

10 min read

# Part 3

## morning glorious

The silence of light  
Reveals a mountain awake  
in eternity

I wake up at 5:30 to the early light and it is cold in the room. My watch tells me why. it is -4 C but bright and sunny.

I look out of the window and I am blown away by this giant mountain peak that I am staring at. Kongde Ri towering over 20,000+ feet or nearly 6150 mtrs. Having come here in the night, we did not realize what a sight we had just outside our room.

I quickly open up the tripod for the first time, set up the DSLR and reel off a set of shots of this overpowering moment.



Kongde Ri, 20000+ feet of majesty looking over Namche Bazaar

Milan comes around reminding us that breakfast has been served, and I reluctantly close the camera. We finish packing the big duffels so that our otherwise invisible porter crew can take them and move ahead of us to Khumjung. Nish and I too discover that we are fresh, no pains and aches from yesterday's long trek. Healing power of this unspoilt land. Or its the Tibetan powder that we take before bed.

We slip into the breakfast room just after 7 am with departure planned for 8. I feel a tinge of regret that we will miss spending time in Namche considering that it is a pretty happening town. Finally its about 830 am when we set out. After the group photo of course.



Ready to start, (not) knowing what a fabulous morning it will be



We set out and almost immediately start climbing. Tenzing had told us that we will see big peaks from now on but I at least was not prepared for the onslaught. Kongde Ri had already taken my breath away. We climb through a park like area through thick tree cover and exposed roots on the ground.

Its only about 20 mins of walking and we see the first view of arguably one of the most spectacular mountains in this range - looming large in the distance." There is Ama Dablam" Tenzing says reverentially



Ama Dablam - Nepal's favorite



The mountain will keep us company as we trek the range and the stories of sherpas and their climbers are told. Ama Dablam will be on our lips for many days to come.

As we continue our climb through the park we pass the Everest Museum gates and soon reach an open area that has the Tenzing Norgay Sherpa Heritage Center. It is closed but we take it in, from the outside.







We walk on a bit blindsided by this sudden open ground and high peaks in front. Tenzing calls out to us in a joyful tone " Look there he says" and we get our first sight of Mt Everest, Sagarmatha.



a mountain, especially a Himalaya, especially Everest, is land's attempt to metamorphose into sky.....Salman Rushdie



Standing tall, guarded by giant peaks of Lhotse and Nuptse. Ama Dablam to the right. The air is crystal clear and even at 10 km distance (as the crow flies) we can see her clearly. we stand and stare not wanting to let this out of our sights.



We are like a bunch of excited kids. Clicking away. Surrounded 360 by mountains. Cool air and bright sunshine. Heaven comes to mind. An hour passes and yet we haven't had our fill. Walking all around this small plateau, breathing it all in. We get to see many helicopters whiz past in all directions, some flying at our eye level as we peer into the valley.



We see a few other trekking groups already taking pictures with the original Tenzing whose statue proudly stands with Mt Everest behind him. We get our turn as well in some time.



Our Tenzing breaks the spell and points to a distant high spot on top of a mountain across from us and says "that's where we gotta go next" We go back down the park and towards our next destination where we are promised even better views.

Tenzing is right. The hike to Khumjung is indeed very picturesque. Our total ascent is 460 mtrs but the net is around 150 mtrs. Basically we climb up from Namche a fairly vertical climb up to the waste management center and then onward towards Everest hotel from where the views are even more glorious.









Ashok and Dinyar with Mt Everest as a backdrop





Everest watching as we walk, as if towards it for a long long time



From there on its a descent all the way to Khumjung. Something that we all do happily. Taking in the views, chatting with whoever is in range. Stopping often to absorb the energy of the mountains that surround us. Listening to familiar music that Nish is playing as he strolls down like a pro.



Khumjung calls itself a Green village. All the rooftops barring one are painted green. Again the cleanliness is striking. The town itself is in a valley surrounded by giant peaks all around.









Our teahouse run by a lady and her mountaineer Sherpa husband



Ama Dablam above all



The one rooftop that is red in color is that of the Samten Choling monastery . A famous one that is one of the oldest in the region. And unique in that it carries the half skull of what is believed to be a yeti.



We had to see this. So, after taking a couple of hours of rest, we go across to the monastery, thankfully, not too far away from our teahouse, and enter the holy doors.

Such monasteries always give me a sense of tremendous concentration of energies within the sanctum. This one is no different.

We decide to sit down in silence, meditate if you will, and absorb as much of this positive energy, as we can. Then Vijay recites some holy chants as does Ashok and it feels fantastic.

The half yeti skull is kept in a glass encased box. Strangely the skull has got brownish red hair on it even though it must be over 100 hundred years old. No one really knows the origin of the story, but there it was, proof against the naysayers and nonbelievers!





The walk back from the monastery to the tea house becomes an adventure when a cow yak decides to chase our porter-guide Bikal and Ashok.

They have to run really fast to avoid getting butted by the annoyed animal.





### A yak farm at Khumjung

We rapidly run down the narrow street, trying to avoid the yak, but it keeps following us. Little do we know that it's only trying to find its way home.

In between all this I spot telecom signal availability and make a call home. All is well.

Vijay had spotted a pretty little café on our way up the village as we came in. So we decide that we need to go there for some coffee and croissants rather than go back to the tea house.

Lata and Nish take a rain check.

The rest of us walk down to the café and on entering it are rewarded by warm interiors.





We order an assortment of food and beverage but what I remember are the hot chocolate along with some delicious yak buttered cookies and soft jazz in the background.

It is a satisfying walk back to the tea house. We do it by torchlight as the sun has set and twilight too has mostly gone. The bakery visit has been a massage for the mind.

We find the tea house without much difficulty. Bikal of course is there with us, sent by Tenzing, to see that we return safely.

Back at the tea house the dining hall is very cozy. A door leading to a balcony tempts me given the stars that are already visible but I rush back feeling the cold.



We are by now used to calling it a day soon after dinner and Tenzing's briefing and we do so even though we are much less tired than the previous evening.

Nish and I chat a bit and look at some of the pictures we've taken. Nish sends some to the EBC family group that has been created. Thanks to insightful thinking by Lester.

I get into bed thinking of how far we have come, remembering that it is Vijay's birthday tomorrow. One more celebration to add to our memorable journey.

And yes, I pass out almost immediately.