

## Introduction to the Case Study Area

This section will focus on the case study area. Households', lodges' and visitors' general characteristics will be presented based on information obtained from sample surveys in the area conducted during September of 1994, immediately before the start of the peak tourist season. Altogether 50 households were surveyed: 25 in Ghandruk and 25 in Ulleri. The visitor use and lodge surveys were conducted in Ghandruk and Ghorepani since, as noted, these are the most intensively used areas in the region and household settlement is not present in Ghorepani.

There are a number of trekking options available to tourists within the Annapurna Conservation Area depending on visitors' interests and leisure time.<sup>1</sup> Among the most widely used trekking route is the Ghandruk-Ghorepani-Ulleri-Birethanti circuit. Ghandruk VDC and Ulleri (Dansing VDC) of Kaski district and Ghorepani (Sikha VDC) of Myagdi were the selected areas for this case study. The rationale for their selection is that all trekkers visiting the area generally reach the above-mentioned destinations. Trekking within this circuit can be generally completed within seven-14 days.

Ghandruk VDC lies between 28° 12'57" N-28° 15' north latitude and 83° 59'42" - 84° 2' east longitude at a distance of a one-day walk from Birethanti. The altitude of the Ghandruk area varies from 1,000 masl at Birethanti to 2,050 masl. The western slope of the Annapurna range on which the village is situated faces east and extends towards the bank of the Modi River. The VDC area stretches north to the Annapurna range and to Dansing and Sikha VDCs in the west, while Modi *dovan* and Sandhi Khola lie in the south.

The mountain tops from Ghandruk towards Ghorepani and from Ghorepani to Ulleri are covered with dense forests. However, the once dense Ghorepani

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<sup>1</sup> There are three popular variations in trekking trails within the area: a) the circuit which takes 20 days and circumnavigates the range passing over the Thorung La at 5,415m; b) the sanctuary which takes 8-10 days to reach the Annapurna Base Camp, and c) the Jomsom-Pokhara trek which takes about 12 days for a round trip.

forest is no longer such. About a decade or more ago this forest was dense, and people feared to travel alone through it for fear of attack by wildlife. Large forest areas have been cleared, and lodges and tea houses have been built all along the Ghorepani ridge as well as along the trekking routes. Forest cover around Ulleri is also sparse.

The tree species found in the forests of the study area included *Alnus nepalensis*, *Daphniphyllum himalayasis*, *Schima wallichii*, *Camelia kissi*, and others. The forest resources are common public property in the area managed by the VDCs. A community forest management system has been initiated by ACAP, under its conservation policy, whereby local people are allowed to collect fuelwood and fodder from the forests only after permission is granted from the community forest management committees. The revenue collected from the permits is used by the Community Forest Management Committee. This system seems to function well in Ghandruk but not very effectively in Ghorepani and Ulleri villages.<sup>2</sup>