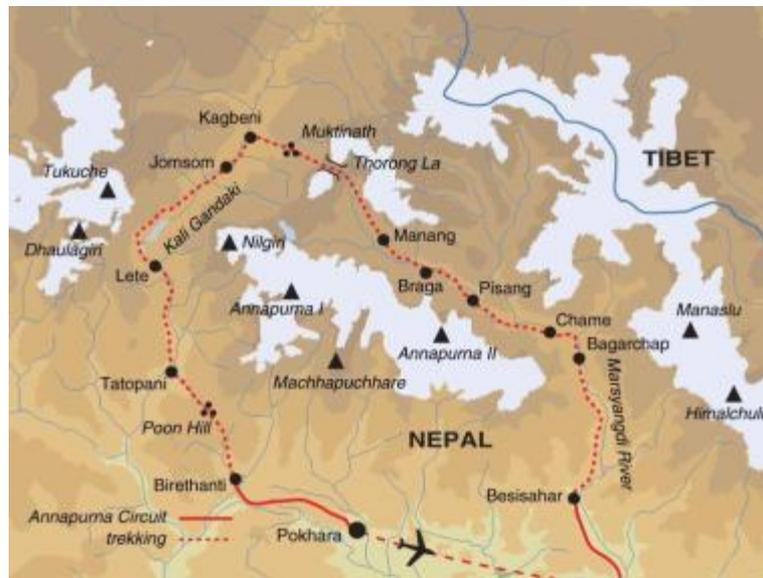


My Next Trek

Posted on November 21, 2016



Annapurna Circuit Trek

“No, I’m sorry, you can’t go on your next MTB (Mountain Bike) Trek in August 2016.”

This was not what I wanted to hear, but I’ll have to live with it, knowing that there is a lot of work to do in my court case (I am not allowed to talk about it at the moment.) My lawyers wouldn’t allow me the time off.

As this answer, “No”, was going through my thought process, I remembered one of my swimming squad friends saying they were planning to do the ‘Annapurna Trek’ in Nepal at the end of the year. It is not my usual mountain bike adventure, but I thought *“let’s do this, a 200km walk in the Himalayas”*

I got back on the phone and I eagerly asked if it was okay to do a trek during the December – New Year period. *“Yes, that’s okay, the courts will be taking a break and you’ll need a holiday by then.”*

It’s amazing how quick I was, in ringing the intrepid adventurous group from down Picton way, to see if I could tag along in them on the trek. It was a, “YES”.

Susan, Alan, Anna and I, became a team of four.



Our Team of Four – Anna, myself, Alan and Susan

So much has happened since that day, planning and lists. This part of the trek has been quite uplifting for me. I have been able to concentrate on the journey and not the court case.

These are all the things we have had to organise so far:

- Book the trek with a tour group in Nepal. We went with:

Advanced Adventures – Annapurna Circuit Trek (21 day/s).

- Book the flights. We went with, China Southern Airlines. They have a good reputation, and with a great flight schedule and a short stop over. This suited us.



- Buy the appropriate clothing. It's possible the temperature trekking over Thorong- La Top(5,416m) could be around minus 20 degrees. What can I say, I have never seen snow let alone been in temperatures like that. Bought all the gear now, boots, jackets, thermals (long johns), etc. I bought all my gear from the Sydney CBD Kathmandu store while they had winter specials on, nearly 50% off everything. This winter gear is not cheap and the layers you have to get. Certainly not the same as when I cycled from Darwin to Broome last year. Only one layer of clothing, but the temperatures were in the forties, a big difference.
- Nepal tourist Visa. Susan and I ventured into North Sydney to the Nepal Embassy and purchased the 30-day visas. We paid an extra \$15 on top of the \$85 for each of them, this guaranteed us completion the same day. It was worth it, not having them sent by mail or having to come back another day to collect them. Paid and all done. We can now enter the country without any problems.

- Vaccinations, which are a must travelling other parts of the world. We are lucky there is a Travel Doctor close to us all in Campbelltown. They have all the required vaccinations on hand. Very convenient. It's quite expensive! Not a cheap visit to the doctor once you finally get all the ones required for Nepal. One example is the Rabies shots (3) were just over \$300.
- Lists, How many can a person write? If it's anything like my D2B (Darwin to Broome bicycle ride) it could be never ending. But it's all worth it. As a group we have done some extreme adventures and are indeed very lucky to be experienced trekkers who no doubt are all very proficient list writers.
 1. Susan and Alan have MTB all over New Zealand.
 2. Anna has done the Mt Everest base camp trek and twice completed the Kokoda Track.
 3. Myself, solo bicycle ride Darwin to Broome MTB.

We train when we can, not easy when we all work and have different things on most weekends. Susan and Alan have been out in their walking gear and have notched the most training kilometers. Anna has clocked up running and swimming kilometers and I have been keeping up my bicycle and swimming kilometers. All four of us are extremely fit – that's just us and the lifestyle we choose to live.

Now I must mention I'm the oldest at 61 and I was concerned about the altitude sickness and that I may not make the 5,416 metres to the top of the pass. What would any normal aged person do? Go and arrange altitude training with a personal trainer. I found a gym, Valley Fitness at St Marys Sydney, which is on the way home from work that has an Altitude Chamber for assessment and training. By the time we fly out, I will have completed about 24 sessions, 10 with the PT (Personal Trainer) to get me to 5,400 at 11% oxygen and the other 14 on my own. I feel more comfortable knowing that I have been doing this training.

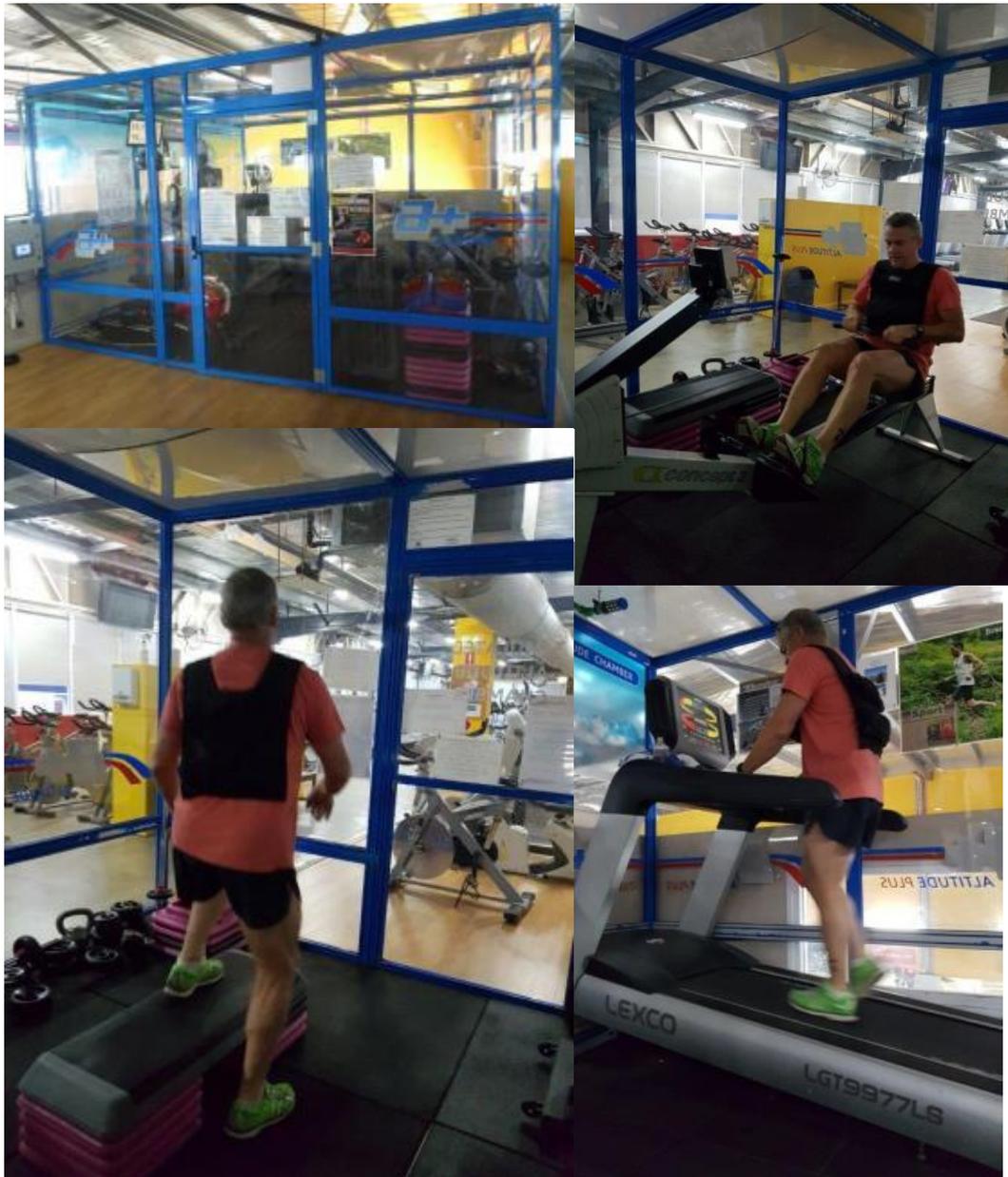
We head off on the 14th December, have two days just being tourist in Kathmandu and then start the trek with the tour group on the 16th December.

So folks while I am experiencing my first white Christmas I hope you all have a lovely festive season. Watch this space and I will continue to share my Annapurna journey.

Kenny Mac



Team of Four Training at Thirlmere Lakes



Training in the Altitude Chamber

The overall experience is beyond imagination.

Posted on January 21, 2017

This trip was my first time to Nepal. Trekking and exploring a small section of its beautiful landscape (the Annapurna circuit) from Besisahar to Pokhara. The overall experience was beyond my imagination, astonishing views of magnificent mountains with snowcapped peaks, moss-laden rhododendron forests that seemed enchanted and farmed terraces. It's difficult finding the appropriate adjectives to truly explain the grandeur of the views. Even the photos don't show the depth and beauty of this Nepalese landscape.

It wasn't until we started the drive from Kathmandu (via the local highway) that I noticed, what I first thought were clouds in the sky but were snow covered mountains. I was awestruck by their size, reaching higher than the clouds. I could feel a small twinge of excitement come over me, "This is going to be one hell of a trek".



As we walked, it was immediately evident that we were about to see the promised diversity written of our Nepalese trek, the Annapurna Circuit. We ascended along the Marsyangdi River Valley and passed beneath the snow-capped Annapurnas II, III and IV and a range of other 6,000m peaks. The highpoint of our trek, crossing the Thorong La pass (5416m) after a 3 hour very early morning walk from High Camp. It was -13°C at the top. After some loud cheering and photos, we headed down the other side to reach the holy shrine of Muktinath.

We then descend into the mighty Kali Gandaki Valley (the deepest river valley on the face of the earth) 7000m deep between Dhaulagiri and Annapurna. The area was a vast windswept region under the shadows of those two mountains. This part of the trek took us across wasteland like landscapes, infertile ridges and windswept cliffs. At the end, we trekked through a wonderful rhododendron forest on the Gorepani Ridge and the picturesque Gurung villages before finishing back in the Pokhara Valley.

Not only did we face a few massive ascents we also had some long days of trekking. In saying that, I look back and would have to admit, we only spent a couple of weeks in the mountains trekking. Our porters (Indra and Mohan) carried our heavy gear, locals fed us and provided rooms. Life is tough in the mountains, food is difficult to grow and the variety available at lower elevations simply cannot thrive at the heights above 4,000 metres. Provisions are driven to the villages where there are roads (not smooth roads) and where there are no roads all gear and food is transported by either donkey or pony trains or by the locals themselves. The local people were always friendly, and the children were always happy. Up in the higher elevations we saw Yaks, Blue Sheep and down in the lower levels we even saw a few wild monkeys living on the cliffs.

It has always been said that physical exercise can stimulate not only the body but the mind. Trekking in places like this amazing section of Nepal did that and more. The visual stimulation was never ending, every corner we turned it showed us more. I now understand this place would be unknown to everyday people with no interest in vacations spent trekking, just like me.

I consider myself lucky to have been a part of our little foursome trekking group from Picton way. It was a once in a lifetime experience and way above my expectations. It made for a truly unique and rewarding adventure.

I wanted to share with you all a brief story of where we've been. More details will come soon watch this space.

Kenny Mac



At airport and excited



