bougainvilleas to the Baglung highway, which we encounter in the place Naya Pul. From there we achieve comfortably and rapidly with a taxi back to our starting point Pokhara.



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