

NEPAL ADVENTURE

Trekking to the top of the world

For two weeks in October, an intrepid band of our colleagues took a scenic hike in the country, the country being Nepal and the scenery being Himalayas. Yes, those Himalayas. The highest mountains on earth.

The team:

- Rolf Robert Lindell - Director Sales Asia Pacific, Ascom TEMS Malaysia
- Mohamad Radzi Nazri - Technical Sales Manager, Ascom TEMS Malaysia
- Kevin Kulasingham - Technical Sales Manager, Ascom TEMS Singapore
- Surina Damanhuri - Technical Manager, Ericsson Vietnam
- Anders Wännström, Ph. D. - WCDMA Radio Specialist, Ericsson Malaysia

This is the fifth year the group has undertaken an ambitious mountain trek. Click [here](#) to see slide shows of their previous trips to peaks in Japan, Borneo, Java, and Vietnam, as well as this year's journey to Nepal.

The Himalayan expedition was their most ambitious trek ever. The five adventurers spent eight months preparing themselves physically and mentally for long days of intense exertion, up and down steep trails in extremely cold, thin air. Each member underwent intensive weight training and ran from ten to 30 kilometers each week. They knew that the two-week walk would be not only incredibly strenuous, but dangerous for anyone not in excellent condition. Those trekking Himalayas risk the potentially fatal acute mountain sickness (AMS).

The adventurers flew to Kathmandu and from there to the mountain village of Lukla. For the next thirteen days they walked to Lobuche, near the base camp of Mount Everest, and back to Lukla, through some of the most spectacular vistas on earth. Equally rewarding was getting to know the welcoming people and fascinating culture of Nepal.

Fortunately, the voyagers recorded their exploits in a breathtaking selection of videos and still photos (click [here](#) to see them all). And trekker Mohamad Radzi Nazri has written an exciting and extensive account of their journey, which you can see below:

NEPAL ADVENTURE, 3rd - 21st October 2009

By Mohamad Radzi Nazri

Trekking or rather walking on trails is the best way to experience Nepal's unbeatable combination of natural beauty and cultural richness. Possessing a pair of strong legs and adventurous spirit helps one to enjoy the thrills of the foothills and Himalaya mountains of Nepal.

Our quest to challenge ourselves is what is so fulfilling when trekking to Everest base camp. With this challenge comes risks, and none is more dangerous than that of high altitude. Altitude is generally associated with extreme conditions such as avalanche danger, freezing temperatures, remote locations and limited oxygen - and if not properly planned for it can cause serious consequence like altitude sickness. There are no specific factors such as age, gender or physical conditions that correlate with susceptibility to altitude sickness. Some people get it and some people don't. Of course our physical training is the foundation required for any mountain trekking experience regardless of overall elevation.

Days 0 - 2 : KLIA - Kathmandu

With all above in mind, we begin our journey to the "Land of Shangri-La," as it is also known. The date was 3rd October 2009, and one by one, the adventurers arrived at KL international Airport, Malaysia, to begin our quest for this years challenge - Nepal.

A direct flight from KLIA to Kathmandu airport took four hours, and approaching Kathmandu, looking from the air as the plane came lower down towards the runway, was an awesome view. All surrounding buildings looks similar sprinkle across around the valley, some more clustered than others. Feels like a start of a magical moment. We were thrilled.

Nepal's famous mountain panoramas began as soon as we lifted off from Kathmandu airport and didn't stop until we returned. The first section to Namche passes through the spectacular and forbidding Dudh Kosi gorge. In the midst of the Himalayas we explored Sagarmatha National Park , staying in the Sherpa villages and summer settlements nestled in the valleys. Namche is juxtaposed between old and new with traders intimate with the various Tibetan tsampas (barley flours) and the different makes of titanium ice screws. Towering above is a galaxy of breath-taking peaks: Ama Dablam, Cholatse, Kangtaiga... Then there are the 8000 metre giants: Makalu, Cho Oyu, Lhotse and Chomolungma (the traditional name for Everest) who command respect for their absolute height and bulk, and have been the focus of countless expeditions.

For the next 15 days, we knew that we would do nothing but walk. Then of course, there is the occasional photo and video session. We

also knew that we probably couldn't get a shower for a week. Well, if that's the price for the fun ahead, so be it! ☺

Well, challenge we sought, then challenge was what we got. Our flight from Kathmandu to Lukla was delayed due to bad weather for three days. Finally on the 3rd day, we managed to leave Kathmandu on late afternoon and squeezed into a small Twin Otter plane.

For the rest of the 13 days, the following features are common on almost all the days.

1. The route each day was littered with rocks and dung.
2. One would meet the "Kings of the Road" daily, below 3,500m, the jopke or jokyo - half yak, half cow - and above 3,500m, the yak - hairy creatures that can survive only at higher altitudes. Each time a troop of jopke or yak passes by, the trekker must stay close to the wall of the slope or risk being knocked over the edge by the animal.
3. Dozen of essential-supply porters would transverse the route daily, carrying heavy loads of over 60kg.

We were led by our experienced guide of nine years' experience, Rame Tamang and the porter, Edu. Rame has taken scores of trekkers up and down the mountains. In fact he took another group up a few days after we finished our adventure. He took good care of us, patiently waited for us each time we had to catch our breath throughout the adventure.

Day - 03: Kathmandu - Lukla (2,860m) - fly in the morning for 45 minutes then commence trek to Phakding (2,600m) - 4 hours.

As we took off to Lukla, 2,840m (9,317 ft.) at 1.20pm where our trek began, the stewardess passed out sweets and cotton wool. The wool is used as ear plugs and during the 45-minute flight we were rewarded with a beautiful view of the Himalayan region and dozens of houses dotting down the mountain ranges below.

Then from a distance, we saw the airstrip, a slanted piece of land cut into the side of the mountain, and considered one of the most dangerous airstrips in the world. A group of German trekkers were killed in 2008 as their plane crashed, due to poor visibility while the pilot tried to land at the airstrip. We were lucky this time around as landing was remarkably smooth and this was followed by big applause from fellow passengers. We had passed our 1st challenge.

Upon arrival we were greeted by the trekking crew who organized the luggage and hustled us off for tea. After a leisurely short tea break we start the trek in earnest, setting off for a gentle walk to Phakding (2,800m), a further three hours to the north. The trail leads through Lukla, past hotels, shops and airline offices to the

edge of the Lukla plateau where the trail drops to meet the intersection of the Jiri trail at Chheplung.

From here the trail follows the Dudh Kosi north through the village of Ghat and then finally to Phakding where we spent the night at the Hotel Shangri-La, which is a pretty old hotel with modest facilities. It has twin beds and a shared toilet, however it does not have any heater, so you still need to get yourself into the sleeping bag to warm yourself up. The tiredness and the constant roar of the raging river near the lodge made sleeping easy on the first leg of the trek.

Day - 04 : Phakding - Namche Bazar (3,446m) - 6½ hours.

From Phakding the trail continues north up the Dudh Kosi Valley, staying 100m above the river on its west bank. The trail leads to Jorsale (2,810m) where we entered the Sagarmatha (Everest) National Park. A few minutes were required for the guide to get the permit for us to continue our journey.

From there we continued our ever-steeper trail to Namche Bazaar (3,446m), known simply as Namche. En route we crossed the spectacular suspension bridge high above the confluence of the Bhoté Kosi and the Dudh Kosi, and shortly after glimpsing our first view of Everest, way off to the northeast. The trail to Namche was steep and long, but eventually we reached the remarkable Sherpa capital perched high on the hillside and dominated to the east by the immense bulk of Kwangde (6,187m).

We bunked into Hotel Namche, one of the best hotels available in Namche Bazaar.

Day - 05: Namche Bazar, one-day rest for acclimatization.

We had to stay put for a day in Namche, and this is crucial, as acclimatization is important before trekking higher, and this is a scheduled stop, which will allow us to gradually become used to the effects of altitude - the lower pressure and the thinner air.

Namche is a fascinating place simply to hang out and take in the culture of the mountains, from the trading of visiting Tibetans to the stories of departing mountaineers. We did some shopping too!

Day - 06: Namche Bazar - Khumjung (3,700m) - 3 hours.

We took a walk to Khumjung from Namche Bazar to get acclimatized and saw the real Sherpa land from the ancient history since in the beginning of their settlement after the Sherpa people migrated from Tibet. The hospital in Khunde, the Yeti sculpture in Khumjung Monastery and the Hilary school are the main interests of the village as well. It was foggy and pretty cold weather, which prompted us to walk back to Namche for another night stay.

Day - 07: Namche - Tengboche (3,867m) - 5½ hours.

From Namche we trekked northeast on a direct line to Everest, starting up the hill to the Visitor Center and continuing on a reasonably flat easy trail high above the Dudh Kosi then saw one of the most beautiful mountains in the Khumbu - Ama Dablam (6,856m), as well as Everest but it is still far off in the distance. At Sanasa we branched off the trail and headed up the hill to the small settlement of Phunki where we stopped for lunch.

The trek from Namche Bazar 3,440m (11,286 ft.) to Tengboche 3,860m (12,664 ft.) has to be the most scenic of the entire route. The mountainsides are lined with pines trees, shrubs, and flowering plants. Before Kyangjuma 3,550m, one can have majestic views of snow-capped Everest, Lhotse shar, Taboche, Kangtega, and Thamserku mountains. And this morning was sunny, clear blue sky and a crispy, windy 15C.

From here it was a steady descent to the Tengboche. This is a beautiful settlement where we arrived at the famous Tibetan monastery and this was the place where we spent a night at Amadablam Garden Lodge. Tengboche is the sacred land in the Himalaya and one of the holy lands for Buddhist people. The shelter provided us a beautiful day of sightseeing with views of a Himalayan panorama including a glimpse of Everest not too far away.

Day - 08: Tengboche - Dingboche (4,343m) - 6 hours.

Today we descended from Tengboche and cross the Imja Khola, then walked side hills gradually to Pangboche. We came across an interesting Gompa site above the main village and by now we were in the midst of the Himalayas with spectacular views all around. Dingboche village, which is lying in a shelter spot above the Imja Khola is generally a more attractive panorama.

We may be in the middle of nowhere but every path is well-trodden. We regularly bump into other trekkers. We pass locals carrying huge weights on their backs, with baskets packed with food and other essentials. It is utterly amazing - a little sad - to watch them carrying such loads up and down the mountains with only a T-shape walking stick to help to ease the burden when they are resting. And they are poorly clothed to resist the cold.

Nevertheless, the Nepalese are beautiful people, friendly and humbled by a modest existence. They always greet us warmly with "namaste" meaning hello.

We spent our night at Hotel Family DingBoche, one of the famous hotels available in Dingboche.

Day - 09: The Dingboche Rest

At this level we spent another extra acclimatization day in Dingboche because when we crossed above an altitude of 4,000m it's always recommended to get another day to adjust ourselves. Dingboche has very clear and beautiful sights of several mountains and the

famous trekking peak Imjatse or Island Peak. We were sitting at the bottom of Mount Amadablam in sun room lodges having spectacular views of Peak 38 and Chukung Valley. It was an unforgettable sight.

We also had some bad news that one Nepalese guide was killed at Cho La Pass by a falling rock. To add to the tragic news, two Japanese trekkers died in their sleep due to a severe attack of AMS (acute mountain sickness) a few nights before. Most of the guides and trekkers were numb with such shocking news.

Day - 10: Dingboche - Lobuche (4,930m) - 5½ hours.

Today we continue our journey to another village called Lobuche. The route past Pheriche slants over a ridge and stays above the village. It joins the trail below Thungla beautiful views of Cholatse 6,440m across the valley. After another steep ascent, the trail climbs up and over the terminal moraine of Khumbu glacier.

The trail was rough in some of the parts with stark and rugged rock, and its beauty creates almost moonscape camp site at Lobuche and the wind swept a collection of huts tucked in a narrow meadow between the glacier and the Lobuche Peak - 6,145m. We arrived at Lobuche approximately 4pm and spent a night at Hotel Sherpa. It was a cold night and the weather has approached - 2 degrees Celcius.

Lobuche was our final destination for the adventure this time around. It was an interesting and challenging experience and yet we would love to come back and experience it again.

If time and money permit. 😊

Coming Down and Back.

Day-11: Lobuche - Periche.

Day-12: Periche - Namche Bazaar

Day-13: Namche Bazaar - Thamu - Namche Bazaar

Day-14: Namche Bazaar - Phakding

Day-15: Phakding - Lukla then fly to Kathmandu for 45 minutes.

Day-16: Kathmandu - HOME

From left to right: Kevin, Radzi, Anders, Robert, Surina

