





Hard Core outdoor camping experience ©Ian Wall

Welcome to Ian and Sarita's
OFF THE WALL TREKKING



We personalise our itineraries to match the expectations and goals of our clients. Before booking a trek with Off the Wall trekking we will exchange several emails and possibly a Zoom call to ensure match sure we tick all the expectation boxes for your trip to Nepal. Whether it is a cultural tour, a mountain camping adventure or a special interest trek, we will advise you on your bucket list trek of your lifetime. We also offer fixed departure treks which we hope will take a bit of the planning stress out of the equation for you. Many people think of Nepal as basically a two season trekking destination, however Nepal offers a lot more. The traditional trekking seasons are Spring and autumn but winter is often dry, the days are shorter and colder but there are far fewer trekkers to be seen so maybe this is the season to do the treks on your bucket list but without the crowds.

I must apologise for another overdue Newsletter but I've been waiting for our new website and unfortunately what with various health issues that are bumbling around Kathmandu at the moment it's taken longer than anticipated. If you have the opportunity to check our new site I would appreciate any feed-back. I have little idea of putting a website together and am still noticing a few areas where I think it needs tweaking, namely with some of the images but we are almost there!

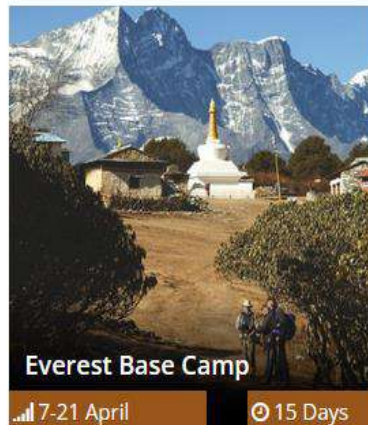
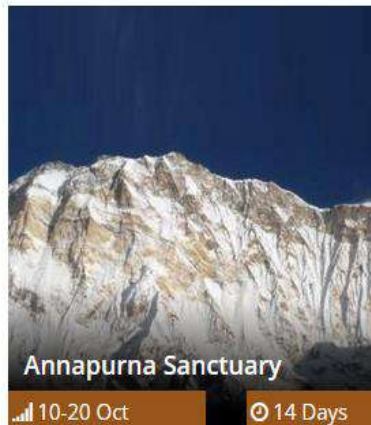
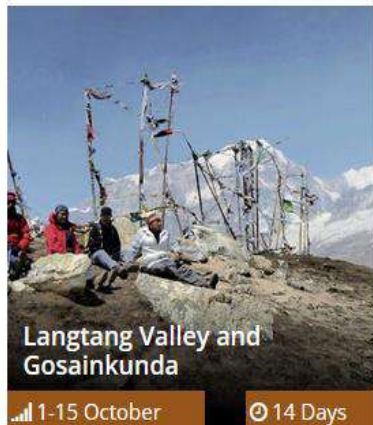
One of the new features we are going with is the promotion of fixed date departures for some of our more popular treks.

As many of you will know one of the most remote, culturally diverse and challenging treks in Nepal is in Upper Dolpa, a very auspicious Buddhist region with Shey Gumpa at its center. Every 12 years there is a major festival held at the Gumpa and this will take place in 2024.

If you are interested in taking part in this incredible trek or any other of our fixed departure date treks or personalized treks please visit our website or contact us via any of the contact services, or email us at info@offthewalltrekking.com

2022-2023 FIXED DEPARTURE TREKS

Fixed Departure Treks are open booking treks so there are likely to be other people on the trek unless you specify that you want to be a self-contained group. The dates are fixed and aim to fit into the traditional holiday periods so as to allow independent flexibility in the event and anticipation of mountain experiences that require taking time off work.



The Dolpa 12 Year Festival Special - 2024

This is an early 'heads-up' for anyone who might be interested in trekking to the Dolpa Festival in August 2024. We will be running this camping based trek to Shey and the Festival, one of the most auspicious festival in both Nepal and the Bon and Buddhist calendars.

Legend says Dolpa is a Beyul, one of the "hidden valleys" explored by Guru Rinpoche as a refuge for devout Buddhists and those of exceptionally pure mind. This hidden

land of Dolpa was long ago settled by farmers and nomads from Tibet and is now one of the highest inhabited places on earth, with scattered fortress-like villages and monasteries nestling amongst mountains of stark, ascetic beauty.



Cover image Prayer Flags on the Nagdalo La5350m leading towards shey Gompa. Above The camp site just north of Saldang looking towards the Tibetan Plateau



A Mask Dance performed by one of the monks at the Shey Festival 2012

Dolpa remains culturally and economically tied to Tibet, as the people of this desolate area are cut off to the south by snow-covered passes for much of the year. Dolpa remains a living example of ancient Tibetan culture and way of life frozen in time.

Dolpos practice a 'Bon' religion which was originally practiced in the Zhangzhung dynasty of what is now Tibet and before the arrival of Buddhism and is the only place in the world where collective settlements of Bön practitioners can be found.

While it has similarities with Buddhism, it has strong shamanistic elements such as the belief that spirits are found in not only humans, but also



Shey Monastery situated in the heart of Dolpa and central to the Buddhist religion and site of the Shey Festival

plants, animals, mountains and rivers too. Since the fall of Zhangzhung dynasty the main and most auspicious Gompa of the region is at Shey situated in Inner Dolpo. This twelfth-century monastery is the main pilgrimage place of Nygma-pa sect Buddhists. In Shey there are two more monasteries built onto caves in the cliffs, said to be older than Shey Gompa. The holy Ribu Drukda (Thundering Crystal Mountain) which towers above Shey is believed to be the younger brother of Mt. Kailash in Tibet. The main, and oldest, monastery of Bön Buddhism is Shamling Gompa where hundreds of ancient scriptures are still well preserved.



One of the Monasteries that is built into the cliffs situated high on the hillside high above Shey Monastery



Crystal Mountain, one kora of which is said to equal one kora of all the other sacred sites in Dolpa

They Gompa lies in the shadow of Crystal Mountain one of the most sacred Himalayan pilgrimages of Nepal. It has a legendary place in Buddhism and is located to the north of the Phoksundo Lake. His immense holiness Tuptop Singe Yeshe had received enlightenment at They-Gompa.

Crystal Mountain (Ribo Drugta) provides one of the major circular kora in Nepal and is also known as the younger brother of Mt. Kailash.

The holiness of Crystal Mountain is based on legend. A thousand or so years ago Buddhist ascetic Gyamgon Rimpoche, the main Lama of the Thiwong Gyamgon Gompa, the main gompa of the Kakyupa sect, one of the



A young musician at They Festival 2012

four major sects of Buddhism, once dreamt about the Shey area, previously unvisited by him. He sent one of his most loyal disciple to explore Shey as a pilgrimage. Drutop Shinge Yeshe, as per his guru's order, left Tibet and visited Dolpo. He first saw Shey from Saikpa Kang near Bhijer. When he found the people whose supreme god was a wild mountain spirit he tried to overcome the fierce the mountain spirit, using the flying snow lion, a legendary companion of the snow leopard, as a mount but the spirits resisted by unleashing a horde of snake-like beings. However, snow lion reproduces itself 108 times, once for each book of Buddhist scriptures, and with this reinforcement, Drutop vanquished the spirit and transformed it into 'a thundering Mountain of purest Crystal'.

Every 12 years, in the month of August, a special festival takes place at Shey Gompa this is one of the most important festivals not only for Upper Dolpo people but also for all the Buddhist people around the world. It is a



Pride in their horses, Shey Festival 2012

grand celebration for all Tibetan Bon and Buddhist followers from around the world. During the festival time people make a kora of Crystal Mountain. The festival continues for 5 to 6 days and includes many local high mountain activities, cultural music and mask

Local Tibetan women Shey Festival 2012



dances, horse racing, archery, religious ceremonies and of course visits by many dignitaries.

Shey Phoksundo National Park is a sanctuary for the rare snow leopard, red panda and other endangered species. It has great bio-diversity: 286 species of flora, over 200 species of birds, 26 species of mammals and 29 species of butterflies are found in the park area. The strange, and very high-value medicinal plant, yarchagumba (*Cordyceps sinensis*) is also found in this region.

Other news

The monsoon started early this year and is still persistent over Nepal, thankfully without the damage being inflicted as we have seen in Pakistan. At the moment there is a split decision as to whether it has deposited the expected amount of water.

A Nepalese rapper and politician, turned Mayor of Kathmandu.



Mayor of Kathmandu Baylen Shah

Earlier in the year the country held local elections for new regional mayors, Balendra Shah, was elected and took office on 30 May 2022. 'Balen', as he is known, certainly hit the ground running and has increased his popularity within the Kathmandu Metropolitan City through his swift and decisive actions in dealing with high priority issues, but of course in dealing with those he has ruffled feathers in some quarters. Two of his initial projects involved dealing with the rubbish collection and disposal system in the city. This environmental issue has been going on for decades with the local community surrounding the landfill site often blocking the transport of rubbish to the site causing major health issues in Kathmandu. The second issue



Rimpoches, the Chief Guest at the Shey festival 2012

concerns the building or erecting of unauthorized 'temporary' shops and other retail outlets around the city, many often obstruction pedestrian walkways and in some cases, roads. The most recent headline news concerning this high profile action involved the site of the Jai Nepal Cinema Hall, a major cinema complex. For many decades locals have complained about the disappearance of local streams and rivers that use to flow through the central valley. Based on the map drawn up by the metropolitan offices, the Tukucha River was rediscovered after heavy earth moving equipment was used to excavate a 15 feet deep hole on the hall premises. According to the council the Tukucha River, which runs out of the Narayanhiti Darbar area, had disappeared as a result of indiscriminate and unmonitored building in this area.



Discovering the missing Tukucha River

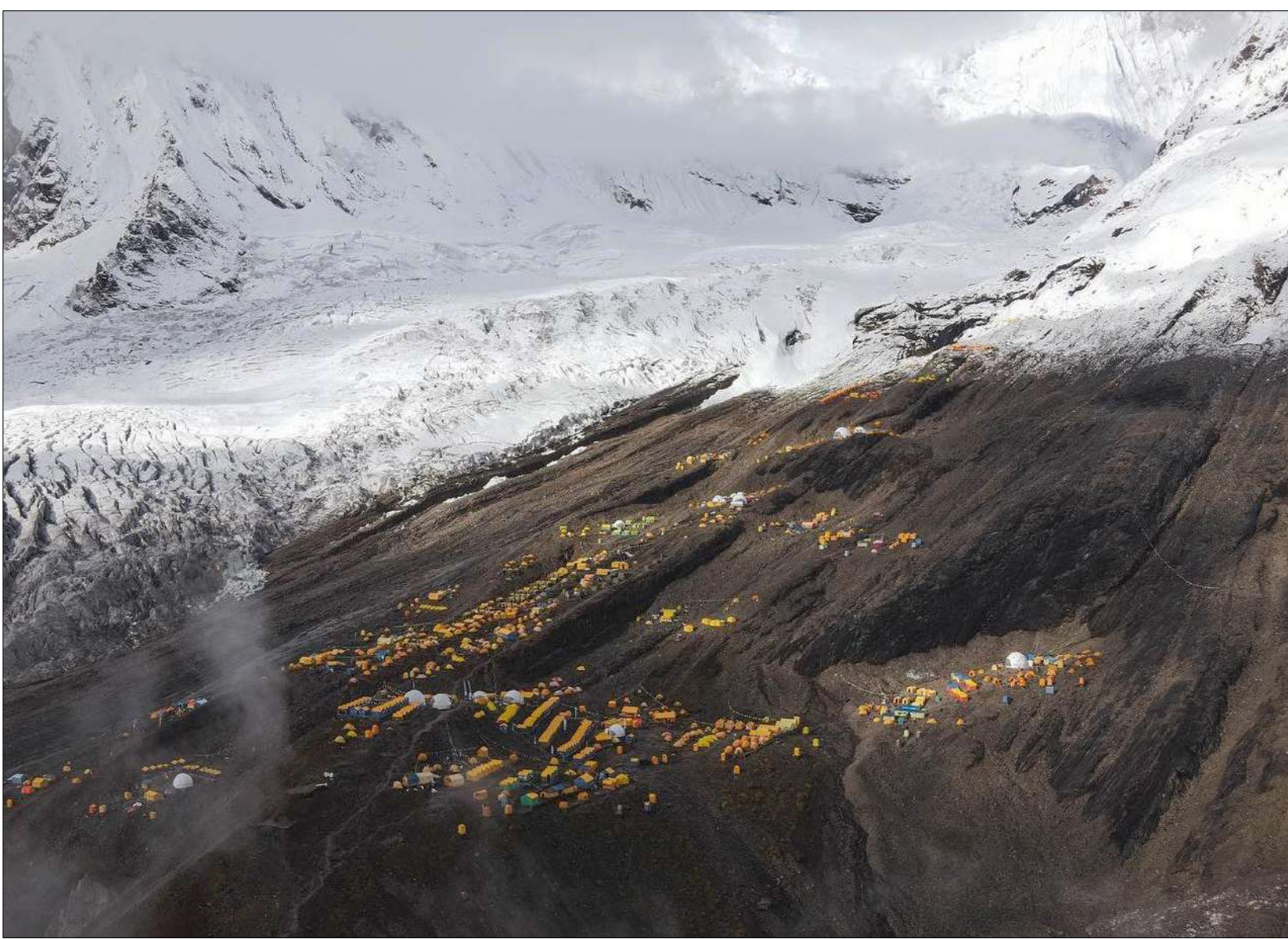
The local residents had been demanding excavation for several years, claiming that structures have been built on infill that encroached over the river.

The council had subsequently issued notification on July 28 and instructed the removal of all encroachments surrounding the Tukucha River. After the expiration of the 35-day notice, the council started excavation and search operations in the area which subsequently resulted in uncovering the buried river.

On the hills

The mountaineering season got underway in late August with many teams heading toward Manaslu. Since the aerial videos taken last season indicating the true summit of Manaslu and the point at which the fixed ropes stopped, and thus termed the 'summit', (despite all images of summit successes showing a continuing ascending snow slope in the background) many people have return to tick the true summit this season.

However, with the rapidly growing numbers of people paying huge sums of money to ascend these 8000m peaks and with the agencies providing a comprehensive service ranging from luxury 5star base camp facilities, mountain skill training programs before going for the summit and with full wifi connectivity more and more people are signing up with less and less technical mountaineering ability. One of the reasons for people not reaching the true summit of Manaslu since 2012 is due to the technical difficulty of the final few meters from the top of the last fixed rope to the true summit. I know there will be all the fixing of gear put in place, but if things go wrong will the clients be able to handle the technical seriousness of the situation?



The enormous Manaslu Base Camp September 2022

The trekking season is slowly picking up, but the monsoon weather is not helping those going into the Khumbu with many days witnessing forced shutdowns of the Lukla flights due to low cloud and poor visibility.

Finally, and what could be more final than the events of the 19th September 2022? Along with several high ranking dignitaries, members of the Gurkha and British forces we, as a family, attended the the British Embassy in Kathmandu for the synchronized televised showing of the funeral of Queen Elizabeth II. What a wonderful person, world leader and exemplary example as to the levels of commitment such a head of state provided to the rest of the world.



Jan Wall
[Signature]

September 2022

