



Earthbound Expeditions

Upper Mustang Motorbike Tour

11 days, from US\$2,190 per person

Duration

11 days

Grade

Moderate to strenuous

Max altitude

3,950 m

Start and end

Kathmandu

The bike

Royal Enfield Himalayan

Best season

Mar to Nov

Accommodation

Hotels and lodges

Meals

All meals on the trek

Group size

2 to 8 riders

Longest day

Up to 200 km a day

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Upper Mustang Motorbike Tour Overview

Ride a Royal Enfield up the deepest gorge in the world and onto the Tibetan plateau, to the walled city of Lo Manthang at 3,840 m.

Tour overview

A nine-hundred-kilometre ride from Kathmandu to the walled city of Lo Manthang and back, on a Royal Enfield Himalayan. Six of the days are on dirt roads. The route follows the Kali Gandaki through the deepest gorge in the world and then onto the Tibetan plateau, into a former kingdom that was closed to outsiders until 1992 and still requires a permit costing \$50 a day.

Riding to Mustang

The road to Lo Manthang was completed within the last fifteen years, and it has changed the region, which some people regret. It has also opened up a landscape that takes walkers eight days to reach and riders four. If you have two weeks and you ride, this is the best two weeks of riding in Nepal.

Lo Manthang

A walled city of about a thousand people at 3,840 m, built in the fourteenth century, with a royal palace, three major monasteries and murals older than anything comparable in Tibet. The kingdom of Lo had its own king until 2008. It is neither a ruin nor a museum; people live there and their children go to school there.

Who this trip is for

Riders with genuine off-road experience who want a challenging route rather than a tour. It is not suitable for riders who have only ridden on roads, and we will tell you so rather than accept an unsuitable booking. A non-riding partner is welcome to travel in the support jeep and sees the whole route.

Itinerary

Day	Route	Hours	Distance	Altitude
1	Arrive Kathmandu	–	–	1,400 m
2	Bike fitting and a valley shakedown ride	3	80 km	1,400 m
3	Kathmandu to Pokhara	6 to 7	200 km	820 m
4	Pokhara to Tatopani	5 to 6	115 km	1,190 m
5	Tatopani to Jomsom	5	75 km	2,720 m
6	Jomsom to Ghami, via Kagbeni	6	75 km	3,520 m
7	Ghami to Lo Manthang, over the Lo La	4	45 km	3,840 m
8	Lo Manthang and the Chhoser caves	2	30 km	3,840 m
9	Lo Manthang to Jomsom	7 to 8	120 km	2,720 m
10	Jomsom to Pokhara	8 to 9	185 km	820 m
11	Fly to Kathmandu, and out	25 min	–	1,400 m

Day 1

Arrive in Kathmandu

We meet you at the airport and take you to your hotel. The afternoon is free. In the evening we brief you on the route, the permits and the road conditions, so that you know what to expect before you start riding.

Altitude: 1,400 m On foot: None, arrival day Night: Hotel, Kathmandu Meals: Dinner

Day 2

Motorcycle fitting, permits and test ride

In the morning you go to the workshop, collect your motorcycle, adjust the levers and mirrors, and ride it around the area until you are comfortable with it. Your passport is with the Department of Immigration for the restricted area permit, so this day is required. In the afternoon we ride up to the valley rim and back, about eighty kilometres, so that the group can settle into riding together.

Altitude: 1,400 m On foot: 80 km riding Night: Hotel, Kathmandu Meals: Breakfast

Day 3

Ride from Kathmandu to Pokhara

You ride two hundred kilometres west on the Prithvi Highway, following the Trishuli river for most of the way. The road is tarmac and busy, and the day is an opportunity to get used to Nepali traffic with a support vehicle behind you. It takes six to seven hours with stops, and you reach the lake in the late afternoon.

Altitude: 820 m On foot: 200 km riding Night: Hotel by the lake, Pokhara Meals: Breakfast

Day 4

Ride from Pokhara to Tatopani

You ride north-west through Beni, where the tarmac ends, and up the Kali Gandaki into the gorge. The last sixty kilometres are gravel, broken tarmac and water flowing across the road. Tatopani means hot water, and there are hot pools beside the river where you can relax after your first full day on dirt roads.

Altitude: 1,190 m On foot: 115 km riding Night: Guesthouse, Tatopani Meals: Breakfast, dinner

Day 5

Ride from Tatopani to Jomsom

This is the best riding day of the lower section. The road climbs 1,500 m through the deepest gorge in the world, with Dhaulagiri (8,167 m) on your left and Annapurna I (8,091 m) on your right, and seven vertical kilometres between the peaks and the river. Pine forest gives way to scrub and then to bare ground. Lunch is in Marpha, and you reach Jomsom by mid-afternoon.

Altitude: 2,720 m On foot: 75 km riding Night: Lodge, Jomsom Meals: Breakfast, dinner

Day 6

Ride from Jomsom to Ghami via Kagbeni

It is half an hour north to Kagbeni, where the restricted area begins and the police check your permit carefully. Beyond it the landscape changes completely, with ochre and grey cliffs, no trees and the Kali Gandaki riverbed a kilometre wide. You ride through Chele, climb to the Taklam La and reach Ghami by late afternoon. The surface is sand and gravel all day, with a headwind after eleven.

Altitude: 3,520 m On foot: 75 km riding Night: Guesthouse, Ghami Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

Day 7

Ride from Ghami to Lo Manthang via Dhakmar

You ride past the longest mani wall in Mustang and below the red cliffs at Dhakmar, whose colour is explained by a local legend about a demon that your guide will tell you. You cross the Lo La at 3,950 m, from where you see the walled city on the plain below, and most riders stop here for the view. The distance is short but the riding is demanding.

Altitude: 3,840 m On foot: 45 km riding Night: Guesthouse, Lo Manthang Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

Day 8

Lo Manthang and the Chhoser caves

There is no long ride today. You spend the morning inside the city walls, visiting the royal palace and the three main gompas of Jhampa, Thubchen and Chodey, whose fifteenth-century murals are the main reason for Lo Manthang's importance. In the afternoon you take a short ride north to Chhoser, where a cliff face is full of caves that were inhabited for three thousand years. You climb up into them on ladders.

Altitude: 3,840 m On foot: 30 km riding Night: Guesthouse, Lo Manthang Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

Day 9

Ride from Lo Manthang to Jomsom

You ride through the whole restricted area in one day, a hundred and twenty kilometres of gravel that takes seven to eight hours. It is a long day, and for many riders the most enjoyable, because by now you know the motorcycle and the surface, and the route is downhill. In Jomsom there is a hot shower and a comfortable bed.

Altitude: 2,720 m On foot: 120 km riding Night: Lodge, Jomsom Meals: Breakfast, dinner

Day 10

Ride from Jomsom to Pokhara

You ride down the gorge and out, retracing days 5 and 4 in one long day. It takes eight to nine hours with stops, and the last two hours are on tarmac. You stay in a lakeside hotel with a good meal and a comfortable bed.

Altitude: 820 m On foot: 185 km riding Night: Hotel by the lake, Pokhara Meals: Breakfast, dinner

Day 11

Fly to Kathmandu and departure

The flight takes twenty-five minutes, with the Annapurnas visible from the left-hand windows, while the motorcycles return by truck. The afternoon in Kathmandu is free, and if your flight is the same evening we will book a day room for you.

Altitude: 1,400 m On foot: None, flight day Night: No overnight Meals: Breakfast

What's included

- A Royal Enfield Himalayan 411, serviced before you collect it, with fuel for the whole route
- A lead rider who knows the road, and a mechanic riding at the back with a tool roll and spare parts
- A support jeep carrying luggage, spare parts, fuel and any rider who needs a rest
- Upper Mustang restricted area permit and the ACAP permit
- Ten nights: two in Kathmandu, two in Pokhara, two at Jomsom, one at Tatopani, one at Ghami and two at Lo Manthang
- Breakfast every day, dinner on the riding days, and all meals inside the restricted area
- A licensed guide in the restricted area, and entry to the Lo Manthang gompas and the Chhoser caves
- The Pokhara to Kathmandu flight on day 11, with the motorcycles returning by truck
- Airport transfers, and a helmet, gloves and knee guards if you prefer not to bring your own

Not included

- International flights and the Nepal visa
- Travel insurance, which must cover motorcycling and travel to 4,000 m
- Lunch in Kathmandu and Pokhara, and drinks throughout
- Damage to the motorcycle, which is charged at cost, with the workshop's invoice shown to you
- Your own riding gear if you prefer it, and boots, which we ask you to bring
- Tips for the lead rider, the mechanic, the guide and the driver

Packing list

Bring your own boots and armoured jacket

We provide a helmet, gloves and knee guards if you need them. We cannot provide a properly armoured jacket or boots that cover your ankles in your size, and these are the two items that matter most in a low-speed fall on gravel. Please bring both. Everything else travels in the jeep, so you can pack for comfort rather than weight.

Helmet and eyewear

- A helmet, your own if you prefer; a peak is useful against the low sun in the gorge
- Goggles or a visor that gives clear vision when there is sand in the air
- A buff or neck tube, which you will wear over your face every afternoon
- Sunglasses for when you are off the motorcycle

Clothing

- A riding jacket with shoulder, elbow and back armour, which we cannot provide in your size
- Riding trousers or jeans with knee armour; we can provide knee guards if you prefer
- A warm mid layer for the mornings and for evenings in Lo Manthang
- A waterproof jacket, for the lower gorge rather than the plateau
- Everyday clothes for the towns, carried in the jeep

Gloves and footwear

- Riding boots with ankle protection. Trainers are not permitted on this route
- Two pairs of gloves: warm gloves for the morning and lighter gloves for the afternoon
- Walking shoes for Lo Manthang and the Chhoser caves, which involve climbing ladders

Health

- Sun cream, factor 30 or above. This is important at 3,800 m, where light reflects off the grey rock
- Lip balm, and eye drops for the sand
- Rehydration salts and your usual remedy for an upset stomach
- A small personal first aid kit for grazes, which are common
- Your own prescription medicines in their original packaging

Bags

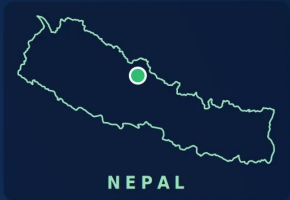
- One soft bag for the jeep. Hard suitcases do not travel well on the Mustang road
- A small tank bag or rucksack for what you need on the motorcycle
- A dry bag for electronics, because dust gets into everything
- Two litres of water capacity; the jeep carries more

Documents

- Passport valid for at least six months, and four passport photographs for the permit
- Your home motorcycle licence and an International Driving Permit with the motorcycle category endorsed
- Insurance that confirms in writing that it covers motorcycling above 125cc, and the assistance line number
- A card for the damage deposit, and cash in US dollars and Nepali rupees

Upper Mustang Motorbike Tour

11 days | Highest point 3,950 m | Moderate to Strenuous



Start: Kathmandu to Pokhara End: Fly to Kathmandu, and home

Altitude by day



Optional extras

Royal Enfield Himalayan 450

\$220, same length

The newer model, with more power, better suspension and a taller seat. Recommended if you are over six feet tall or have ridden adventure motorcycles extensively. The 411 is more forgiving and is the better choice if you are less experienced.

Muktinath, on the way back

\$110, 1 extra day

A day trip from Jomsom to Muktinath at 3,760 m, one of the most important pilgrimage sites for both Hindus and Buddhists. The road is good tarmac for most of the way, and the temple courtyard has a notable view of Dhaulagiri and Tukuche.

Two nights at Lo Manthang instead of one day

\$190, 1 extra day

A second full day in Lo Manthang, with time to visit the Luri cave monastery to the south-east and the Tingkhar valley to the north-west. Lo Manthang is the main destination of the trip, and one day is not enough to see it fully.

Ride back to Kathmandu instead of flying

no charge, 1 extra day

Two hundred kilometres of tarmac on day 11 instead of a twenty-five-minute flight, arriving in Kathmandu in the evening. It adds a day and replaces the flight, and about half our riders choose this option.

Non-riding partner in the support jeep

\$1,490, same length

The whole route in the jeep, with the same rooms, meals and permits. A passenger sees more of the scenery than the riders, who need to watch the road surface.

A rest day in Pokhara at the end

\$120, 1 extra day

Taken after day 10. A lakeside hotel, a boat trip, a massage and free time, which is welcome after eight days of riding.

Photos, videos and reviews of this trip: enepaltrekking.com/upper-mustang-motorbike-tour