WILDERNESS IMAGE

Natural Sunlight on Kongde Ri

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In October 2019, the Wilderness Medical Society (WMS) hosted a fundraising event for the Wongchhu Sherpa Memorial Hospital (WSMH). I served as one of the WMS faculty. Our trek started by flying to Lukla (2800 m), known for its starting point into the Solukhumbu region. On our first day, we trekked to Phadking and stayed at the Sunrise Lodge. For a rest day, we stayed the second and third nights in Namche Bazaar, the gateway to the high Himalayas, located at 3440 m (11,286 ft). This village is popular, with lodgings, restaurants, shops, bakeries, and internet cafes. On the second morning, this photo was taken looking west from our room window at the Khumbu Lodge. I got up before sunrise each morning specifically seeking first sunlight on the nearby mountains. This mountain is called Kongde Ri (6000 m [20,000 ft]) and is 4 km west of Namche Bazaar. Initially there was no sunlight on

the mountain, but eventually the sun started to appear at the peak. Soon the natural sunlight shone through partial openings of the clouds, creating this spectacular illumination on the mountain face.

Our highest altitude trekking destination was the village of Tengboche for the fourth night, located at 3867 m (12,687 ft). The following morning, the WMS group took helicopters to the small community of Khamding (2300 m [7545 ft]), where the WSMH is located. The day after our arrival we participated in the WSMH Phase 1 opening ceremony. This event was attended by 400 community members, leaders, and Nepal health dignitaries. A highlight was the cultural music and dancing by the local villagers. It was a once-in-a-lifetime experience to witness the appreciation from the villagers for the WSMH and the natural beauty of Nepal.