

Great Himalaya Trail

Technical Passes

Below is a collection of photos and route information that I was able to collect prior to the start of our trip. This information comes from many sources and should be taken with a grain of salt. Some information is snippets from emails I received, historical photos found online, reprints from atlases and maps or write-ups I could find on mountaineering forums. I cannot take credit for any of the information I've listed below and have no first hand experience with any of the information presented here, so I cannot verify the accuracy. This is merely a collection of the scarce information that I could dig up in my own research and planning for the GHT. This should be used as a springboard for your own personal planning.

Sherpani Col

The climb up Sherpani Col (20,245' / 6135m) is steep 3rd class loose rock (it reminded me of a more difficult Longs Peak Trough, elevated 6,000 feet), followed by a steep rappel onto the huge ice basin below Baruntse. A camp is usually made on this basin near West Col. This is Camp I for Baruntse climbers. A second long rappel drops you into the Hongu, and two days of difficult trekking over glacial rubble brings you to Panch Pokhari, where you join the track that came up from Mera.



Amphu Labsta

The normal exit out of the Hongu, the Amphu Labsa is also not to be taken lightly. At least several hundred feet of rappel or fixed rope descent is necessary right from the top of the pass, and portions of the remaining 3,000-foot descent into the Imja Valley are highly exposed.

Fitness - You will get tired but find it comparatively easy compared to Mera Peak, mainly because it is a shorter day, its 600m lower, the approach days are fairly gentle, and you will have acclimatized well.

Technicality - if you have done winter climbing before and abseiled, you will find this fairly non-technical and straightforward. Its not even Scottish Grade 1 (circa French PD). There are 3 or so short ice pitches on the way up and 1 rappel over the other side of about 15m.

Exposure - none to speak of on the way up, the top is fairly wide, but there is a fair bit on the Nth side on the way down, after the 15m rappel. Our Sherpa told us to take off our crampons after a while, well after the end of the fixed ropes, only to find a lot of narrow iced up ledges around the corner that were very dodgy to say the least - One slip and it was a nice 800m plunge - needless to say I wasn't too happy and my tip would be to keep your crampons on till you are off all of the snow/ice. I believe this is where a lot of accidents/deaths occur on the pass - 3 Sherpa had died there in Oct 08, just days before we got there. I had a minor slip at one point and our porters dropped several thousands of dollars worth of gear in another incident



Descending an exposed section on the north side of Amphu Labsa at above 18,000', with Island Peak (Imja Tse) shining in the background.
This pass, linking the Hongu and Imja Valleys, can be closed by avalanche conditions and has been the scene of several fatal accidents. A misstep here would be unfortunate.



Looking back towards the Amphu Labsa (~5,800 m / 19,200 ft) from the north after our crossing of the pass. Three members of our party can be seen, circled at the lower right. The route we descended is marked to the best of my recollection. The section that curves to right just below the top of the pass, is where the rappel and fixed ropes are set.

West Col



Tilman's Pass



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