



TENGKANGPOCHE 2025

South Ridge Attempt

Report by Will Rowland
will.rowland@live.co.uk

Contents

Conditions.....	2
Travel	2
Access	2
Mountain Condition and Weather	3
Snow Cover.....	5
Logistics	6
Environmental & Cultural Impact.....	6
Map Inaccuracy	6
Other Objectives.....	6
Budget	7
Appendices	8
Appendix 1.....	8
Appendix 2.....	9
Appendix 3.....	10
Appendix 4.....	11
Appendix 5.....	11
Appendix 6.....	12
Appendix 7.....	12
Appendix 8.....	13
Appendix 9.....	14
Appendix 10.....	15
Appendix 11.....	16

Conditions

As the saying goes “things come in threes”! In September there were the anti-corruption protests. The beginning of October saw a late monsoon. When we arrived at the beginning of November the storm had blown back in leading to more high rainfall and snow.

Travel

We choose to set off a day late from Kathmandu to allow the roads to improve after the storm passed. The usual route was blocked so we had to travel to Phaphlu before turning off for Surke. The first leg took 15hrs of rally driving in a Mahindra 4x4 with bald tyres and no seat belts. The driver, we nicknamed DDB (Double Dahl-Baat) due to his rotund appearance and ability to quickly scoff down a fantastic amount of DB in a short time frame. He was an expert driver (or so he thought) being able to drive, use his phone, dodge cows, potholes and people without even blinking. He chewed some sort of stimulant coming from a plant seed which he spat out the window every so often. DDB knew the route very well with no need for Google maps as we crossed multiple mountain passes and along numerous valleys. We were glad to reach the teahouse - where we received a warm welcome from the proprietors.

The following morning was beautifully clear, and we were stunned to see what the night had hidden from us when we first arrived. Numbur and its neighbours welcomed us to the range. Everything was very snowy and as always, quite intimidating! We greeted the new driver who would take us over to Surke. The roads on this stretch of the journey particularly interesting. The mud got thicker and the ruts deeper as we zig-zagged towards our destination. Parts of the track had just been cleared by excavators and great piles of rubble lined the roads ahead. The philosophy was simple- the road washed out so another was ploughed through!

We were on the main trade route to the Khumbu. Anything that wasn't flown in or out of Lukla would come up and down the muddy tracks, balanced on shiny roof racks or loaded into Lorries. It was quite a spectacle! (Appendix 1) Fortunately our vehicle was equipped with 2 (balding) mud tyres which gave us good traction at the rear and we made steady progress. 10hours later we were at the end of the road with all our equipment, food and fuel. We could have flown but there had been a lot of delays and stranded people from the poor weather. Flying at the start of the trip also added complication with carrying fuel so we opted to keep all our provisions with us and travel over land. It was worth it. (Appendix 2).

The return journey was far less eventful. Traveling from Lukla direct to Kathmandu takes around an hour and costs 230USD with 15kg luggage.

Access

From Surke the best option is to walk to Ghat where there is a bridge across the mighty Duhd Kosi river. Above lies the More La Pass, which is the most trodden route. The path is kept in condition by the yak herders who cross over to the rich high pastures in the Lumding Karkha valley. The trekking maps detail a path over the Lumding La Pass above Phakding- this is not recommended (Appendix 3).

Halfway over the pass at 3626m a lovely flat spot cuts through the ridge. Yak Kharka was our first camp spot, above us was a further 600m of ascent which was ideal for acclimatising steadily. A cool breeze blew through the night, and a dusting of fresh snow stuck to the tents. There was no rush in the morning, everyone was happy to wait for the sun to dry things out.

The path climbed steeply through the arches of Rhododendron to around 4000m which marked the edge of the tree line. Soon we were at the pass which was decorated with prayer flags. There was a small shrine, and the porters lit a small fire for good luck. For the first time we could see Everest and more importantly Teng Kangpoche's south ridge. The peaks shone a bright white colour with all the fresh snow. We dropped down in to the Lumding Kharka, and it soon became clear the guide and porters didn't know the route ahead. It turned out our guide Phuiri had only been so far and then had to turn back with his client and that was ten years previously. The next day we had a short day up to the impressive Lumding waterfall (4200m). The snow was quite low, and we were happy to wait until the following day to go to basecamp. The section above the waterfall is quite steep and rough, previous parties have come to difficulty here as porters have refused to carry their loads. Fortunately, our porters were both very strong and very keen. We receded the steep ground above the waterfall with Phuiri so he could report back to the porters and then return with gear to rig the 170m section. Ken maintained "if an old fart can do it, they'll have to!"

In the morning, we set off for basecamp. The porters were very appreciative of our efforts to keep them safe (Appendix 4). The ground was complex, but we found a way through and soon reached the snow line at around 4500m. It was slow going through the boulders, the visibility became poor as the clouds rolled in up the glen. The porters were all wearing trainers and we had to use the rope twice to put a handrail in on the steeper section. Finally, we reached the lip of the moraine above Lumding Tsho Lake. I was getting twitchy regarding the weather and the porters' basic equipment; I was concerned that the cloud cover would allow verglas to form on the rocks and make for a nasty retreat. I knew the Kongde Ri basecamp was close by, so I announced to the group "that's fine just leave the gear here". The porters seemed surprised, "Is *this* basecamp?", no I replied it's just over that ridge. The lads insisted on going to BC and were now clearly enjoying the adventure and determined to complete their task. By this stage the snow was at least knee deep and route choice had to be carefully considered through the boulder field. Through the cloud we welcomed a flattening with a nice burn nearby, this was the spot!

Mountain Condition and Weather

At base camp there was snow cover between 75cm and 105cm on level ground (Appendix 5). There was a lot of digging and we figured this would be great for acclimatising. We dug 4 holes in total, one for the cook tent and 3 others for individual tents. Andy left his tent at the waterfall for the returning porters and as a snow free option for the team. Later we learned that some giddy blue sheep jumped on his tent breaking a pole. These horned hooligans had dropped below the snow line in search of food.

We found several weak layers digging down into the snowpack before getting to the old snow. The old snow had mostly consolidated and was about 30-40cm deep. The ground wasn't frozen underneath but by the end of the trip it was, and the cook tents pegs were well in! This itself was a relief, as the cook tent was in terrible condition, blue on the outside and black on the inside, see through and full of holes! This was our only complaint!

Originally, we planned on using a couple of porters to help carry a load to ABC, but this was out of the question given the conditions. Leaving at 6am it took 5 hours to break the trail and 2 hours to return to BC. Every step taunted you, holding your weight briefly before breaking through – the worst snow to deal with! The snow conditions never really improved. The crust on the surface never firmed up enough to trust fully. The wind picked up for a few days and plumes of snow could be seen blowing down the many steep faces.

ABC was beautifully situated by a small lochan at the edge of ridge of moraine leading to the glacier (Appendix 6). Even on this exposed ridge the going was tough with varied snow. Standing at the edge of the moraine and the would be “dry” glacier it was clear which route was favourable. The entire glacier was covered in a uniform blanket of snow, but it was not at all clear where the numerous crevasses were hidden (Appendix 7). We witnessed the westerly winds loading the east facing slopes, two of which our route would cross. The first above the glacier on the south ridges flank, the second below the summit on the east ridge route. The volume of snow and the wind direction did not favour our route on this occasion.

A low-pressure system was forecasted for the week ahead during the days we’d hoped to get up high. A little snow and strong westerlies of 40-50mph. Returning to ABC we saw avalanches releasing from the south face of Tengkangpoche and the west face of a neighbouring peak. It was a sign that things were not right for our plans and coupled with the forecast we didn’t have the time to wait for things to improve. The fact that even the high west facing slopes were avalanching, proved the instability of the snow which fell at the start of November. Frustratingly, we contacted Phuri who arranged the porters and we began clearing out ABC.

A lot of effort went into setting up our ABC and breaking trail to the glacier. We can clarify that this location as an ABC and using the ridge of moraine to gain the glacier is the best approach. From the end of the moraine there seem to be three options across the glacier, whichever route is chosen they would all start from this location as the lower glacier is very broken. If descending the east ridge, it is possible to return to ABC by a logical route.

Snow Cover



Logistics

Logistics were managed by Mountain Sun Valley Trek & Expeditions. Several quotes were requested from other companies before choosing Rajendra's company. MSVTE are a trustworthy company, and we would recommend them and use them again. (Appendix 8).

Environmental & Cultural Impact

Returning to Ghat we were surprised to bump into some fellow Scots. They have been training the Everest Fire and Rescue service in Lukla and other villages across the Khumbu. The organisation is run by volunteers and supported by Scottish Fire and Rescue. We were invited along to a motivational talk by Mark Inglis a New Zealand mountaineer who, after 13 days stuck in a snow hole on Mount Cook had to have both legs amputated. Mark told an incredible story of resilience from dealing with his accident to summiting Everest and become a Paralympian. We were also asked to act as casualties during a training exercise at the airport. The work being done to train volunteers and the work of the volunteers themselves is making a huge difference in the area. Over 1000 people a day come in via Lukla airport which is the second busiest in Nepal after KTM International.

All litter was carried out by the porters. The area is secluded but unfortunately there is a surprising amount of litter is scattered around.

We will offset the carbon footprint by donating to trees for life £170 which was the comparative amount calculated (Climateimpact, 2025).

Map Inaccuracy

Printed trekking maps and digital maps were used and both had some inaccuracies. Contour lines at BC (Appendix 9) and ABC (Appendix 10) were false due to the map scale and the complexity of the ground. The trekking maps direct you over the Lumding La pass, but the main route is actually over the More La pass. The path to Kongde BC is marked in the wrong place as it is further west on the other side of the burn line when above the waterfall.

Other Objectives

The Lumding valley is predominantly good quality granite. Above the valley to the east are 3 prominent buttresses which ease in angle to form defined ridges. There are plenty options for rock climbing here all 4000m asl. There are also copious amounts of waterfalls which were starting to form ice in the shade. They would provide interesting cascade climbing in the winter.

Budget

Expedition Costs	
International travel	6000
Domestic flights and transport	800
Permits and peak fees	1510
Expedition members' insurance	2650
Porter / staff Insurance	750
Food and fuel (base camp and above)	1200
Agency fees if applicable	1700
Porters and pack animals	750
Accommodation while in country	800
TOTAL	£16,660

Appendices

Appendix 1



Appendix 2



Appendix 3



Appendix 4



Appendix 5



Appendix 6



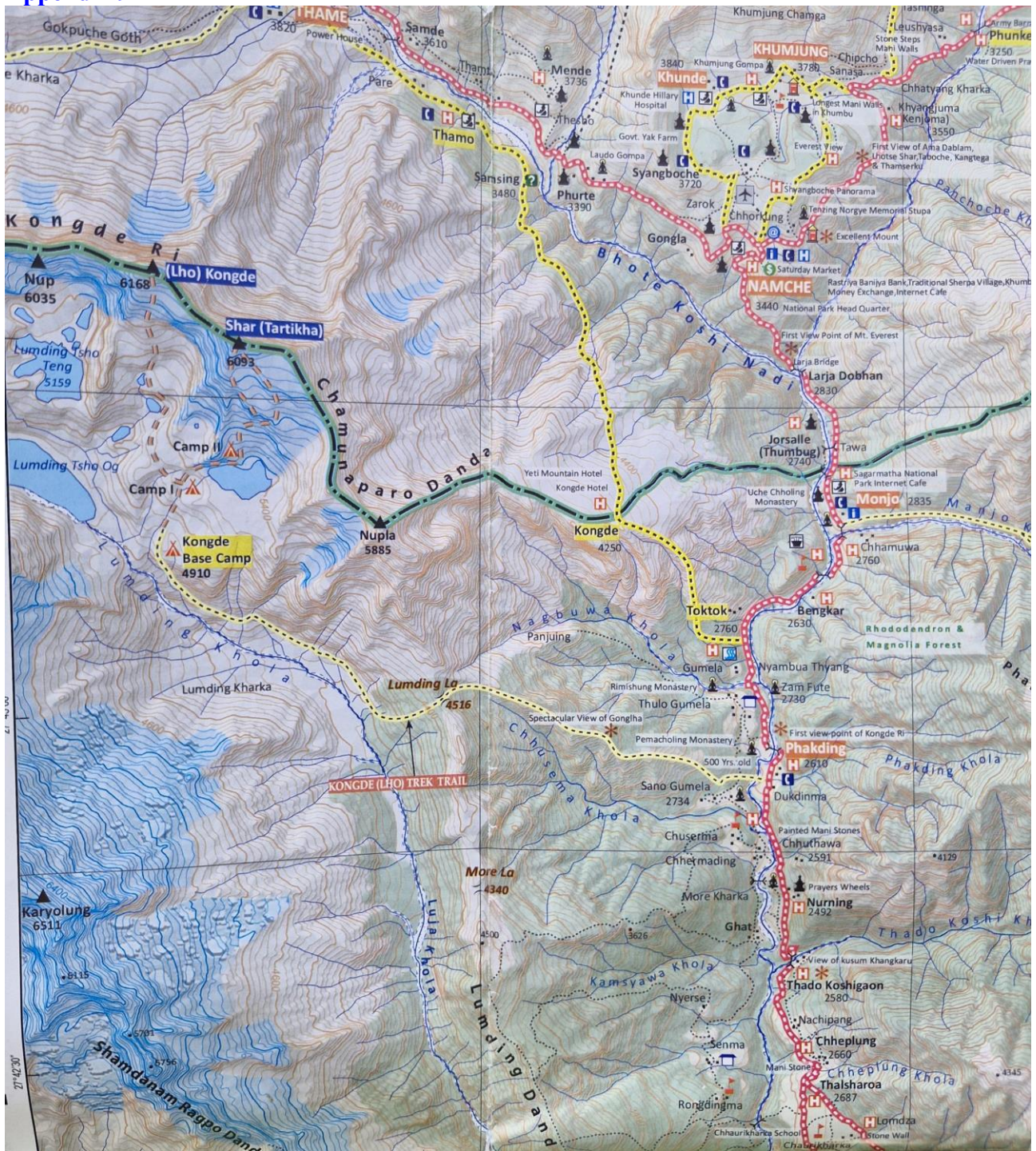
Appendix 7



Appendix 8



Appendix 9



Appendix 10



Appendix 11

