

SIKKIM GOECHA LA, INDIA



View from Goecha La



HIGHLIGHTS

- This is a superb trek around the eastern flank of Kanchenjunga. It is the third highest mountain in the world and straddles the border of India and Nepal. The Sikkimese people regard Kanchenjunga as a holy mountain and known as “the five treasures of the eternal snows”.
- It is a varied journey from visiting monasteries to trekking through the lush forests of Sikkim; into the high alpine environment below Kanchenjunga and finally to Darjeeling hill station before flying back to Delhi
- Roland, owner and founder of The Mountain Company, led this trip in October 2006 and modified the itinerary based on this experience. He will be able to answer any questions you might have

"The Goecha La trek was a great experience, in truly amazing scenery and breathtakingly beautiful landscape. Roland and the Mountain Company team's level organisation was faultless and it felt like we were in the hands of a truly professional team from the start to the end of the trek.

I look forward to another trek with the Mountain Company next year and would happily recommend them to anyone looking for an adventure in the Himalayas." Ben Webb (UK)



SIKKIM GOECHA LA

Total number of days	15 days
Grade & days trekking	Moderate, 8 trekking days
Accommodation	6 nights hotel, 8 nights camping
2010 price ex Delhi	£1,395
Minimum group size	2
Dates	October 18 th to November 1 st 2009 April 4 th to 18 th 2010 October 17 th to 31 st 2010 April 3 rd to 17 th 2011



THE FOLLOWING IS INCLUDED IN THE PRICE OF THE TRIP

- Internal flight to/from Bagdogra and Delhi.
- All transfers including airport collections.
- Twin share room at Hotel White House in Delhi, Traveller's Inn in Darjeeling, Himalayan Hotel in Kalimpong and Hotel Tashiding in Yuksom (evening after trek).
- Breakfast only at hotels in Delhi, Darjeeling and Kalimpong, all meals included while on trek.
- Twin share tents while on trek.
- All trekking arrangements including permits and fees, tents, TMC guide, ponies (or yaks) and cook.
- Financial protection insurance with International Passenger Protection.

THE FOLLOWING SINGLE SUPPLEMENT IS AVAILABLE:

Single room supplement	£POA
Single tent supplement	£75

Please note that if you are a single person booking on one of our trips you do not have to pay the single room supplement, this is only payable if you specifically request to have a room or tent to yourself. You will not have to pay this for this option if you happen to end up with a single room or tent due to odd numbers on the trip.



THE FOLLOWING IS NOT INCLUDED IN THE PRICE OF THE TRIP

- International flight to/from Delhi (from £350).
- Travel & trekking insurance (eg Snowcard from £55).
- India visa up to 6 month (£30).
- Lunch and evening meals in Delhi, Darjeeling and Kalimpong.
- Personal clothing & equipment please see the Appendix for suggested kit list.
- Tips.
- Other items not listed in "What is included".

YOUR COMPLETE FINANCIAL PROTECTION

In accordance with "The Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992" all passengers booking with The Mountain Company are fully protected for the initial deposit and subsequently the balance of all monies paid to us, including repatriation if required, arising from cancellation or curtailment of your travel arrangements due to the insolvency of The Mountain Company.

This Insurance has been arranged by International Passenger Protection Limited and underwritten by Insurers who are members of the Association of British Insurers. A certificate detailing this cover will be given to each passenger as evidence of cover.





PARTICIPATION STATEMENT

Participants should be aware trekking, mountaineering and travelling in a developing country are activities that involve a risk of personal injury or death. As a condition of booking you must accept these risks and be responsible for your own actions and involvement.

Adventure travel requires an open and flexible attitude. You may experience extreme conditions, unpredictable weather and last minute changes to the itinerary beyond our control. Lack of acclimatisation to high altitudes could also be a risk factor. Our itineraries allow optimum time for acclimatising although it is possible that some individuals might be slow acclimatisers.

The majority of our trips visit remote areas where you are away from normal emergency services and medical facilities. In case of a serious injury requiring hospitalisation, it has to be accepted by you, evacuation could take up to several days and may impede your ensuing recovery. Helicopters are the most usual means of evacuation, however they are not always available or they may be hindered by poor weather and flying conditions.

INTRODUCTION

A classic trek in Sikkim in the Eastern Himalaya with views of Kanchenjunga the third highest mountain in the world.

Your journey starts by visiting the old British Raj hill station of Darjeeling followed by a classic eight day trek in Sikkim. This state of India is famous for its large variety of flora especially its orchids of which there are over 600 species. At the beginning of this beautiful trek you walk through sub-tropical forests and pasturelands of grazing yaks and then enter the pristine high alpine at higher altitudes.

The highest Camp on the trek is next to the sacred Samiti Lake, and the next morning we start early for the trek to the Goecha La pass opposite the immense eastern flank of Mt Kanchenjunga. There are many other impressive mountains seen on this trek including Kabru, Rathong and Pandim. After the trek we visit the hill station of Kalimpong staying at the historical Himalayan Hotel. In Kalimpong you

Telephone and fax: 0207 4980953 / International callers: +44 207498 0953

Skype ID: RoIandh1 / Email: info@themountaincompany.co.uk / www.themountaincompany.co.uk

Postal address: Flat 3, 190 Cedars Rd, Clapham, London SW40PP, UK



have the chance to visit a Buddhist monastery and orchid nursery or just to relax in the gardens of the hotel with a cup of tea enjoying views of Kanchenjunga.

DETAILED ITINERARY

It is our intention to keep to the day by day itinerary detailed below, although there might be some flexibility due to local conditions or other factors beyond our control. If this is the case the trek leader will do everything possible to work out the changes to the itinerary in order to minimise your inconvenience.

Day 1. Arrive Delhi and join the tour at the hotel.

A driver will be sent to collect you on your arrival at Delhi airport and to bring you back to the hotel. Please provide travel plans on booking and we will arrange the pick up and transfer.

Day 2. Fly to Bagdogra, drive to Darjeeling.

Morning transfer to Delhi domestic airport for the flight to Bagdogra. If the weather is clear we will get a superb view of the Himalayas from the plane including the giants of Dhaulagiri, Annapurnas, Makalu, Nanda Devi and of course Kanchenjunga.

The drive to Darjeeling takes about 4 to 5 hours and follows the famous Darjeeling toy train. The hill station was built by the British on top of a ridge facing the Himalayas and soon developed many tea gardens due to the ideal climate.

Day 3. Sightseeing and relaxation in Darjeeling.

Today we explore Darjeeling visiting the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute, which has an interesting collection of Everest memorabilia, and also the zoo with many animals including snow leopard, bear and red panda. We can also visit one of the many tea plantations and get a tour around the tea processing factory.

Day 4. Drive to Yuksom (1,770m)- 6 hours driving.

Today we drive to Yuksom, the road travels through the heart of Sikkim passing through tea plantations, lush jungle and forests.



Day 5. Trek to Tshoka (3,050m)- 7 hours walking.

Today we walk along the valley side crossing several rivers and then climb steeply to Bakhim and little further higher we reach the Tibetan village of Tshoka.

Day 6. Trek to Phidang (3,650m)- 4 hours walking.

The trail continues to climb steeply through forests of rhododendron to the alp at Phidang. During the pre monsoon season the walk in the forest is beautiful with many flowering plants.

Day 7. Trek to Dzongri (3,990m)- 4 hours walking.

The trail levels off above Phidang before climbing again to the Mon Lepcha pass, from here there are superb views of Pandim. We descend to the open yak pastures of Dzongri where we camp for two nights. After setting up camp and having lunch, we can go for an afternoon walk to a holy Buddhist lake (about 2 hours return).

Day 8. Day walk from Dzongri (3,990m)- 6 hours return.

Before dawn we start to climb the hill above the campsite to Dzongri Top for the sunrise view of Kanchenjunga.

You will be rewarded with a panoramic view of Kabru (7,353m), Ratong (6,678m), Kanchenjunga (8,534m), Pandim (6,691m) and Narsing (5,825m). Towards the west the Singalila ridge which separates Sikkim from Nepal can also be seen.

After breakfast we will go for a walk to the Dzongri la. If the group is feeling energetic, we can continue and complete a circuit back to Dzongri. The trail descends in the direction of the HMI base camp and then we walk down that valley and around back to Dzongri.

Day 9. Trek to Onglathang (4,000m)- 6 hours walking.

From Dzongri there is a walk over open hillside before a steep drop to Thangsing in the Prek Chu valley. We descend through rhododendrons, cross the river and walk uphill through a pine forest to Thangsing. After lunch at Thangsing, we continue up the Prek Chu valley with the majestic Pandim towering overhead.

Day 10. Trek to Gocha la (4,940m) and back to Thangshing- 8 hours walking.

After an early start, we climb the hill behind the campsite and soon arrive at the beautiful turquoise Lake Samiti (it is no longer possible to camp at the lake).



The trail follows the moraine and then descends to the sandy bed of an empty lake at Zemathang. We cross under the shadow of Pandim and then ascend moraine to about 4,710m. After passing a frozen lake which is dotted with snow and ice pinnacles we walk along the path to Goecha la. The pass is bedecked in colourful Tibetan prayer flags and has incredible views of the east flank of Kanchenjunga.

The Goecha la is formed by a depression between Pandim and the Kabru spurs. It overlooks the Talung Valley and commands a very impressive view of Kanchenjunga.

The descent follows the same trail back to Onglathang. After lunch, we continue on down to Thangsing where we spend the night.

Day 11. Trek to Tshoka (3,050m)- 6 hours walking.

Leaving Thangsing we take a different route back avoiding the long climb to the Dzongri plateau. We descend along the Prek Chu river and contour round through the jungle to emerge at Phidang again. From here it is a steep walk down to Tshoka where we spend the night.

Day 12. Trek to Yuksom (1,770m)- 6 hours walking.

It is downhill today to the river and then we follow the trail through lush, semi-tropical forest until we arrive back at Yuksom. We stay in the comfortable Hotel Tashiding tonight. In the afternoon we can explore Yuksom or just relax after the trek

Day 13. Drive to Kalimpong- 6 hours driving.

We are collected by our jeeps for the drive to the hill station of Kalimpong. You can relax here for the rest of the day while enjoying the views of the surrounding Himalayan foothills. Overnight Himalayan Hotel, Kalimpong.

Day 14. Drive to Bagdogra and fly back to Delhi.

After breakfast we drive down to Bagdogra airport to get our flight back to Delhi. Transfer from Delhi domestic airport to hotel.

Day 15. Sightseeing and fly back home.

In the morning we will have a sightseeing tour of Delhi with an English speaking guide (optional), and in the afternoon get the transfer to the airport for the flight back home.



ETHICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Mountain Company is committed to adopting a responsible attitude to the areas we visit. We are guests of the communities visited and with some thought and care we can ensure that everyone benefits from the experience.

We work closely with the International Porter Protection Group (www.ippg.net) who we support as a Camp 1 sponsor- we abide by their 5 guidelines for porter protection.

We also work with other organisations such as Climate Care (www.climatecare.org), Tourism Concern (www.tourismconcern.org.uk), Friends of Conservation (www.foc-uk.com) and Kathmandu Environmental Education Project (www.keepnepal.org).

We have developed a Responsible Tourism policy which aims to ensure that The Mountain Company and its clients act in a way that is socially, environmentally and culturally sound.

The Mountain Company has joined the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Know Before You Go campaign. The aim is to make sure travellers are properly prepared before travelling overseas. The best way to get the FCO latest advice is to visit their website at: www.fco.gov.uk/travel.

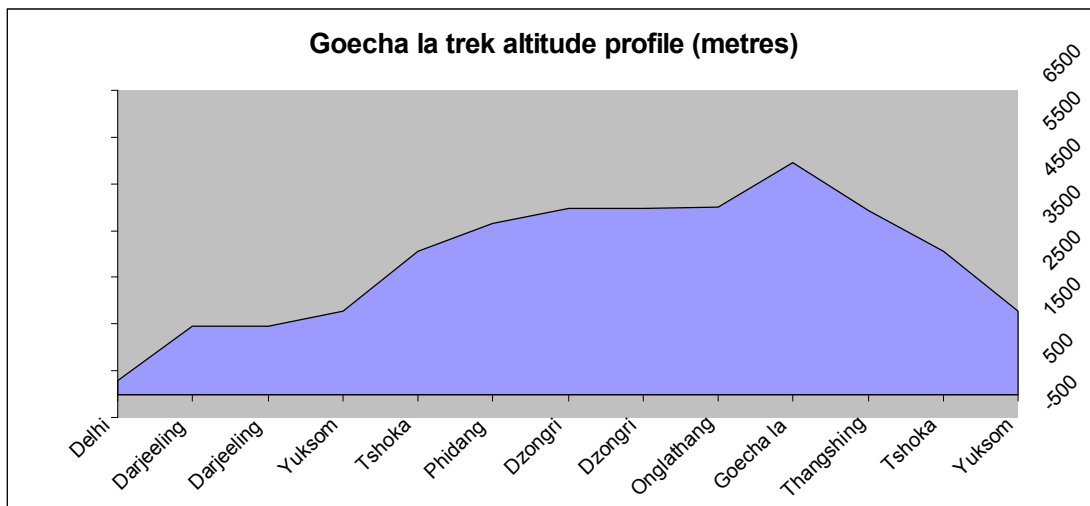




PRACTICAL INFORMATION

ALTITUDE AND ACCLIMATISATION

Our Markha Valley itinerary has been designed for gradual acclimatisation to take place, take a look at the altitude profile for the itinerary below:



There are ways of helping the acclimatisation process, as described below:

- Walk slowly: there is plenty of time included in the itinerary so there is no need to rush, go at your own pace and enjoy the incredible views!
- Drink lots of water: it is easier for your body to acclimatise when hydrated so drink water and avoid coffee, tea and alcohol.
- Consider taking diamox (acetazolamide): before using this drug we recommend consulting a doctor and thoroughly researching the pros and cons.

For further information we suggest you take a look at the following websites:

Base Camp MD website:

<http://www.BaseCampmd.com/expguide/highalt.shtml>

Telephone and fax: 0207 4980953 / International callers: +44 207498 0953

Skype ID: Rolandh1 / Email: info@themountaincompany.co.uk / www.themountaincompany.co.uk

Postal address: Flat 3, 190 Cedars Rd, Clapham, London SW40PP, UK



High Altitude medicine website:

<http://www.high-altitude-medicine.com>

Medex Travel at High Altitude:

<http://www.medex.org.uk/v26%20booklet.pdf>

BMC website:

<http://www.thebmc.co.uk/Feature.aspx?id=1746>

ACCOMMODATION IN DELHI, DARJEELING & KALIMPONG

In Delhi we normally use the White House hotel which is located centrally in the Karol Bagh district of New Delhi. It is a short walk from the hotel to the Metro station and five minutes into Connaught Place. For more information take a look at their website www.hotel-whitehouse.com

In Darjeeling we use the Traveller's Inn situated near the centre of Darjeeling. The hotel has superb views of Darjeeling town and the Kanchenjunga mountain range <http://www.darjnet.com/travellersinn/>

In Kalimpong we use the Himalayan Hotel. This is the home of the McDonald family and is set in landscaped gardens to the south of the town. The hotel has impressive buildings with oak ceilings, teak furniture and a large collection of Tibetan artefacts and memorabilia.

David McDonald was the interpreter on Francis Younghusband's mission to Lhasa in 1904 and was later posted to Tibet as the British Trade agent until he retired in 1924. He also helped the 13th Dalai Lama to escape from Tibet in 1910 and served as British Political Officer in Sikkim.

We will book hotels of a similar quality if we are unable to get reservations at these ones.



A TYPICAL DAY ON TREK

The day starts with an early morning mug of tea brought to your tent by one of the cook's helpers. Before heading over to the mess tent for breakfast it is best to pack your overnight gear into your duffel bag. During breakfast the tents will be packed away and, after the pony men have arranged their loads, they will set off on the trail in the cool of the morning.

After breakfast, probably between 7am and 8am, we start walking. The pace of the trek is leisurely with plenty of time to enjoy the scenery, take photos and explore the local villages. Lunch will be around 11am at a spot by the side of the trail and is prepared for us by the cooks.

There is more walking after lunch and normally you will get into camp by mid afternoon with the tents already put up by the local staff. In the evening a three course meal is served in the mess tent around 7pm. After supper the western leader will discuss the plan for the next day with the group. People might stay in the mess tent chatting about the day's events for a while before retiring to their tent for the night.

FOOD

In **Delhi** there is a wide range of excellent restaurants close to the hotel in Connaught Circus from upmarket, local dhabas to western style. Some of the more popular ones are: Spice Route (in the Imperial hotel), Banana Leaf, Nirulas, Baristas, Parikrama, United Coffee House and Standard. Breakfast is provided each morning by the hotel.

In **Leh** there is also a wide range of good restaurants, our favourites include Dreamland, La Terrasses and the Tibetan kitchen.

While on the trek you will get breakfast with porridge and cereal, toast or chapattis, omelettes and a range of hot drinks. Normally a hot lunch is prepared by the trek crew or on the longer days a pack lunch is provided after breakfast. On arrival at the camp in the afternoon you will be given tea and biscuits and a three course meal will follow later in the evening.



CLIMATE

The traditional trekking seasons in Sikkim are late September to October and May to June.

The Goecha la trek will have a range of temperatures depending on the altitude and the time of day. In the mountains between 1,000m and 3,500m the nights will be cool, normally around 5°C, and during the day temperatures sometimes rise to 25°C. At higher altitudes temperatures range from about 20°C to -15°C.

CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT

A list of suggested clothing and equipment for the Goecha La has been included in the Appendix below. This is a comprehensive list and experienced trekkers will often take only a selection of these items based on what has worked in the past. It is worth pointing out that you will need a sleeping bag for this trip.

If you do not have the clothing and equipment contained in this list then a good option might be to rent from the UK. Trek Hire is a company that rents out high quality items at competitive prices which would save you the expense of buying. The link to their website is <http://www.trekhireuk.com/>

Alternatively if you are going to buy then please contact the office for the Cotswold Outdoor promo code that entitles you, as a client of The Mountain Company, to a 15% discount in their stores and online.

Each trekker should bring one backpack for items required during the day. Your day backpack will contain items such as warm clothes, jacket, camera, water bottles, personal first aid kit and snacks.

The rest of your personal equipment packed in a duffel bag or backpack will be carried by a pony or yak. **The maximum weight allowance is 15kgs.** Please ensure that your bag is marked clearly on the outside for easy identification.



VISA REQUIREMENTS

Citizens from the UK, US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand require an entry visa, it is your responsibility to obtain the entry visa. The Indian High Commission in London has updated the procedure for obtaining tourist visas. The decision on whether to grant a visa has been retained by the High Commission; however the application and collection process has been outsourced to VFS Global.

All applications have to be made online at <http://in.vfsglobal.co.uk/> You still have to apply online if you are submitting your application by post or using a visa agency. Walk-in applicants also need to fill out the online form before visiting VFS's office.

It should take 2 to 3 days to process your visa from submission although many people have experienced delays so please allow longer than this. Postal applications might take up to 15 days plus postage time. We suggest you carefully read the VFS website taking particular care in calculating the fee payable and also the rules for acceptable passport photos in order to avoid further delays.

VACCINATIONS AND MEDICAL

You should obtain professional advice from a travel clinic or your local GP about which vaccinations to have before you arrive in Nepal. A dental check-up is a good idea as there will be no dental facilities while on the trek.

We bring a comprehensive first aid kit from UK (Life Systems Mountain Leader) plus high altitude medicine, antibiotics and other medicines.

FLIGHTS

We recommend Max Travel (ATOL bonded license# 4705) for booking international flights and other travel arrangements. Please take a look at their website at <http://www.maxtravel.co.uk/> or give them a call on 020 7095 0920.

There are a number of good online agents that we also recommend, they are:



Kayak: *an excellent flight cost comparison website* <http://www.kayak.co.uk/>

Traveljungle: *another good flight cost comparison website*
<http://www.traveljungle.co.uk/>

Cheap Tickets: this site quotes airfares in USD\$ & often is very competitive when translated back to GBP£ <http://www.cheaptickets.com/>

Southall Travel: very competitive prices for India, Pakistan and Nepal both online and telephone support <http://www.southalltravel.co.uk/>

INSURANCE

Travel insurance for any Mountain Company itinerary is a condition of booking a holiday. At the very least you should have emergency medical and repatriation insurance which must include the cost of mountain rescue. Cancellation insurance is strongly recommended as all deposits paid to The Mountain Company are non-refundable.

To get an online quote for your personal travel and trekking insurance (UK residents only), take a look at Snowcard's website at http://www.snowcard.co.uk/pages/d_select1.asp?referrer_id=MC

Snowcard activity level for Goecha La trek is 3 and prices start from £55.



Please note that The Mountain Company do not act as an agent of Snowcard Insurance and any policy bought via this web link is effected directly with Snowcard Insurance Services Limited.



CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

For those of you who are visiting India for the first time we have provided some cultural information to help ensure your behaviour is acceptable to your hosts in India:

- Both men and women should dress conservatively wearing full length trousers and a shirt.
- There are many hot springs, rivers and lakes where it is pleasant to take a dip, it is fine for men to go bare-chested while bathing but should not go nude. Women should try and be as modest as possible in these situations.
- Indians consider the left hand to be unclean, therefore do not eat food with your left hand and make sure you give or receive food only with your right hand
- Shoes are considered degrading so keep them on the ground and remove them before putting your feet on anything and on entering a temple you should remove your shoes.
- You will pass Buddhist mani walls, chortens, and stupas along the trek and to follow local traditions you should pass them on your right.
- When visiting a monastery or gumpa it is customary to give a donation for its upkeep.

SUGGESTED READING

Please take a look at The Mountain Company's bookstore for a wide selection of books and maps to Nepal, the link is at: <http://astore.amazon.co.uk/themountainco-21>

- Kanchenjunga the Untrodden Peak by Charles Evans.
The Hard Years by Joe Brown
- The Kanchenjunga Adventure by Frank Smythe
- Round Kanchenjunga by Douglas Freshfield



- Kanchenjunga; First Ascent from the North-East Spur by Col Narinder Kumar
- Kangchenjunga Himal and Kumbhakana by Jan Kielkowski
- The Ascent of Rum Doodle by WE Bowman

MAPS

- Sikkim Schweizerische Stiftung fur Alpine Forschung (Swiss Foundation For Alpine Research) Scale: 1:150,000



APPENDIX

SUGGESTED CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT LIST

Footwear:

- Walking boots. A pair of water repellent boots with ankle support.
- Gaiters. A pair used to keep boots dry if walking through deep snow or on wet ground.
- Wool and liner socks.
- Trainers/sneakers or sandals. Can be used in camp/lodge in the evenings.

Clothing:

- Waterproof jacket and trousers (goretex or similar).
- Trekking trousers.
- Long sleeve shirts (not cotton).
- Micro fleece.
- Mid to heavyweight fleece.
- Sleeveless or body warmer type fleece.
- Thermals or base layer for top & bottom (merino wool or synthetic).
- Fleece pants.
- Medium weight down jacket.

Handwear:

- Fleece gloves.
- Warm mittens and/or gloves.

**Headwear:**

- Wool or fleece hat.
- Sun hat.
- Bandana or scarf.
- Headtorch. Bring extra batteries.
- Sunglasses.

Personal Equipment:

- Sleeping bag.
- Backpack large enough to carry water bottles, camera, lunch and extra clothing.
- Stuff sacks for keeping your gear dry and organised.
- Two water bottles (Nalgene wide mouth bottles are the best).
- Sunscreen and lipsalve with a high SPF.
- Insect repellent.
- Water purification tablets (Pristine, Biox Acqua or Acqa Mira).
- Favourite snack food.
- Books, ipod and cards etc.
- Trekking poles.
- Camera with spare batteries and memory cards.
- Insurance certificate.
- Earplugs (optional).
- Baby wipes (optional).
- Hand sanitizer (optional).

**Travelling:**

- Duffle bag or large backpack for your personal gear on the trek (carried by a pony or yak). Bring a small combination padlock to secure the bag.
- Travel clothes. You will need casual clothing for air travel days.
- Toiletry bag include toilet paper, soap, towel, toothbrush, etc.

Personal first aid kit:

Note: we provide a comprehensive group first aid kit but please bring personal medications and other items you might use regularly such as:

- Any personal medications.
- Malaria prophylactic tablets.
- Blister treatment- Compeed patches are the best.
- Rehydration powder eg Dioralyte.
- Analgesic (paracetamol, ibuprofen and aspirin).
- Plasters and zinc oxide tape.
- Throat lozenges.
- Diamox (optional), helps with acclimatisation.