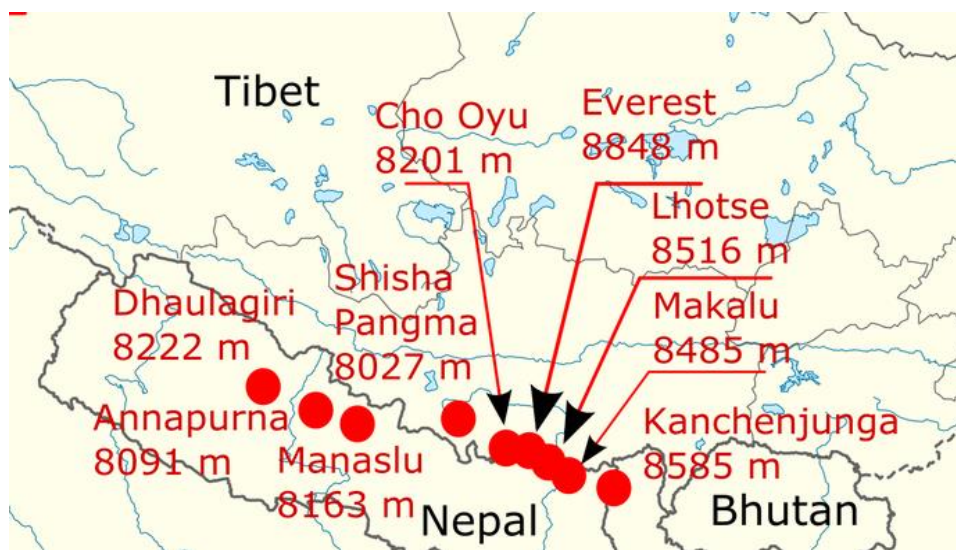


## THE ROUTE TO KANCHENJUNGA

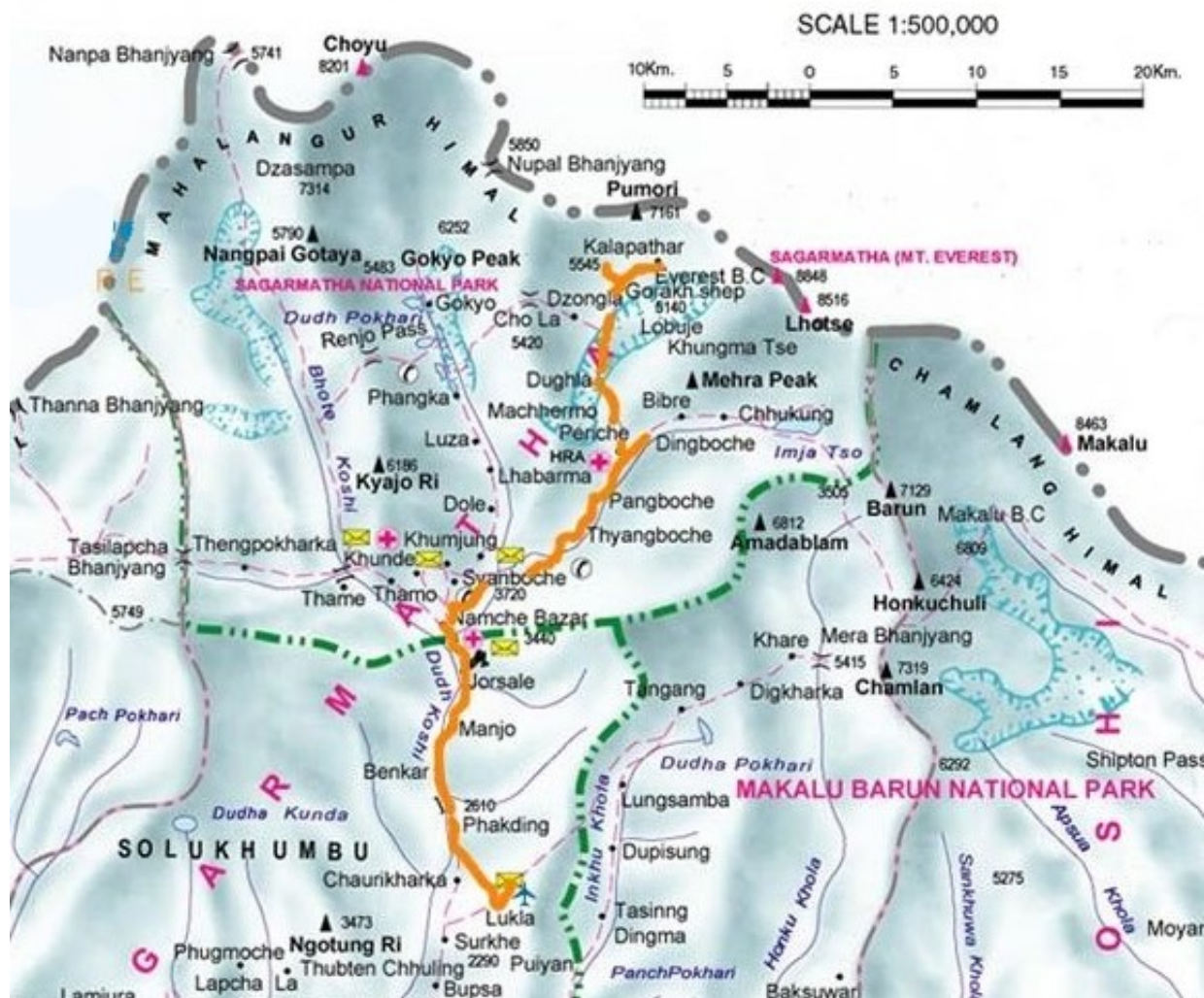
Last week in our exploration of the highest summits of the Himalayas, we ended our [Route to Everest](#) at the Red Hat Tibetan Tengboche monastery.

Having now been to world's 6<sup>th</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and highest mountain of all – Cho Oyu, Lhotse, and Everest -- this week we continue on to the giants of *Makalu* – the world's 5<sup>th</sup> at 8,485m/27,838ft – and *Kanchenjunga* – 3<sup>rd</sup> highest on earth at 8,585m/28,168ft.



We return from Tengboche to the [Lukla Airport](#) where we arrived from Kathmandu (Nepal's capital) the previous day to refuel our helicopters onward to Everest. Lukla is the staging place for treks and climbs to Everest, so everyone flies in here, even though it's built on a slanted ledge on a mountainside and is considered "the world's most dangerous airport."

This is of no concern to us as we safely land and take-off by helicopter! After spending the night at the comfortable Everest Summit Lodge, we lift off for Makalu in the early morning light. Let's orient ourselves. The yellow line is the trekking route to Everest Base Camp.



Even though it's only 12 miles between the summits of Everest and Makalu, the normal heli flight path would be far to the south below the high mountains, then over the Shipton Pass (above the word "PARK"), then up the Barun Valley to Makalu B.C. With our ultra-high altitude AS 350 B3 Eurocopters, however, we have pioneered a route virtually directly from the Everest-Lhotse massif to Makalu.

Following the trekking route, we overfly Tengboche (spelled Thyangboche in the map and in the bottom of the photo below) back towards Ama Dablam and the Lhotse-Nuptse Wall.

Getting nearer, we get a close up view of the summit of Everest peeking over the Nuptse Wall, and the entire gigantic south face of Lhotse summit to base.

We fly around Ama Dablam...

And with one last glorious look at Everest and Lhotse...

We turn right past Ama Dablam and head straight for Makalu. We fly over massive glaciers and high passes when suddenly there it is, *The Great Black* – *Makalu* in Sanskrit as the abode of the Black God of Hindus, Shiva.

Closer and closer until we skirt Makalu's gigantic South Face.

To land at Makalu Base Camp.

To be here is to truly feel the majesty of our Earth, which we take the time to celebrate.

Now we head for the far east of Nepal to find the remotest and thus least climbed and trekked to of the Himalayan giants. Cho Oyo, Everest, Lhotse, and Makalu are all on Nepal's border with Tibet. *Kanchenjunga* stands athwart Nepal's border with the former Tibetan kingdom of Sikkim, militarily invaded and incorporated into India in 1975.

The world's 3<sup>rd</sup> highest mountain is named "Five treasures of snow" – Kanchenjunga in Tibetan – for its five main peaks, four of which are over 8,000 meters (26,247ft).

To get there, we fly down the Baruntse Valley – so spectacular it was called the "Valley of Eternity" by Sir Edmund Hillary, over the Shipton Pass (named after Hillary's climbing partner, the famed Eric Shipton), and straight for the Five Treasures. We refuel at a Sherpa village in the valley.

As we approach the Kanchenjunga Massif, its enormity becomes apparent – for it has 16 peaks over 23,000 feet and 170 glaciers.

As our helicopters are capable of flying at 7,000 meters or 23,000 feet, we can see what no one else sees – *the entire ridge line of Kanchenjunga over 8,000 meters high*, with its four peaks of (right to left) Kanchenjunga South, Central, Main, and Yalung Kang.

There are two approaches to climb the principal summit, Kanchenjunga Main – via the North Face with the base camp at Pangpema, and the Southwest Face with the base camp at Rampche.



We go to both. First up the Kanchenjunga Glacier to Pangpema for the magnificent North Face.

The photo above can only be taken by our ultra-high altitude helicopters. There are only a handful of human beings who have ever seen this sight.

We then circle the massif around to the south to enter Kanchenjunga's inner sanctum, with the sentinels of Jannu on the left, and the Kabru Towers on the right.

It is here we witness Kanchenjunga Main soaring above us.

We celebrate an extraordinary day at the Rampche Base Camp.

We now fly all the way back to Kathmandu, to celebrate the day again at the bar of our home base in Nepal, the legendary Yak & Yeti.

Next week we'll continue exploring the Himalaya's greatest mountains via *The Route to Annapurna*. If you want to explore them for real with me this coming April, [click here for details to join the Himalaya Helicopter Expedition and have the greatest one-week adventure possible on earth today.](#)

*Carpe diem.* Life is short. The time for a great adventure is *now*.

