

## TRAVEL



# The 10 greatest treks in the world

The great trek – a punishing 25-day haul, perhaps, over dizzying mountain tops, weighed down with food, water and endless camping supplies. Or possibly a hearty march accompanied by a column of hardy locals carrying foldable beds and silver tea sets. Or then again, it could be little more than a gentle meander through alpine meadows with plenty of time to sniff the daisies and a warm bed waiting at a nearby lodge. One person's dream trek is always going to be the next person's nightmare but, by consulting trekking experts, **Sue Williams** has come up with a multipurpose list that should have something for everyone – and maybe even everything for someone.

## The Kokoda Trail, Papua New Guinea

Through rainforests, mossy vales, muddy streams and over the rugged mountain ridges of the Owen Stanley Range, Kokoda is known as one of the toughest treks.

Yet most agree that the haul across the 96-kilometre route is a rite of passage for Australians.

"It's the site of the most important campaign ever fought in defence of our country," says Charlie Lynn, a NSW MLC who's done the trek a staggering 37 times. "We fought here for Australia and won. Gallipoli doesn't come close. There we fought for England and lost. As well as the environmental experience and the cultural significance of the villages you pass by, it's fascinating for its military history."

**Distance:** 96 kilometres  
**Duration:** 8 to 10 days  
**Altitude:** 2000 metres at Mount Bellamy  
**Difficulty rating:** five

**Accommodation:** camping or in village huts  
**Contact:** [www.kokodatreks.com](http://www.kokodatreks.com)

## Everest Base Camp and Gokyo Lakes, Nepal

The trek around the Gokyo and Khumbu valleys is considered one of the best in the world. This is not only because of its dramatic mountain scenery – with the region's 8000-metre peaks including Everest, Lhotse and Makalu – but also the Ngozumpa glacier, turquoise lakes, friendly Sherpa villages, monasteries and wildlife.

"There's just something about seeing the highest point of the world," says Rod Griffith, of travel company Peregrine Adventures. "Even though a lot of people do it these days, it's still lost none of its attraction. It's always going to be a challenge, no matter how fit you are, but there's that feeling of conquest. I've done it 15 times now but I love it so much I always want to go back."

**Distance:** 175 kilometres  
**Duration:** 18 days  
**Altitude:** 5545 metres at the peak of Kala Patar

**Difficulty rating:** four  
**Accommodation:** lodges  
**Contact:** [www.peregrineadventures.com.au](http://www.peregrineadventures.com.au)

## The Paine Circuit, Patagonia, Chile

For the hardy trekker, this is an outstanding circuit for exploring the rugged mountain peaks of the Patagonian Andes in southern Chile. Across the high peaks of Torres del Paine National Park, there's undulating grasslands, woodlands and lakes. Then there's a world of granite peaks, hanging glaciers and tiny glacial lakes as the route passes over the Paso John Garner with spectacular views of the Grey Glacier and as far as the Patagonian ice cap.

"It really is the best trek in the world," says Kate Baker, of World Expeditions. "It's the most spectacular scenery you can possibly get at a comparatively low altitude. The water's clean enough to drink out of streams and the beauty is quite amazing. The whole trek is just exhilarating."

**Distance:** 160 kilometres  
**Duration:** 14 days  
**Altitude:** 1180 metres is the

highest point, at Paso John Garner  
**Difficulty rating:** three  
**Accommodation:** lodges and camping  
**Contact:** [www.worldexpeditions.com.au](http://www.worldexpeditions.com.au)

## The Way of St James, France and Spain

In the 9th century, the tomb of the apostle Saint James was unearthed in Compostela, which then became the holy grail of a pilgrimage beginning in France and crossing northern Spain through the beautiful sierras of Navarre and Aragon, past numerous churches and monasteries, to Santiago de Compostela.

"It goes through fabulous scenery, the wine-growing areas and across the Pyrenees," says Kate Baker, operations manager of World Expeditions. "You pass through all these interesting little villages and the whole area is amazingly untouched. You feel like you're almost in a different century. It's one of my favourite areas of Europe."

The trek takes 30 days, but most people break it down and do