



Medical Research Expedition to Manaslu 2015



Medex (www.medex.org.uk) and Medical Expeditions are planning to undertake a medical research expedition to the Manaslu region of Nepal in the spring of 2015.

The research is being coordinated by Jamie Macdonald PhD, a lecturer at Bangor University and a member of the Extremes Research Group (email: j.h.macdonald@bangor.ac.uk; Tel: +44 (0) 1248 383272). A number of projects have been submitted and are currently being scrutinised by the research committee. Please refer to: www.medex.org.uk/expeditions/Manaslu%202015%20Research%20Page.php or contact Jamie for more information on the research.”

We welcome all who want to come and join us to participate in the expedition. No qualifications are required, just a desire to be in the mountains and to enjoy trekking. Some will be leading research projects. If you want to assist directly with the conduct of a research project, please contact Jamie MacDonald who will match you with a research leader and project. Everyone on the expedition is invited to participate in the research as guinea pigs! To enable the research to be effective it is hoped that everyone will be able to attend a sea level data collection weekend which will be held about two months before the expedition commences. This is an opportunity for researchers to test their equipment in a more controlled environment before packing and freighting it to Nepal. It is also a great opportunity for the trekkers to meet each other and learn about the research projects and the types of tests that will be conducted during the expedition.

Medex organises the trekking and climbing activities on the expedition and Medical Expeditions organises the research. Simon and Sally Currin are the leaders of Medex (simon@medex.org.uk and sally@medex.org.uk)



Organisation of the expedition

Medex has organised a number of research expeditions to Nepal, starting in 1994 with the British Mount Everest Medical Expedition. Reports from past expeditions are on the Medex web site. We organise the participants into groups of normally about 10 people and encourage the groups to get together and get to know one another ahead of the expedition as far as is possible. We do not provide any western leaders to accompany or lead the Groups. Each group will be ably supported by Nepalese guides, cooks and porters and each group should appoint a spokesperson who will be the main contact for the Nepalese staff. Each person is expected to take responsibility for themselves and undertake activities to the level of their ability. We also encourage people to become involved in the many and various jobs that are required ahead of, during and after the expedition. This is the best way to get the maximum benefit from joining a Medex trip so do let Simon or Sally know (simon@medex.org.uk) if you would like to assist with organisation – from being a medic for a group, assisting with freighting equipment, organisation of medical kits, sorting discounts on gear for expedition members, assistance with base camp logistics etc etc.

Length of expedition

The minimum length of the expedition will be 4 weeks. This is to allow time for research at base camp and also to increase the enjoyment of the trek by allowing time for good acclimatisation, side trips and the opportunity, should people feel able, to attempt a trekking peak. This is a week longer than a normal commercial trekking holiday. Itineraries of five and six weeks will also be available.

Timing of expedition

We expect the expedition to take place between around 25th March 2015 and 6th May 2015. This is a six week period and groups will be arriving at different times in Nepal depending on their particular focus and the length of their trip. When trekking we like to keep the groups apart so as not to overcrowd camp sites and also to stagger arrival at the research base camp to enable researchers to cope with conducting the tests.

Route of trek

We have chosen the Manaslu circuit as an ideal destination for this expedition. A suggested itinerary follows. Manaslu is the eighth highest mountain in the world at a height of 8,163m. It was first climbed by the Japanese in 1956 and today attracts several teams each season, including commercial climbing groups.

Site for the research base camp

Having researched the area and liaised with our trekking contacts in Kathmandu, we have identified a super site for the research base camp at an altitude of about 5,000m on the east side of the Larkya pass. It was originally thought that we could make Manaslu base camp our research base camp but the altitude at 4,600m is lower than is ideal for the research and due to the number of expeditions climbing the mountain it can get very crowded.



Base camp below the Larkya La

Trekking peak objective

Above our base camp and the Larkya La is Larkya Peak (6,249m). It has recently received trekking peak status in Nepal which means that permits to climb it can be obtained from the Nepalese Government at a reasonable cost. The ascent requires a high camp and should only be attempted by those with good Alpine experience on crevassed glaciers. Those wanting to attempt the peak will need to reserve their places when booking for the expedition so that permits can be arranged in good time.



Larkya peak from high camp

Cost of the expedition

We price the trek to be similar to a commercial trek price and use the surplus that would normally go to the UK based trekking company to fund the research logistics. We do not organise the International Flights and all trek prices are for the in country costs in Nepal. We charge a price for the expedition similar to a commercial trek company but use the margin to fund the research logistics. We are still liaising with our Nepalese agent on final costs but as a guideline a three week commercial trek cost around £1,900 ex Kathmandu. Our price will be higher due to the longer duration of the expedition and a separate fee of about £300 will be payable for attempting Larkya Peak. We will firm up the costs in time for taking deposits in the spring of 2014. For those outside the UK we will provide a cost in US dollars as this helps us to cover the exchange rate risk.

What is not included in the cost of the trip

The trip cost will cover trek, transport and hotel expenses in Nepal. Whilst on trek accommodation is in two man tents. Hotel accommodation is in twin rooms. The additional expenses which you will need to incur are:

- a) International flights to Kathmandu
- b) Cost of Nepalese visa
- c) insurance for search and rescue, medical expenses and travel
- d) cost of additional kilos of baggage over standard allowance of 15kgs per person on trek
- e) meals and beverages in Kathmandu and Pokhara and items bought along the trek
- f) tips for staff

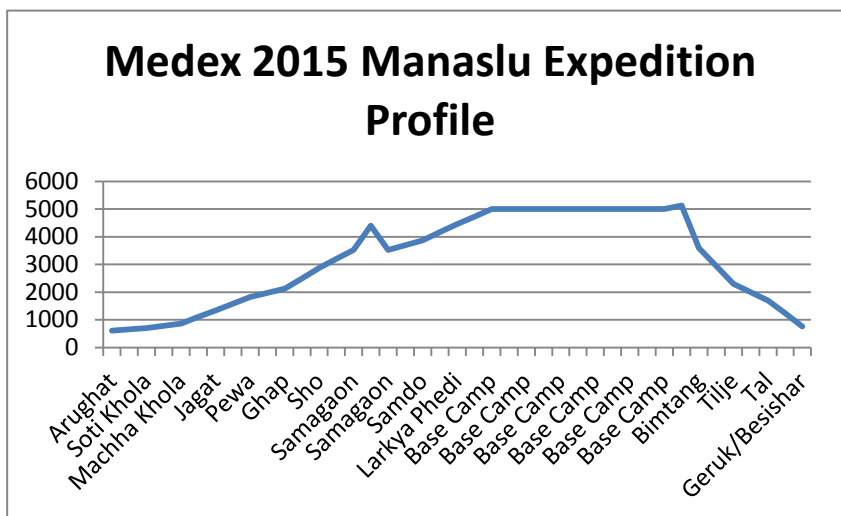
Flights are normally available for booking a year ahead and do get very booked up in the peak trekking season.



Suggested trek itinerary

Groups can go at their own pace and can spend extra days at rest if desired. The trek profile is a good one although as ever in Nepal, the heights of camps belie the ups and downs to be encountered on the trail.

Day	Location	Possible side trips
1	Arrive Kathmandu	
2	Day at leisure in Kathmandu + welcome dinner	
3	Bus Kathmandu to Arughat (608m)	
4	Trek Arughat to Sotikhola (712m)	
5	Sotikhola to Machha Khola (883m)	
6	Machha Khola to Jagat (1,415m)	
7	Jagat to Pewa (1,820m)	Tsum valley trek diverts here
8	Pewa to Ghap (2,120m)	Serang Gompa 500m climb to North east of trail
9	Ghap to Sho (2,880m)	Day hike to Kal Chhuman Lake 3,574m possible
10	Sho to Samagaon (3,520m)	Alternate camp at Prok 2,397m and side trip to ~Pung Gyen Gompa at 4,120m
11	Rest day in Samagaon	Day hike to Manaslu base camp possible 4,600m
12	Samagaon to Samdo (3,875m)	Vantage point above Samdo 4,600m
13	Samdo to Dharmasala (Larkya Phedi) (4,460m)	
14	Dharmasala to base camp (5,000m)	
15-20	Research and possibility of climbing Larkya Peak	
21	Larkya base camp over Larkya pass (5,160m) to Bimthang (3,590m)	Day hike to Ponkar Lake (3,965m)
22	Bimthang to Tilche (2,300m)	
23	Tilche to Taal (1,700m)	Join Annapurna circuit here
24	Taal to Geruk/Beshishahar (760m)	
25	Bus to Kathmandu	
26	Day in Kathmandu	
27	Depart Kathmandu	



This profile includes a day trip to Manaslu base camp which is optional.

It is also possible on descent from the Larkya Pass to join up with the Annapurna circuit, cross the Thorong La (5,416 m), and descend to Jomson, then fly to Pokhara and on to Kathmandu. This will add at least a week to ten days to the itinerary but would be a great exit route. Pokhara is a lovely town on the banks of a very picturesque lake and a great place to relax. Flights from Jomson to Pokhara are subject to delays due to strong winds and bad weather so additional time needs to be built in to ensure International flight connections are made. It is also possible to exit from the Manaslu circuit and spend a few days in Pokhara before returning to Kathmandu without crossing the Thorong La. The trek profile for exit via the Thorong La is on the Medex web site as is a profile including an ascent of Larkya Peak.

Equipment required

We will publish a kit list closer to the time. Tents, food and cooking equipment are provided by our Nepalese staff. Porters are hired to carry our equipment between camp sites. The two single most important items of personal equipment you will need are a very good down sleeping bag and a down jacket. Other than this most of the gear you will need will be the same as you would use on a day out in the hills of the UK unless you are attempting Larkya Peak, in which case alpine climbing equipment will be required.

Medical kits

We will appoint someone to be the expedition medical officer for the trip to take care of medical requirements of ourselves and our Nepalese staff. The expedition medical officer will be assisted by a medical officer in each group and will advise on personal medical kits required. A number of people indicated a while ago that they are interested in taking up these posts so please do get in touch if you are still interested. A wealth of experience is available to assist you in these roles.

Environmental considerations

Medex have a strict environment and cultural code and each group is asked to appoint one of their number to ensure that the code is adhered to by us and by our support staff. We are going into a fragile mountain environment as guests of the local people and have a duty to respect their culture and customs and to ensure appropriate and proper disposal of rubbish.

Contact details

Please direct research questions to: j.h.macdonald@bangor.ac.uk;

Please direct trekking and climbing questions to: simon@medex.org.uk

We look forward to welcoming you to Medex. To ensure that you receive all the forthcoming information and to be eligible to join the expedition please join Medex so that you are included on our email list. The fee to join is a one off payment of £45. Details are on our web site. <http://medex.org.uk/membership/sign-up.php>

We are organising a number of events over the next few months to enable people to find out more about the trip and the research. There is still time to join us at the Old Dungeon Ghyll in the Lake District on 23rd November. Other events are:

New Year on the West Coast of Scotland December 29-Jan 1st 2013/4

Spring Meeting in mid Wales March 29th & 30th 2014

Full details are in the September 2013 newsletter on the web site

<http://medex.org.uk/membership/newsletters/Medex%20Newsletter%20September%202013.pdf>

Simon & Sally Currin

Medex

15 November 2013

