



The Trekker's Trail
DZONGRI-GOECHALA
10 Nights / 11 Days Alpine Trekking

A background image showing two trekkers with large backpacks walking up a grassy mountain trail. The sky is blue with some clouds. The trekkers are wearing hats and using trekking poles. The overall scene is bright and scenic.

01

Yuksom (5700 fts)

The Goechala trek starts from Yuksom, a fairly large settlement in West Sikkim. It was the 01st capital of Sikkim and the history of Siikim starts from here dating back to the 1641-42 A.D. so the culture in the town shows. It is also a nice quaint hill station and for those who ant to avoid the hustles&bustles of Towns and Cities, Yuksom is a nice gateway.

Overnight at the Hotel.

02

Yuksom (5,700 feet) - Sachen (7,200 feet) 04 hrs.

Most trekkers like to trek from Yuksom to Tshoka in a day. This makes the trek very long and the altitude gain too much. A sensible way to trek is to break the trek at Sachen as described here. From Yuksom, the Goechala trail starts just behind the houses after the forest check post. Cross the last few huts of Yuksom and skirt around the fields of Yuksom to enter the V shaped valley of the Rathong river (many mistake it for the Prek – earlier Prek and Pha Khola merge to form the Rathong).The trail, though passing through the fringes of the forest is exposed for about half hour. Midway through the exposed trail, look for a shelter on your right. From here onwards it is half hour to the first bridge over the Pha Khola. By the time the trail gets to Pha Khola, you are well into the thick of the forest and the coolness envelopes you at all times. The gently undulating trail climbs gradually.The next hour and half is a pleasant walk through the moist jungle until suddenly on your left the Tshushay Khola falls in a series of mini waterfalls joining the Prek below. Sachen at 7,200 feet is a small clearing where a single log hut and a shelter on the trail exist. The log hut a few meters below the trail. The hut has room enough for about 6-7 and a small area to cook. For a larger team look for the clearing just above the trail opposite the shelter. The Prek, is many feet below Sachen and not visible to the eye, though you can hear it faintly rushing below.

Overnight in the tent.

03 **Sachen (7,200 feet) – Tshoka (9,650 feet).** **4-5 hours**

This is a short trek, but the altitude gain is considerable. Trekkers love the initial amble through the forest – it gives them a chance to loosen up before the stiff climb to Bakhim from the bridge over Prek..

At over 9,000 feet high, Rhododendron trees abound everywhere. The trail gets dark from the overhanging trees and meanders for another ten minutes. It suddenly pops out to a plateau and the trekkers hut of Tshoka. There's also a flat camping area to the left of the trekkers hut. The trekker's hut is a pretty long wooden building that has four rooms – enough space to house more than 20 trekkers. Alternatively, trekkers can stay at the Forest Rest House slightly uphill.

Spend some time exploring Tshoka. Slightly uphill are the cafes where trekkers can try the local malt beer Tumba. The local Yak cheese is another delicacy but it takes time to get used to the taste. It is rock hard too! Ask the café owners for the keys to the monastery.

Overnight in the Trekker's Hut/Tents.

04 **Tshoka (9,650 feet) – Dzongri (12,980 feet)** **06 Hrs**

For most trekkers this day is perhaps the highlight of the Goechala trail. Everyone looks forward to the trek this day. For one, they trek through some of the densest Rhododendron forest India has to offer, and second, on the trail, suddenly the views open up to showcase the might of the highest mountains in Himalayas.

Like yesterday, climb up to the little pond leading to the monastery, and then follow the trail that runs to its right. The trail begins to climb sharply and within minutes Tshoka is a tiny hamlet below you. Red Rhododendron trees spring up everywhere. If you are in season when the flowers bloom (May 1st/2nd week), then the entire slope lights up with a fiery red colour. After a stiff climb for about 30 minutes, the trail evens out to a gradual climb. The trail changes to one paved over wooden logs. It is a delight with Rhododendrons fanning the path. Little wooden benches line on either side of the trail – which makes the trail look like it is in a park. Sometimes mist filter in surreally through the Rhododendron trees – but even in the magical setting the trail climbs throughout and trekkers feel the altitude. The log path gives way to a regular stony trail that climbs quickly to Phedang in 20 minutes.

Dzongri is a welcome sight for trekkers after the hard climb from Tshoka. At 12,980 feet trekkers feel the affect of altitude at the Dzongri meadows. Dzongri is a large cauldron, mostly meadows, surrounded in all directions by the mighty peaks of the Kanchenjunga range. In every direction is a snow peak to be looked at and admired. For most trekkers Dzongri is a reward on its own. Many finish their trek at Dzongri and head back the way they came.

Overnight at the Trekker's Hut/Tents.

05

Dzongri (12980ft) to Dzongri top (13681ft) **Acclimatization.**

Dzongri top is the highest point from where you get the 180 degree panoramic view of the mighty peaks of the Singalila and Kanchenjunga ranges. Dzongri top is a hill climb from the Dzongri trekkers hut. The trek from Dzongri to Dzongri top takes about 45 mins. The sun rises at 5 a.m and you don't want to miss seeing the first rays of sun hitting Kanchanjunga(03rd highest peak in the world). Start your trek at 4.00 a.m with torch lights and you reach the top just as the dawn breaks. As you climb up, the peaks of the Singalila range begin to open up and just at the bend before the top, the Kanchenjunga and its neighbours make their appearance. Witness an inspiring sunrise and spend time watching the mountains changing colours in the sun rays. Spot Thansing, the destination for the day, Lamuney and Goechala peaks below you. On the other side, the green Rhododendron slopes extend for miles. Retracing your path to Dzongri takes 20 mins.

06

Dzongri (12980ft) to Thangshing (12894ft) **5 - 6 hours**

Thansing is a meadow at the same altitude as Dzongri. The trail from Dzongri to Thansing descends a 1000ft to Kockchurang and then climbs a 1000ft to Thansing. In half an hour Rhododendron shrubs occupy the slopes. The gentle to medium descent continues over 2 hours. The Rhododendron shrubs suddenly give way to Rhododendron forest. The descent becomes steep and you lose more than 500ft to Kokchurang. The forest is a good place to spot birds. Walk through silently and spot birds camouflaged in the browns and greens of the forest. From Kokchurang, walk down to the bridge across Prekchu. Spend some time on the bridge experiencing the cool breeze of the river. The water below looks icy blue. On the other bank you have the Rhododendron forest again. They flower in June but at any time, the moss lined trees with their branches spreading out in all directions make it a fairy tale walk. There is a trekking trail but no lined path. The gradient increases and it's an ascent through out. The distance between the bridge and Thansing is 2kms. By mid way forests end and the landscape becomes rocky and barren. At the end of the climb is Thansing a big meadow. There is a dilapidated trekker hut at the entrance of the flat meadow. The hut can be used as a kitchen but tents would be needed to stay. The open meadow can host any number of tents. You are right in front of Pandim and the left wall of Kanchanjunga here. Thansing can be cold in the night. Overnight at the Hut/Tents.

07

Thangsing -Lamuney (13,693ft) 02 hours

The trek from Thangsing to Lamuney is an easy one. Walk through the meadows heading closer to Goechala. The trek is inspiring because the mountains come closer and closer. The meadows tend to get rockier as you move ahead. The flat gradient suddenly gives way to an ascending trail and that's the farthest you can camp. The ascending trail heads to Samiti lake where camping is no longer allowed. Excursion to Samiti lake 14100ft 45 mins moderate climb and back to Lamuney or You may choose to trek further to Samiti lake and spend an hour there. The trail ascends from Lamuney and it is a 45 minute stiff climb to the Samiti lake. Notice the terrain being rocky all through the ascent. The climb suddenly flattens out and the deep blue waters of the lake come into the picture. Move closer to the shore of the lake and the blue does not change. If it is windy, the lake has waves too. Take a walk around the lake and sit besides its serene waters. The Samiti lake shores are home to mountain goats and blue birds which you are most likely to spot.

Overnight in the Tents.

08

Lamuney-Goechala (16,000 ft)- Thangshing 6-7 hours

- A 3 a.m start ensures that you reach the first view point or the sunrise point right in time to see the first sun rays hitting Kanchenjunga.

- It also makes it easier to walk on the morains that you find after the sunrise point as the snow is still hard.

- The probability of getting good views are higher in the mornings.

The trail to Goechala goes behind Samiti lake and beyond. Mt. Pandim is always to your right and the left is also lined by huge snow walls. Climb to the ridge on top of Samiti lake and then traverse right on the narrow trail on the flank of the mountain. A bit more of a climb and you reach the sunrise or the first view point of Goechala in less than two hours from Lamuney. Mt. Pandim and to your right and Kanchenjunga raises just in front. Spend a few moments here before starting your descent to Zemathang. Zemathang is a sand bed covered with snow and gravel. From Zemathang Goechala is a climb of about one and a half hours. Retrace your path to Lamuney, and then head to Thangshing with your belongings. Stay at the trekker hut or pitch tents by the river at Thangshing.

Overnight stay at the Trekkers Hut/Tents.

09

Thangshing to Tshoka 6-7 hours

The days trek can be divided into three phases. The first from Thangshing to Kookchurung which is descending down to the river, Kockchurang to Phedang – a direct trail by passing Dzungri and second, the Rhododendron forest trail from Phedang to Tshoka.

The first phase is just going down but the second phase is new and interesting. The trail goes on the flank on the mountain all along and you move from one mountain to another to another maintaining a constant altitude of 12,000ft all along. Kokchurang, Phedang and most of the trail, is all at 12,000fts. Take the diversion to the left inside the forest instead of climbing up to Dzungri. The trail remains mostly flat with small descents and ascents only to switch between mountains. Rhododendron trees line your way all along and the Prekchu flows below. Look left and at a number of places you get lovely views of Mt. Pandim and its neighbours. Phedang is 10 kms away and this is one of the longest trails between two known campsites. It takes about 4 hours to reach Phedang. From Phedang you retrace the descending trail to Tshoka. The days trek takes about 6-7 hours on an average.

Overnight stay at Trekker's Hut/Tents.

10

Tshoka to Yuksom 6 hours

Retrace your way from Tshoka to Yuksom. Its much faster and easier than your trek up. Sachen comes up quickly being a pure descent. From Sachen the trail goes up and down generally losing altitude. The last stretch has a few climbs which makes you wonder but it's soon over and you find yourself back in the friendly Yuksom neighborhood.

Overnight stay at the Hotel.

A hiker in a red jacket and black pants is walking across a wooden bridge over a stream in a forest. The bridge is made of logs and has wooden railings. In the background, another hiker in a blue jacket is visible. The surrounding area is rocky and covered in moss and small plants.

11

DEPARTURE

Breakfast will be served at the Hotel itself and thus for the final journey towards the onward destination, the guide will accompany you till the Nearest Airport which is at West Bengal and is about 140 kms and takes around 06 hours to reach.