

The newer Tamang Heritage Trail (see Chapter 9) lies to the west of the Langtang area and takes you through mainly Tamang villages in the mid-hills that have received relatively fewer tourists. Although the mountain views are a bit farther away than in Langtang, follow this trail and stay in people's homes for a deeper cultural experience than can be had on the more touristic routes. A trek along the Tamang Heritage Trail can be combined with the Langtang trek. The routes coincide at Syabrubensi or along the high route from Syabrubensi to Rimche where the trails tie in at the village of Khajim.

LANGTANG

(Map No. 6, Page 297)

Langtang is a spectacular valley nestled in the Himalaya and the third most visited trekking region after Annapurna and Everest. Lodges and food are available for most of the way, but it is best to arrange food and shelter to be able to explore the upper part of the valley; this can be organized at Kyangjin Gomba, the last area with lodges. First, we describe the trip from Dhunche (or Syabrubensi, a quicker valley-bottom option) to Langtang and then several side trips up the valley. A high pass, the Ganja La, links Langtang with Helambu; going with a guide is advised. Return routes to avoid backtracking from Langtang and link up with Gosainkund complete the description.

Dhunche was the traditional starting point for the trek. However, with the construction of a trail from Syabrubensi to Langtang (Paino), it is possible to cut about a day off the usual trekking time. The price paid for starting from Syabrubensi rather than Dhunche is not passing through Syabu, missing views of Ganesh Himal and peaks to the north in Tibet, and opting for an entire valley-bottom route. However, if you are going on to Gosainkund, you will pass through Syabu anyway, so the valley-bottom option makes sense. You could also start (or vary your return) by traversing from Syabrubensi high on the north side of the Langtang valley and reaching Rimche (or if going the other direction, return this way to Syabrubensi). A start from Syabrubensi is described first, followed by that from Dhunche.

The first part, often the most difficult, consists of road travel. If you have the resources, consider hiring a jeep. Trekkers have occasionally chartered a helicopter to Kyangjin Gomba and descended from there. Altitude illness is more likely to strike such groups. Better to board a bus from Kathmandu to Dhunche or Syabrubensi. Some buses go directly to Syabrubensi; others go only as far as Dhunche. Departure points for these tourist buses are from the New Bus Park ("New Bus Park") near Baleshi on the Kathmandu Ring Road. Purchase the tickets the day before, and specify which destination you want.

The road rises out of the Kathmandu valley to the northeast. Enjoy refreshing sights of fertile hills along the way and the occasional symphony of cicadas if they can be heard over the din of the bus. There are glimpses of Ganesh Himal and west to Himal Chuli and the Annapurna Range, but you will be close to the mighty Himalaya soon enough. Trishuli, the administrative center of Nuwakot District, is less than 45 miles (70 km) by road from Kathmandu.

North of Trishuli the rough feeder road climbs up from the valley bottom. Views of the Langtang Range and Paldor Peak as well as the incredible gorge below you give a sense of the scale of the terrain. Pass through the village of Kalikasthan and eventually enter the Langtang National Park area. Park entry permits are inspected along the road just before reaching Dhunche (6594 feet, 2010 m), the headquarters of Rasuwa



Mani wall with Kyangjin Gomba and prayer flags (Photo by Tokazole Robbins)

District, 30 miles (48 kms) from Trishuli. The check post and national park office and information center are just over 1/2 mile (1 km) before Dhunche or a 10-minute walk. The road continues 9 miles (14 1/2 kms) to Syabrubensi and further west to Thakachhet (road travel even farther west into the Ganesh Himal area to lead and zinc mines at Somsang is by private vehicle) or north to the border.

SYABRUBENSI TO KYANGJIN GOMBA

Syabrubensi (4650 feet, 1417 m) is at the junction of the Langtang Khola with the Bhote Kosi, which join to form the Trishuli Khola. This large town has a settlement of Tibetan refugees, as well as Bhote/Tiya, who call themselves Tamang. The newer part of town is to the south. Below here, on the true right (TR) bank of the Trishuli Khola, there are hot springs with five small pools that used to be clean enough for bathing, but more recently have become too polluted and are in disrepair. There are attempts to clean them up, so inquire locally if they are usable.

Cross the Bhote Kosi and then the Langtang Khola on suspension bridges to begin on the south side of the Langtang Khola. The trail follows the Langtang Khola upstream on the true left (TL) bank, if facing downstream. Don't take the right-hand fork, reached in 20 minutes from the bridge, unless you would like to go to Syabu.