

## 4.4 Lobuche to Gokyo by the Cho La

53

73

67

**Day 1** Lobuche to Dzonghla 2-3 hours

**Day 2** Dzonghla to Thangnak via the Cho La 5-8 hours

**Day 3** Thangnak to Gokyo 2-4 hours

This section describes an adventurous route that links the Khumbu Valley with the Gokyo Valley, traversing a high pass with a glacier. Under good conditions it can be completed by any strong trekker; after heavy snowfall it may be unsafe, but there is a fallback 'long way round'. We describe the link in the westerly direction, for those descending from Lobuche, but it works equally well going eastward from Gokyo.



*Chola Tsho, with Taboche and Cholatse*

### **Lobuche (4910 m) to Dzonghla (4600 m)**

- From Lobuche, divert from the standard descent path by bearing right 1 km south of Lobuche. Enjoy the gentle traverse as it heads slightly uphill, with great views back up the moraine, and also across the valley to Dughla and Pheriche with Ama Dablam and other peaks.
- As you round the shoulder of Arakam Tse westward, you gain amazing views over the glacial Chola Tsho lake, with the craggy peaks of Taboche and Cholatse as backdrop.
- The path swings right, westward, but remains easy walking across an area with many streams. After crossing the largest of these, you begin your final uphill approach to Dzonghla, almost hidden in its valley.
- There's a couple of lodges here, but facilities are fairly primitive: don't count on an inside toilet. However, you may well see snowcocks strutting their stuff and it's pleasantly quiet here.

## Dzonghla (4600 m) to Thangnak (4700 m) via the Cho La (5368 m)

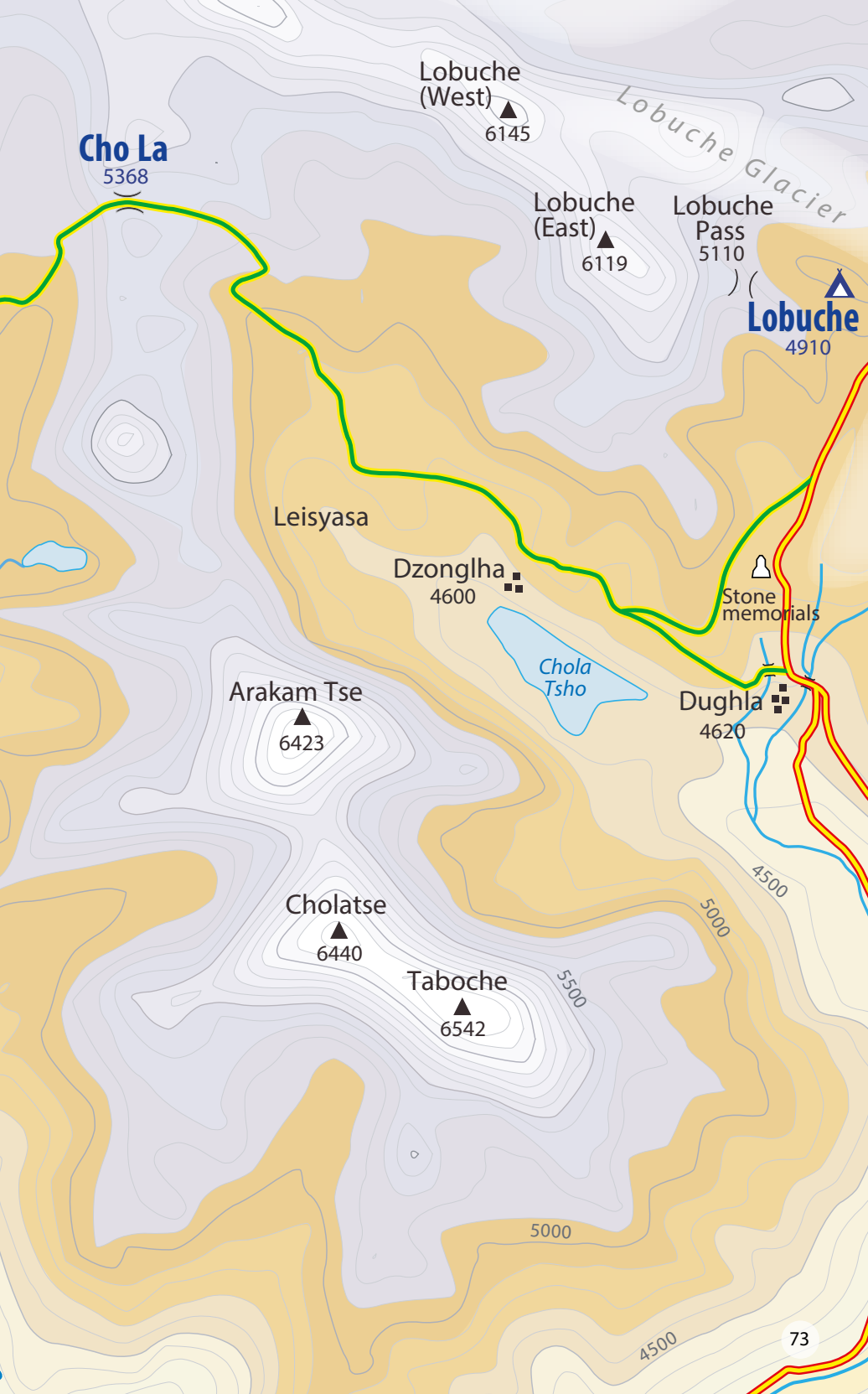
- Plan to set off very early for the Cho La: rockfalls and avalanches are a real danger later in the day once things have warmed up. Also, if there has been recent snowfall, the terrain may be very hard going or even treacherous, and crevasses in the glacier could be hidden by snow: take great care. In adverse conditions, the route may even be impassable. Take local advice before deciding to set out.
- The early morning mountain views are sensational, with Cholatse to your left and the Lobuche ridge to your right. The photo at right shows Cholatse towering over morning mist soon after dawn.
- Begin by climbing uphill, gently at first, but the valley soon narrows. The trail turns into a series of stiff zigzags leading to a steep-sloping rock and boulder field, with large slabs pointing toward a seemingly impregnable wall of jagged mountains.
- Gradually it emerges that the route will win through diagonally uphill. Keep close to the rock wall at your left, and stay close as the route veers to the left. Although the terrain isn't easy, this section merely needs persistence and stamina.
- Finally you top out at the surprisingly level glacier. This can be fairly easy going, as long as the snow isn't too deep and soft. Keep to the southern edge of the glacier and stay alert for crevasses and frozen ponds.



*Cholatse (6440 m)*



*Porter crossing the glacier*



**Cho La**  
5368

**Lobuche (West)**  
▲  
6145

**Lobuche (East)**  
▲  
6119

**Lobuche Pass**  
P  
5110

**Lobuche**  
▲  
4910

Leisyasa

**Dzonglha**  
■  
4600

Stone  
memorials

**Arakam Tse**  
▲  
6423

*Chola Tsho*

**Dughla**  
■  
4620

**Cholatse**  
▲  
6440

**Taboche**  
▲  
6542

5000

4500

73



*Top of the Cho La*

- At the far end of the snow and ice, you finally reach the top of the pass (5368 m/17,610 ft) celebrated by prayer flags, with good views into the valley beyond.
- Reaching this summit by no means marks the end of the difficulties. Now you must descend over a steep, jumbled boulder field that seems to go on for hours. It isn't unbroken descent all the way: just after you have crossed a stream and descended to about 4950 m, you have to climb a ridge at over 5150 m.
- Finally, after the strenuous boulder-hopping, you begin a protracted descent on something more like a path, to the right of a major stream all the way down to Thangnak (4700 m/15,420 ft). This settlement, also known as Dragnag, has a couple of lodges with rather more creature comforts than Dzonghla.

### **Thangnak (4700 m) to Gokyo (4790 m)**

- To reach Gokyo, you must first cross Nepal's longest glacier, the Ngozumpa – perhaps the largest in the Himalaya. It's a mountainous, bouldery and scree-covered glacier, not remotely like the gentle flat glacier atop the Cho La, and like all glaciers, there are possible dangers.
- The normal way of doing so is to descend westward from Thangnak and to cross to a cairn on the crest of the moraine. From here, cross the glacier as directly as possible and climb to the moraine on the far side. The glacier traverse is undulating and rough, but when this route is viable, the whole crossing may take only an hour or so.
- You emerge at a point just north of the First Lake – a distance of just over 1 km. You turn right to hike past the Second Lake and into Gokyo: see page 67.
- When the local advice is to avoid this route, the alternative is likely to take rather longer. This alternative heads north-west for nearly 2 km along the lateral moraine from just below Thangnak, a surprisingly slow hike.





*Overlooking the Dudh Pokhari lake*

- Once you head west across the glacier, progress is still slow but you emerge on the glacier's western lateral moraine, soon reaching a wonderful vantage point over Gokyo's Third Lake (Dudh Pokhari).
- From here it's a short descent into the village with its welcome facilities. And if you are still hungry for more summits, you can always climb Gokyo Ri from Gokyo: see page 76. For the descent from Gokyo to Namche, simply reverse sections 4.1 to 4.3, with faster times because you are acclimatised, and (on trend) descending.

*Gokyo, from the slopes of Gokyo Ri*

