

## DHAULAGIRI TO HIDDEN VILLAGE TRAIL GUIDE

### About the trek

This is a 5 day alternative route from Beni to Hidden Village via the lower part of the Dhaulagiri Sanctuary trek. One enjoys the beautiful Rahughat Khola valley with spectacular views of the Dhaulagiri massif, and then you climb over a 2800 m. pass to the Myagdi Khola valley joining the regular route to Hidden Village just below Lulang. Gurja Khani is reached in a long day from Lulang via the 3250 m. Gurja Deorali Pass.

You will witness some of the extreme topography, though the trail is 'average' in its demands. There are the two passes around 3000 m., but the approaches are fairly easy. The trail passes through quintessential Nepali scenery of terraced fields, forest, and ochre-plastered villages perched on steep slopes. Most of the inhabitants of the attractive and tourist-untouched villages are Magar and Chantyel, Tibeto-Mongolian tribes, but there are also significant numbers of Bishwakarma and other artisanal castes. You will meet few if any trekkers on this route, but the villages are full of the bustling activity of traditional subsistence agriculture and transhumance pastoralism. Beni, the starting point, is easily reached from Pokhara by regular buses or share jeeps in around 3 ½ hours.

There is no designated map with the route highlighted in yellow, but the trail appears on the following:

- Dhaulagiri Circuit 1:90,000 (Nepa Maps NS 501)
- Gurja Himal & Hidden Village 1:100,000 (Nepa Maps NS 523)

### Trail Description

It is recommended to make the 3 to 3 ½ hr bus journey from Pokhara to Beni in the late afternoon, overnight in Beni (many hotels of varying standard available), and then get an early start from Beni the next morning. Buses to Beni depart regularly throughout the day from the Baglung Bus Station in Pokhara and take approximately 3 ½ hours. For a bit more money, share jeeps depart from a point on the main road a few hundred meters north of the Baglung Bus Station and take about 3 hours.

### Day 1 – Beni (850 m.) to Chim Khola (1800 m.) – 7 ½ hours

**Beni to Dagnam (3 ½ hours)** - (You might consider replacing this with a share jeep from Beni bus station all the way to Dagnam, although it is a rough, bone-shaking 2-hour journey that doesn't save much time.) If you want to walk, catch any northbound bus or share jeep leaving from Beni bus station (on the Jomosom "highway") and get out after 15 minutes at Galeshwar. There is a famous Hindu pilgrimage site here featuring a temple to Shiva, and if you pass through in late November/early December, you will see thousands of pilgrims gathered for the annual Baikuntha Mela fair. The trail from Galeshwar follows the jeep road to Dagnam which leaves the main Jomosom highway about 100 meters after the bridge over the Rahughat Khola. It's a hot and dusty 800 m. climb for 3 ½ hours, via Piple, to Dagnam. The jeep road mercifully ends 20 minutes short of Dagnam village. In Dagnam, there are a couple of local hotels, the Thapa Khaja

#### The Magars

All Nepali people are warm, friendly, and hospitable, but in our view the Magars take the prize. Do not be prejudiced by the fact that large numbers of them have been recruited into the British and Indian Gurkha armies. Magars are not naturally aggressive, but soft-spoken and renowned for their trustworthiness and enjoyment of life. They are the largest of the Tibeto-Mongolian groups in Nepal, comprising around 2 million in total. Numerous sub-clans and groups exist. Some speak their own language while others have forgotten their mother tongue and speak only Nepali. Most define themselves these days as Hindus, though their practices and beliefs relate more closely to shamanism.

Ghar as you enter the village and the Hotel Riverside, sited as its name suggests on the Khoma Khola on the north side of Dagnam, as you leave the village.

**Dagnam to Darmijha (2 hours)** - The path onwards from Dagnam levels out and after a half hour passes through a spectacular section where the walkway has been cut out of sheer marble cliffs high above the Rahughat Khola riverbed. This is a most dramatic section of the trek. The trail was cut by hand (using dynamite) into the rock face, leaving isolated pinnacles like sentinels. If you glance backwards in certain places you will find that you have been walking unknowingly on an overhang. For those who dislike exposure, the trail is reassuringly broad and, needless to say, rock-solid!. This is not the case across the valley where the slopes are scarred with landslides. The cliff path continues for some 30 minutes and then descends through forest to the delightful Magar village of Darmijha set amongs rice fields on a shelf several hundred meters above the Rahughat Khola. Darmijha has one small local hotel (near the school), but its main claim to fame is the hot springs on the banks of the Rahughat Khola some 45 (steep!) minutes below the village. The villagers have constructed therapeutic pools and simple shelters and toilets for those pursuing multi-day cures for their aches and pains. There is even a small teashop selling hot and cold drinks. Lokendra Garbuja (98439 25104) will be happy to guide you to the hot springs.

**Darmijha to Chim Khola (2 hours)** - From Darmijha the route descends steadily through fields and forest to Chim Khola, via a well-worn path used by many villagers. Rounding a last ridge, the fascinating village of Chim Khola hoves into view, its red and white painted homes stacked in narrow tiers on the steep slope. Chim Khola comprises some 250 households, the majority Magars with 20-25 households of artisans. It is an unspoiled traditional village of stone and mud houses, slate roofs, wooden verandahs and carved windows; stone-flagged paths meander up and down beside water channels and gushing water taps and water channels. The village is well maintained since there are quite a few families of retired British Gurkha soldiers with good pensions, and nowadays at least one member from each household works overseas and sends remittances home. Beside the river you can visit the small hydro-electricity plant which supplies their electricity. There are several shops and local lodges where food and accommodation can be obtained, one of the better being the homestay of Dhruba Paija (98051 19449).

## Day 2 Chim Khola (1800 m.) to Kuinekhani (2400 m.) – 7 hours

**Chim Khola to Chaurkhani (2 ½ hours)** – The first 1 ½ hour is a gentle, pleasant descent to the Rahughat Khola through scattered hamlets with fine views of the Dhaulagiri massif. At Kharibot there is a footbridge to cross the Rahughat, where it is advisable to stop for refreshment in the local tea shop before taking on the very steep 1 hour climb up the west bank of the Rahughat to reach Chaurkhani, at 2000 m., not much higher than Chim Khola. It may be a bit early for food, but this is the last settlement before the night stop at Kuinekhani, so a dhal-bhat stop is advised in Chaurkhani, enjoying the views of both the tip of Dhaulagiri I and the Annapurna massif.

**Chaurkhani to Kuine Pass (3 ½ hours)** – the path wind up the edge of fields on the south side of Chaurkhani, and after around 45 minutes, crosses a major tributary of the Jhinkhani Khola at around 2300 m. Following this stream up for another 45 minutes and a stone shelter with a piped water tap is reached. 20 minutes further and you reach the top of the ridge that divides two branches of the Jhinkhani Khola (around 2600 m.), with magnificent views of the Dhaulagiri massif. The path is now fairly level, rising slowly through a beautiful Himalayan Cedar forest until Kuine Pass (2800 m.) is reached just above a high pasture, where you may meet large herds of sheep and goats shepherded by lads and lasses from Kuinekhani.

**Kuine Pass to Kuinekhani (1 hour)** - from the pass, the path descends steadily through rhododendron and dhaphne forest and cultivated fields to the Chantyel village of Kuinekhani. This compact village of perhaps 100 houses was originally a settlement for artisanal copper mining. The extraction of ore became uneconomic around 100 years ago, and the residents now

depend on subsistence agriculture and livestock for their livelihoods. There is a small shop in the village whose owner will also provide homestay accommodation for visitors. A micro-hydroelectric scheme was under construction in April 2017, and Kuinekhani residents were anticipating the imminent arrival of electricity in the village.

### Day 3 Kuinekhani (2400 m.) to Kibang (1800 m.) – 6 ½ hours

**Kuinekhani to Malampargau (3 hours)** – from Kuinekhani, follow the path above the hydroelectric plant penstock, winding down to cross the Jharme Khola in about 45 minutes. Another 45 minutes up the west bank of the Jharme Khola and a ridge is attained, overlooking the large Chantyel village of Malkaban far below. The path then contours around the Hopa Khola for about an hour to Lusbang on the ridge separating the the Hopa from the Dhoka Khola. Malampargau is now visible to the west on the far side of the Dhoka Khola, as well as the day's starting point of Kuinekhani to the east. Descending through rhododendron forest, and crossing the Dhoka Khola, Malampargau is reached in 1 ½ hours. Malampargau is also a Chantyel village, and there are a couple of local shops who will cook a meal for hungry trekkers.

**Malampargau to Khibang (3 ½ hours)** – leaving Malampargau, the path climbs steeply up through the village and on up through rhododendron forest to a notch in a ridge that is reached after 1 ½ hours. Taking the right hand path at this pass, descend through more rhododendrons to the Chari Khola. A short climb up the right bank of the Chari Khola to a low pass reveals Khibang below with a glorious display of the Dhaulagiri massif and Gurja Himal rising up behind. The first section of the path descending to Khibang from the pass is cut into a sheer cliff which wakes you up for the final 45 minutes into the large Magar village. One can spend a pleasant night with good food at the 2 or 3 local hotels here.

### Day 4 Khibang (1800 m.) to Lulang 2500 m.,) 6 ½ hours

**Khibang to Dar (3 hours)** - The path descends steeply for 1 hour to the Myagdi Khola bridge at Khamla (1300 m.). You cross the bridge and climb steeply up for an hour, joining the path from Muri at Sinbang, and then climb more slowly along the north bank of the Dar Khola, reaching lower Dar village (1800 m.) in another hour. The inhabitants of Dar are a mix of Magar and Chantyel, and the village is spread out over 200 vertical meters on the hill side. There are several village shops where you can get snacks or cooked food.

**Dar to Lulang (3 ½ hours)** - There are no settlements and little water on this section, so make sure you carry a good supply from Dar. Leaving Dar, the route continues climbing up along the north bank of the Dar Khola. Steeply at first and then more gradually, crossing one tributary (the Narja Khola) roughly 2/3 of the way to Lulang. Just before Lulang you cross an old landslide from 2015 which destroyed 4 houses and a lot of good agriculture land. Fortunately, no one was at home when the landslide struck and there were no deaths. 15 minutes on from the landslide the first houses of lower Lulang hove into view. Lulang, like Dar, is also stretched up the hillside over 200 vertical meters. The population of Lulang is most unusual, in that almost all of the families are of the artisanal blacksmith caste. Homestays in Lulang: Ratima Bishwakarma tel: 97460 62149 and Ram Bahadur Rasali tel: 97467 04177.

### Day 5 Lulang (2500 m.) to Gurja Khani (2800 m.) – 7 to 8 hours

Note: There is no habitation between Lulang and Gurja Khani except for a teashop at the Pass, so it is wise to eat breakfast and/or carry some snacks. It is a moderately strenuous route with two ascents and one descent, but the trail is easy-to-follow. Snow is possible during December/January, but the path is rarely closed. It may be possible to spend the night at the teashop at the pass and thus get good early morning views of the Dhaulagiri massif. There is a

seasonal tea shop at the top of the pass open approximately from April through November, call the tea shop owner to confirm: Siddhiman Bishwakarma tel: 97413 44450.

**Lulang to Gurja Deorali (3-3 ½ hours)** - The main trail emerges from Lulang village on the upper left side (looking uphill). It is a pleasant climb through oak-rhododendron forest – not too steep except for the final section. The branches and trunks are almost hidden by a thick cloak of moss, ferns, and orchids. At the pass there is a draughty teashop (tea, noodles, biscuits) and stupendous views of Gurja Himal – if you arrive before noon. Note: the teashop closes for 1-2 months from mid-December.

#### Himalayan Cedars

The *Cedrus deodara* trees on the pass and along the ridge, mark the westernmost occurrence of this magnificent tree. One of the giants of the forests, it can grow up to 80 metres high (similar to sequoia trees of California). It is used for timber, and fragrant oils can also be extracted.

**Gurja Deorali to Dhaula Khola bridge (3 hours)** - Follow the path down the ridge's north slope. A landslide in the monsoon of 2014 felled many of the majestic Himalayan cedar trees.

The path has been repaired and the landslide opened up some of the best views of Gurja Himal. In December and January you may encounter snow on this section. After 1-2 hours the gradient lessens, as the path heads in a more westerly direction for the final hour of the descent to the bridge over the Dhaula Khola. On the opposite side you will see fields and temporary dwellings of the Gurja people, who descend to live in these when snow falls up in the village.

**Dhula Khola to Gurja Khani (1 ½ hours)** - After crossing the bridge the last leg to the village involves another climb. It is not so high but it is steep and has to be done when legs are tired. By this hour you are likely to encounter villagers heading home with farming tools or loads of firewood and grass on their backs, so there is no risk of getting lost. The path arrives at a flattish grassy meadow. There is a water tap and an empty building on the right, with the south face of Gurja Himal partially visible above this. Hidden Village is finally visible to the west, and is reached on a level footpath in about 15 minutes.

#### Arrival at Hidden Village

If you visit in November after the harvest, you may think you have arrived at an animal park as you walk the final 15 minutes to the village, for the fields will be covered with thousands of sheep, goats, cows and buffaloes, guarded by large but friendly sheepdogs, all of them wearing bells, including the dogs. As evening approaches a tremendous bleating and ringing arises as lambs that are penned call out to their mothers returning from grazing. Shepherds in homespun jackets wander around checking that animals are safe, and relocating those which have turned up at the wrong address.

#### Gurja Khani homestay accommodation:

- Jiwan ko Bato Homestay - Mrs Bel Moti Pariyar 98668 23371 (first house on the left at entry to main village)
- Shristi Homestay - Mrs Gyan Devi Bishwakarma 98468 82003 (large new house on the western edge of the village)
- Yashoda Homestay - Mrs Bhim Maya Chantyal 98477 72458 (second house to the left at entry to main village – above Jiwan ko Bato Homestay)
- Sita's Homestay - Mrs Sita Chantyal 99469 0013 (shop in the centre of the main village)

There is a Tourism Development Committee who will be happy to help with any questions (Contact: Chairperson Jhak Bahadur Chantyal who speaks English tel: 98477 72458). Gurja Khani is a pleasant place to spend a few nights. For activity suggestions (e.g. trek to glaciers), see pdf document labelled "About Gurja Khani".

## GLOSSARY and PHRASEBOOK

### Acronyms/abbreviations/nepali words used in the guide

- Chautara – a stone ledge constructed along footpaths on which to rest porter-loads, sometimes with a banyan and pipal tree in the middle to provide shade.
- VDC – Village Development Committee. The lowest political unit in Nepal. A VDC will typically contain several villages.
- Khola – river or stream
- Deorali – a pass
- Bhanjyang – nick point on a ridge
- NGO - Non-Governmental Organization
- Dhara – water spout
- Phedi – the foot of a slope or ridge
- Dobhan – the meeting of two rivers
- Danda (dara) – ridge or hill
- Khani – a mine
- Danda (pr. Dara) – hill or mountain
- Duhre (pr duri) – hill or mountain
- Chiya – tea
- Dudh – milk
- Bazaar – town or settlement with several shops

### Note on pronunciation

This has been simplified.

- There are four 'd' sounds. These have been simplified to two: d and dh (aspirated)
- There are four 't' sounds. These have been simplified to two: t and th (aspirated)
- There are several 'r' sounds. These have been simplified to one.
- There are two 'a' sounds: long 'aa' (as in a sheep's *baa*; and short 'a' (as in 'material')
- 'e' should be pronounced 'eh' as in 'hey'
- 'i' should be pronounced as 'ee' as in feet (short, not a diphthong sound)
- Nasal sounds

### Asking Directions

Path	baato
Motor-road	Motor-baato
Uphill	ukalo
Downhill	uralo
Flat/level	terso
Easy/difficult	sajilo/garho
One hour/ two hours	ek guntaa/dui guntaa . . .
Right/left	dayaa/bayaa
Here/there	yahaa/tyahaa
Over there	para
Upper/lower	upallo/uwallo (or) tala
Village	gau
Town	bajar
Pass/col	bhanjyang/deorali
Can I get a bus?	Bus cha?

How far to the bus?  
How far to (Pokhara)?  
Which way goes to (Pokhara)?  
How long does it take?  
Is it far?  
Am I on the right path to (Pokhara)?  
I want to go to (Pokhara)  
Is the path difficult?  
Is the path dangerous?  
I need a guide

Bus sama kati cha?  
(Pokhara) sama kati cha?  
(Pokhara) jaane baato kun ho?  
Kati ta-im (time) laagcha?  
Tara cha?  
Yo (Pokhara) jaane baato ho?  
Ma (Pokhara) jaana chahanchu  
Baato garho cha?  
Baato dor-lagdo cha?  
(Malai) ga-ide chahincha

### Food and accommodation

Cooked rice/lentils/vegetables  
Cooked food  
Water  
Boiled water  
Drinking water  
Clean water  
Bottled water  
Filtered water  
Drinks  
Tea  
Black tea  
Coffee  
Sugar  
Do you have sugar?  
Please give me tea without sugar  
How much?  
I am hungry/not hungry  
I am thirsty/not thirsty  
Where can I get (cooked) food?  
Is the food ready (to eat)?  
Is this clean water?  
Is this boiled (filtered) water?  
Please boil water for me  
Where can I find accommodation?  
I need somewhere to sleep  
Where is the hotel (teashop)?  
How much does it cost?  
I need some blankets  
Do you have a clean sheet?  
Where is the toilet?

dal-bhaat  
khana  
paani  
umaleko paani  
piune paani (may still contain bugs!)  
safa paani (may not meet tourist standards!)  
Mineral water (chupa ko paani)  
Filta paani  
piune chij  
chiya  
phika chiya /raato chiya/dudh na-bhaeko chiya  
cofi  
chini  
Chini chha?  
chini na-bhaeko chiya dinos  
kati lagcha/kati parcha/kati bhayo?  
Malai bhok lagyo/lagena  
Malai tirka lagyo/lagena  
Khana kahaa pahincha?  
Tayar cha?  
Yo safa paani ho? (be careful!)  
Yo umaleko (filta) paani ho?  
Paani umali dinu holaa.  
Basobas kahaa pahincha?  
Sutne thau chahanchu  
Hotel kahaa cha?  
Kati laagcha?  
Sutne lugaa chahincha  
Safa tanda cha?  
Toilet (charpi/paikhana) kahaa cha?

Do you sell/have toilet paper?

Toilet paper cha?

Miscellaneous

Yes/No

Ho/Hoina

There is/I have/He has

Cha

There isn't/I haven't/He hasn't

Chaina

Okay

Huncha

Very

dherai

I like

Manparcha/manlagcha

I like Nepal

Nepal manparcha

I need/I want

(malai) chahincha

Do you speak English?

Inglish bolnu huncha?

Is there someone who speaks English?

Kohi inglish bolne cha?

I come from (France)

Ma (France) bata aaeko

Do you sell (biscuits)?

(Biscuits) chaa?

Where can I get (biscuits)?

(Biscuits) kahaa painchha?

Okay

Theek chha.

Health and safety

I have lost my way

Baato birayo

I am very tired. I can't walk any more

Ekdam thakai lagyo. Hirna sakdina.

I had a fall

Lardy

I have hurt my foot

Kutta lagyo

I hit my head

Thauko lagyo