

Trekking in Nepal on the Annapurna Circuit: 5 October to 13 November

Walkers: Lothar & Peter

The Annapurna Circuit & Annapurna Sanctuary. We took a tourist bus from Kathmandu to Dumre, and then another one to Besi Sahar. We stayed overnight (or 2/3 nights) at the following locations: Bhulbule, Syange, Tal, Chame (2), Pisang, Manang (2), Yak Kharka, Thorung Base Camp, Muktinath, Kagbeni, Marpha, Kalopani/Lete, Tatopani (3), Sikha, Ghorapani, Tadapani, Chhomrong, Himalaya Lodge, Machhapuchhare Base Camp (MBC), Annapurna Base Camp (ABC), Dovan, Chhomrong, and Ghandruk. We then walked to Naya Pul via Birethanti, and took a taxi to Pokhara. A few days later we returned to Kathmandu by tourist bus.

What were the highlights?

Walking in fantastic and interesting/varied terrain/scenery. The Thorung La & ABC areas. Poon Hill. The great people - both locals & fellow trekkers. Lodge accommodation and food was good/excellent...mmm, the steak in Pokhara was the best I've ever had! The weather was superb- hardly any rain. We didn't see a leech!

What were the worst bits?

Pollution & touts in the cities. Rolled ankle (Peter). Chest infection complicated by breathing at high altitudes (Lothar). Afternoon winds around Kagbeni, Jomsom and Marpha. And we didn't like some of the steep bits!

What were the day to day expenses like?

During the trek an Australian dollar was worth about 40 Rupees, and a US dollar about 70 Rupees. So to convert to dollars, just divide by 40 or 70. We budgeted on US\$15/day during the trek and that was more than adequate.

Prices were fixed and increased the higher up you went in altitude. A bed (mostly twin share) was in the range 60-120 Rupees/night. Food was 400-1000 Rupees/day. eg Dahl Bhat was 70-200 Rs (and that included free seconds anywhere on the circuit - other food never included free seconds). A pizza cost about 150-250 Rs. Two eggs cost 40-60 Rs, tea 10-30 Rs per cup. A large bottle of beer (eg Tuborg) cost 80-250 Rs, and a small bottle of coke 20-90 Rs. Bottled water cost 20-80 Rs/litre but you didn't need this if you had iodine solution/tablets, drank soft drinks, or had drinks made from boiling water. Menus were fixed price and you got a great selection of food and drinks.

At high altitudes, and when it was cold at night, red hot coals or a kero stove would be put under the large community dinner tables to keep our feet and legs warm. Great! This service cost about 15-30 Rs/person.

Some of the trekkers had their own porters/guides at a cost of 400-600 Rs a day. We carried our own 15-17 kg packs which seemed overweight at times. You really don't need a guide - there are plenty of locals & fellow travellers to set you straight if you're unsure which path to take.

It cost us 2000 Rs in Bhulbule for the Annapurna pass. Unfortunately we arrived in Kathmandu during the Dassain festival and the ACAP office was closed. If we had been able to purchase the passes in Kathmandu (or Pokhara) instead of on the trek, the cost would have been only 1000 Rs. Yes, a big rip off!

What was a typical day like?

Out of bed at about 5-6am. Packed and had breakfast (such as porridge or muesli, eggs, tea/coffee). Started trekking 7:30-8:30am. Stopped once or twice for a cuppa or soup. Lunch was usually 12-2pm. We mostly finished our walks about lunchtime anyway - on a few occasions we walked in the afternoon until about 5pm. We'd then check into a lodge, have (solar heated) showers at lower altitudes (and a bucket of water at high altitudes), changed & washed some clothes, chatted with fellow trekkers, ordered dinner at about 4-5pm, had a beer, played cards, dinner at about 6-7pm, and off to bed at about 7-9pm. In the evenings in Manang we also watched films at video cinemas. Dinners were good because you sat around big tables and talked to lots of different people.

Lothar

PS:

Between Oct 18 and October 23 we crossed paths and shared some experiences with Leonie & Sebastiaan (from Holland) and Klaus (from Germany) - see [photo](#) or visit www.rondreisweb.nl/nepasten.htm . Leonie & Sebastiaan (and their friend Susan) visited Peter and myself briefly in Warrnambool on Jan 23, 2001. It was great to see them again! We saw lots of photos, slides, films, etc of all our travels and did lots of reminiscing. On the following day they left for Adelaide & Western Australia.

Lake Pertobe family fun day: 19 November

A group of 13 participants met down at Lake Pertobe looking forward to Stephanie's planned family fun day.

We split up into groups and armed with a laminated quiz sheet (depicting photos & questions pertaining to those photos) set off around Lake Pertobe to seek the answers.

We noticed serious discussion going on between some of our competitors to various questions.

Once we had completed the quiz we assembled back at the BBQ area where Steph collated & corrected our sheets in typical teacher spirit.

The Rauerts were declared the winners with a perfect score (perhaps we had an advantage with the most team members and possibly the most familiarisation with the area).

Steph had also completed a bicycle quiz but with insufficient participants this was held over for another weekend.

We all then enjoyed a picnic/BBQ before heading off back home.

Stephanie had put a lot of time and effort into planning this activity and we were all rewarded by the fun we had. Thankyou Steph.

Judy Rauert.

Port Fairy to Warrnambool beach walk: 26 November

Walkers: Bill, Carolyn, Ken, Laine, Lothar, Marg, Ron, Steve, Trevor

Lothar chose a fine sunny afternoon to lead this walk. It is a route he knows so well as he has often made this trek along the beach carrying a fully loaded pack as training for his recent Trek in Nepal. But that is another story.

We met at 1:30pm at the east beach of Port Fairy. Nine of us were walking whilst Chris arranged the car shuttle. She promptly returned home to await word of our arrival and to be at Thunder Point. Bill had other plans and his car was parked at Killarney. Ken, Trevor and Carolyn planned to walk to Killarney and back to Port Fairy. Meanwhile Tony and Sandra were out there on the sand having begun their walk at 11am and they went on to arrive at Thunder Point at 5pm.



Trevor found a golf ball on the sand – overshoot by a golfer playing the 16th hole on the adjacent golf links and it was then that Ken looked decidedly uncomfortable. If only he'd had his sand iron with him Ken could have had some constructive and enjoyable bunker practice.

Killarney was a good spot for our first coffee break, which Lothar served from thermos flasks he was carrying in his daypack. Hot coffee and fruitcake was lovely thank you! We bid three of the Farrars goodbye and Bill left to move his car along to Rutledge Cutting. This gave Laine the chance to walk on further.

At our next break Bill was waiting on the beach for us and to pick up Laine, reducing our party of beachcombers to four: Lothar, Steve, Ron and Marg.

The peace and tranquillity of the ocean with the constant waves breaking gently on the shore was occasionally disturbed as horses galloped along the beach leaving hoof prints distinctly in the sand. Walking was easy at low tide on the firm sand and later in the day we stopped to inspect the myriad of rock pools that were exposed along the coast.

West of Levy's Point we walked on rocky outcrops around which seaweeds floated, rising and falling as the tide ebbed and flowed. The light grew soft as the sun began to sink in the west and the sea took on a silver glow and we felt privileged to experience calm towards sunset. Looking back, the Norfolk Island pines at Port Fairy were just dots on the horizon indicating our long walk.

Ron left us near Thunder Point to walk home. Chris welcomed us in the car and she dropped Marg off in town before heading back to Port Fairy for Steve to collect his car.

Thank you to Lothar and Chris for organising such a good day.

Marg.

Christmas break up in the Grampians: 2–3 December

Once again a group of 22 adults & 7 children made the trek up to the camp site near the Moora-Moora Reservoir. Some arrived Friday evening & the rest of us throughout the day on Saturday. The day was spent leisurely around the campfire, with the meat put on to cook in the camp ovens mid afternoon.

After commencement of predinner drinks & nibbles the bush-walking Olympics began. This was kicked off with the golden boot throwing competition . A number of different styles were witnessed as competitors flung the boot as far as they could. Lois showed us the boomerang throw whilst Karen put a halt to the event when her throw put the boot high up into the tree branches. Stephanie was declared the winner & received a medal for her efforts. She was honoured by completing a lap of the campsite with the Olympic torch (courtesy of Jumping Jai alias Herb). Lois kept us entertained throughout the evening with her impersonation of Titiana. Jan was the official drug tester and Sandra had everybody in stitches of laughter, as she successfully executed the "clean & jerk" as a convincing weight lifter.

At some stage during the evening dinner was served & the delicious meal was quickly devoured with many compliments being passed on to the chefs. Then it was back to more Olympics fun . Helen helped create the atmosphere with sparklers for everyone. The Rauerts had everyone clapping along as they sang their improvisation of "clapping land". Wayne & Sandy kept the laughs flowing with their commanding performance of the "Haka war-cry". Linda & Irene performed admirably together as "Fatso " the wombat & his mum (a reference to the Olympic advertisements on the T.V.). Diane & Coralie had masterminded a competition to see who could get dressed quickest in their wet weather gear with the rain coming down. The contestants were Geoff & Steph. Coralie provided the "rain" with her water pistol. After a lot of tussling Steph was eventually declared the winner. Diane also had a blindfolded Jan down on her knees feeling for her husbands toes! This was hilarious as Jan tried to decipher which legs belonged to Trevor. In the end she got it wrong!

As the entertainment from the opening & closing ceremonies finished the party began with music & dancers taking over the tarpaulin floor.

Earlier on in the evening Santa had paid us all a visit & the ingenious Olympic themed gifts were well received. The next morning everybody arose and packed at their leisure, some leaving before lunch & the rest staying on until mid afternoon ending another successful Warrnambool Walkers Christmas Break-up.

Judy

