



Earthbound Expeditions

Upper Mustang

20 days, from US\$2,387 per person

Duration

20 days

Start and end

Kathmandu

Accommodation

Guesthouses and camps

Getting there

Fly to Jomsom

Grade

Moderate

On the trail

4 to 6 hours a day

Meals

All meals on the trek

Max altitude

4,230 m

Best season

Mar to Nov

Group size

Up to 10

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Upper Mustang Overview

A trek to the walled city of Lo Manthang, a preserved area of traditional Tibetan culture with ochre cliffs, cave monasteries and a living Buddhist tradition.

Trek overview

A trek into a Tibetan kingdom within Nepal. Lo was an independent monarchy until 1795, and its king was recognised by Nepal until 2008. The language is a Tibetan dialect, the religion is Sakya Buddhism, and the walled capital of Lo Manthang has about a hundred and fifty houses inside four hundred metres of rammed-earth wall. It was completely closed to foreigners until 1992. Culturally it is the best-preserved area of traditional Tibetan culture that travellers can still visit, and it is much easier to reach than Tibet itself.

The landscape

The landscape is unlike anywhere else in Nepal. You walk north from Kagbeni, out of the green valleys and into the rain shadow of Annapurna and Dhaulagiri. Within a day the landscape is ochre, grey and deep red, eroded into fins and pillars, with irrigated barley fields forming patches of green and thousands of man-made caves cut high into the cliffs. It is often compared to Ladakh and to the American south-west.

Who this trip is for

Travellers who are interested in culture rather than altitude. The walking is moderate: no day is longer than about seven hours, there is nothing technical, and the high point at 4,230 m is a pass that you cross rather than a place where you sleep. Instead, the trek requires patience with wind, dust and long days in bright sun, and an interest in what you are seeing. Trekkers who want close views of high mountains will prefer the Annapurna Circuit.

Trekking in the monsoon

This trek can be walked during the monsoon. Upper Mustang lies behind the Himalaya in the driest rain shadow in Nepal, so June, July and August, when all our other treks are closed, are good months here. If you can only travel in the summer, this trek and Dolpo are the options, and we recommend this one.

Itinerary

Day	Route	Hours	Distance	Altitude
1	Arrive Kathmandu	–	–	1,400 m
2	Kathmandu sites, collect the Mustang permit	–	–	1,400 m
3	Drive or fly to Pokhara	7 hrs by road	–	822 m
4	Fly to Jomsom, walk to Kagbeni	3–4 hrs	–	2,804 m
5	Kagbeni to Chhusang	5–6 hrs	–	2,980 m
6	Chhusang to Samar, over the Dajori La	5 hrs	–	3,660 m
7	Samar to Gheling, over the Yamda La	6 hrs	–	3,860 m
8	Gheling to Dakmar, over the Nyi La	6 hrs	–	4,010 m
9	Dakmar to Lo Manthang, over the Chogo La	6–7 hrs	–	4,230 m

10	Lo Manthang, the walled city	3–5 hrs	–	3,840 m
11	Lo Manthang to Dhi, over the Dhi La	6 hrs	–	4,100 m
12	Dhi, caves and villages	–	–	3,730 m
13	Dhi to Tsarang, over the Tsarang La	6 hrs	–	3,870 m
14	Tsarang to Samar	6–7 hrs	–	3,660 m
15	Samar to Kagbeni	6 hrs	–	2,804 m
16	Kagbeni to Jomsom	3–4 hrs	–	2,743 m
17	Fly Jomsom to Pokhara	20 min	–	822 m
18	Drive to Kathmandu	6–8 hrs	–	1,400 m
19	Kathmandu, free day	–	–	1,400 m
20	Fly home	–	–	–

Day 1

Arrive in Kathmandu

We meet you at the airport and transfer you to your hotel, followed by a briefing with the team about the trek. Overnight in Kathmandu.

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

Day 2

Kathmandu sightseeing and permits

You visit Pashupatinath temple and Boudhanath Stupa, both UNESCO World Heritage Sites, and collect the official Mustang trekking permit from the Nepal Tourism Board. Overnight in Kathmandu.

Altitude: 1,400 m On foot: Easy walking, 2–3 hrs Night: Hotel, Kathmandu Meals: Breakfast

Day 3

Travel from Kathmandu to Pokhara

A seven-hour bus journey through the middle hills along the Trishuli river, with views of the Himalaya. A flight is available as an alternative. Overnight in Pokhara.

Altitude: 822 m On foot: None, 7 hr drive Night: Hotel, Pokhara Meals: Breakfast

Day 4

Fly to Jomsom (2,743 m) and trek to Kagbeni (2,804 m)

A twenty-minute flight to Jomsom and a light lunch are followed by the trek to Kagbeni, the starting point of the Upper Mustang region. Overnight in a guesthouse.

Altitude: 2,804 m On foot: 3–4 hrs Night: Guesthouse, Kagbeni Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 5

Trek to Chhusang (2,980 m)

The trail follows an ancient salt trading route and passes Tangbe village, with its apple orchards, before reaching Chhusang.

Altitude: 2,980 m On foot: 5–6 hrs Night: Guesthouse, Chhusang Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 6

Trek to Samar (3,660 m)

A five-hour walk along the Kali Gandaki river crosses the Dajori La pass (3,736 m) and passes through Chele village, with views of Nilgiri at Samar.

Altitude: 3,660 m On foot: 5 hrs Night: Guesthouse, Samar Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 7

Trek to Gheling (3,860 m)

A six-hour trek via the Yamdo La and Shyangmochen reaches Gheling. You visit the 600-year-old Gheling Gumpa of Mahakala and the Sakya monastery. Overnight in camp.

Altitude: 3,860 m On foot: 6 hrs Night: Tented camp, Gheling Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 8

Trek to Dakmar (4,010 m)

A six-hour walk crosses the Nyi La pass, with an optional climb to Lo Gekar for an earlier arrival in Lo Manthang. Overnight in camp.

Altitude: 4,010 m On foot: 6 hrs Night: Tented camp, Dakmar Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 9

Trek to Lo Manthang (3,840 m)

The trail crosses the Mui La (4,170 m) and the Chogo La (4,230 m) and passes the oldest gumpa in Mustang, believed to be 1,400 years old, reaching the capital of the former kingdom in the afternoon.

Altitude: 3,840 m On foot: 6–7 hrs Night: Guesthouse, Lo Manthang Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 10

Exploration day in Lo Manthang

You explore the nearby villages, their way of life and heritage, the ancient monasteries and possibly the royal palace. Overnight in camp.

Altitude: 3,840 m On foot: Easy walking, 3–5 hrs Night: Tented camp, Lo Manthang Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 11

Trek to Dhi (3,730 m)

You walk to the Dhi Pass (4,100 m) and then descend to Dhi, regarded as one of the finest villages in the Lo Manthang region. Overnight in camp.

Altitude: 3,730 m On foot: 6 hrs Night: Tented camp, Dhi Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 12

Exploration day in Dhi

You explore the nearby village, its way of life and heritage, and its ancient monasteries, with a possible visit to a palace. Overnight in camp.

Altitude: 3,730 m On foot: Easy walking, 2–3 hrs Night: Guesthouse, Dhi Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 13

Trek to Tsarang (3,620 m)

You explore the valley, visit the old Buddhist library and monastery of Lo Manthang, and cross the Tsarang La (3,870 m) to Ghami. You stay at a lodge run by relatives of the King.

Altitude: 3,620 m On foot: 6 hrs Night: Guesthouse, Tsarang Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 14

Trek to Samar (3,736 m)

The return journey begins, with a night in camp at a local apple orchard. There is an option to reach Jomsom the same day by jeep from Samar or Chele.

Altitude: 3,660 m On foot: 6–7 hrs Night: Tented camp, Samar Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 15

Trek to Kagbeni (2,804 m)

A six-hour walk along the Kali Gandaki river passes through Chhusang village to Kagbeni. Overnight in Kagbeni.

Altitude: 2,804 m On foot: 6 hrs Night: Guesthouse, Kagbeni Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 16

Trek to Jomsom (2,743 m)

A mostly flat and easy walk of three to four hours to Jomsom, with time to explore the town. Overnight in Jomsom.

Altitude: 2,743 m On foot: 3–4 hrs Night: Guesthouse, Jomsom Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 17

Fly to Pokhara (822 m)

An early morning flight with views of the Himalaya, or a 10 to 12-hour bus journey if the flight is cancelled. Overnight in Pokhara.

Altitude: 822 m On foot: None, flight day Night: Hotel, Pokhara Meals: Breakfast

Day 18

Drive back to Kathmandu (1,400 m)

A drive of six to eight hours with stops, past small streams, green hills and farmland. Overnight in Kathmandu.

Altitude: 1,400 m On foot: None, 6–8 hr drive Night: Hotel, Kathmandu Meals: Breakfast

Day 19

Free day in Kathmandu

You can visit any World Heritage Sites you have not yet seen, shop in Thamel or rest. In the evening there is a farewell dinner. Overnight in Kathmandu.

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

Day 20

Departure

Breakfast at the hotel, followed by a transfer to the airport 2 to 3 hours before your scheduled flight.

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

What's included

- Airport transfers and ground transport
- Licensed English-speaking guide
- Accommodation throughout the trip
- All permits and national park fees

- Meals as listed in the itinerary

Not included

- International flights
- Travel and rescue insurance
- Personal trekking equipment
- Tips and personal expenses
- Nepal entry visa (on arrival)

Packing list

Two weight limits, and the Jomsom flight is the stricter

Your porter carries a strict maximum of 20 kg, shared between two trekkers. The Pokhara to Jomsom flight allows 15 kg, luggage is weighed, and this itinerary uses the flight twice. We provide the duffel and the sleeping bag, and store the rest of your luggage free of charge in Kathmandu.

Headwear and eyewear

- Sun hat with a brim, and a warm hat that covers your ears
- Two buffs or neck gaiters
- Category 3 sunglasses. The sun is stronger than the temperature suggests
- Head torch and spare batteries
- Sunscreen SPF 50 and lip balm with sun protection

Clothing

- Three or four merino or synthetic base layers, no cotton
- Two mid layers; fleece is sufficient
- A light down or synthetic jacket for the evenings
- A waterproof jacket and trousers that pack small
- Two pairs of trekking trousers, one lined
- Underwear for four or five days, washed along the way

Hands and feet

- Light gloves, and a warmer pair for the mornings
- Trekking boots with ankle support, which must be broken in before the trek
- Four pairs of wool trekking socks
- Camp shoes or trainers for the evenings
- Gaiters, if you are travelling in winter or early spring

Bags

- Duffel bag for the porter, 20 kg maximum. We provide one
- Daypack, 30 to 35 litres, with a rain cover
- Dry bags or thick liners, as no bag stays waterproof for long on a Himalayan trail

Sleeping

- Sleeping bag rated to -10°C. We provide one
- Silk or cotton liner, for warmth and hygiene
- Earplugs, as teahouse walls are thin plywood

Health

- Personal first aid kit: blister plasters, tape, painkillers and rehydration salts
- Any regular medication, in its original packaging
- Water purification: tablets, a filter or a SteriPen
- Hand sanitiser and wet wipes
- Throat lozenges, as a dry cough at high altitude is very common

Documents and money

- Passport valid for at least six months, and two photocopies
- Four passport photographs for permits
- Travel insurance certificate showing trekking cover to your maximum altitude
- \$300 to \$450 in small notes. The last cash machine is at Jomsom, and it is not reliable

Wind and dust protection

- At least two buffs, and wraparound sunglasses rather than open-sided ones. The dust is fine, constant and abrasive
- Plenty of lip balm with sun protection. The combination of altitude, wind and dry air causes cracked lips within days
- A wide-brimmed hat that stays on in strong wind, or a cap and a hood
- Eye drops. Every guide who works in this valley carries them
- Three litres of water capacity rather than two, as the air here is very dry
- A proper torch rather than a phone, if you want to look inside the cliff dwellings

Route map

Upper Mustang

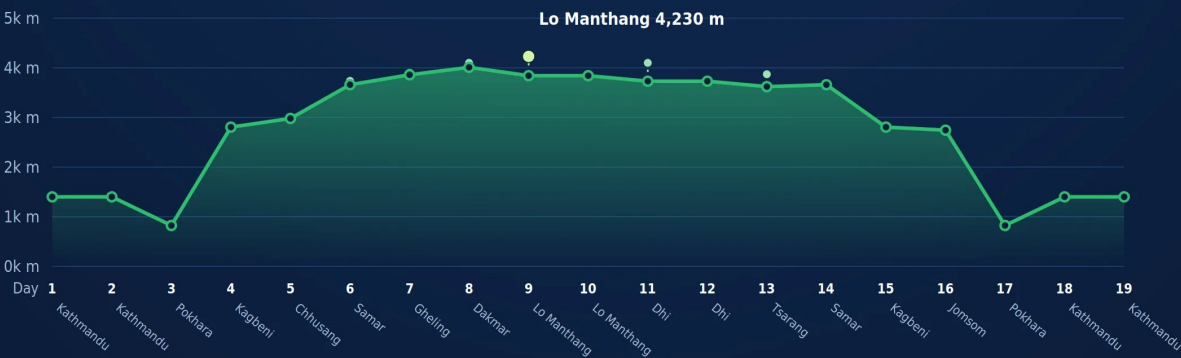
20 days | Highest point 4,230 m | Moderate



- Main trekking route
- Flight
- Drive
- Trek starts
- Overnight on day
- Highest points



Altitude by day



Optional extras

Tiji festival at Lo Manthang

+\$200 on the trek price, 3 of the itinerary

Three days of masked dances in the square at Lo Manthang, following the Tibetan lunar calendar, usually in May. In 2027 it takes place on 1 to 3 June. It is the best reason to plan the timing of a Mustang trek, and beds inside the walls are booked a year in advance.

Chhoser cave complex

\$40, uses the Lo Manthang day

The Jhong caves north of Lo Manthang: five storeys of rooms cut into a cliff and reached by ladders. Their builders and date are unknown. A half-day visit.

Damodar Kunda

from \$780, +5 days

A sacred lake at 4,890 m east of Lo Manthang, on a pilgrimage route rather than a trekking route. The trip involves camping, with no lodges, and is considerably higher and more demanding.

Jeep instead of walking the lower half

saves \$180, 4 fewer days

Drive from Jomsom to Ghami and walk only the upper half. This shortens the trek to about fourteen days, but it also removes the gradual approach, so we offer it only to travellers who are already acclimatised.

Muktinath and the Thorong La side

from \$190, +2 days

Kagbeni is a few hours from Muktinath, a major Hindu and Buddhist pilgrimage site at the end of the Annapurna Circuit. An easy and worthwhile addition at the end of the trek.

Single room where available

\$180

For the six hotel nights and the better guesthouses. The buildings inside the walls of Lo Manthang do not have single rooms.

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