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## Upper Mustang Trek

The word ‘Upper Mustang’ in Nepal conjures up remoteness & seclusion, a region lost amongst the mountains. This was an independent country until it was closely consolidated into Nepal just a few decades ago. The Kingdom of Mustang lies in the rain shadow formed by the Annapurna & Nilgiri Himalayas & thus gets very little rain which, fortunately, makes the area ideal for trekking even during monsoons while the other areas of Nepal remain unsuitable for trekking due to heavy monsoon rains. The trek to this mystique Kingdom, which requires a special permit that begins at the airstrip of Jomsom after flying up early from Pokhara. Mustang trek is rather easy as most of the route goes along the bank of Kali Gandaki River & eventually leads you to Lo Manthang, the capital of Mustang at 3,730m, which is the highest point on this trip. Truly a fascinating area; culturally, historically, picturesque villages, monasteries & a unique stark landscape with easy access & very few trekkers going to this area are the major highlights of the Mustang trek. This is among the very few adventure a trip to Nepal that can be done throughout the year. The region of Mustang lies north of the main Himalayan range in the area known as the trans-Himalaya. A vast high valley, arid, desolate & dry, it has a barren desert-like appearance similar to the Tibetan Plateau & is characterized by eroded canyons & colorful stratified rock formations. It was once an important route for crossing the Himalaya between Tibet & Nepal, many of the old salt caravans passed through Mustang. Known to its inhabitants as Lo Manthang was only opened to trekkers in March 1992 & you will be part of a small privileged minority to visit this remote outpost of Nepal. The capital of the Mustang district is actually Jomsom but the Tibetan influenced area north of Kagbeni is known as Upper Mustang. It is this area, which we will explore fully, discovering the wonders of the architecture, language, culture, & traditions, which are almost purely Tibetan in this once-upon-a-time mystical Kingdom.

Price:

Trip Start:

Trip Ends:

Duration: 20 Days

Grade: Moderate

Altitude: 3,820 meters

Destination:

Trip Style:

Transport:

Group Size:

Best Time: Autumn , Spring

## Itinerary

Day	Title	Description
01	<u>rrival in Kathmandu (1,350 m)</u>	After landing at the Tribhuvan International Airport, Adventure Ascent representative will be there to greet you and take you to the hotel. We will then check-in at the hotel, freshen up, and take a rest. Welcome dinner will be hosted in the evening. Overnight in Kathmandu.
02	<u>City tour in Kathmandu and trek preparation</u>	After an introduction with the city tour guide at the hotel, you will begin your tour to Pashupatinath temple, Swayambhunath stupa, and Bouddhanath stupa, which are all world heritage sites. Pashupatinath temple is one of the most important places of pilgrimage for all Hindus. Swayambhunath is also known as the Monkey Temple and Baudhanath Stupa is one of the largest stupas in the world. After the tour you will meet with your trekking guide, briefing about the trek and checking your trek gears will be done afterward. Overnight in Kathmandu.

03 [Fly to Pokhara](#)

Today we begin our trekking journey by taking a spectacular half hour flight to the mighty Himalayan Range to Pokhara. Upon arrival in Pokhara, we transfer into town and check in to the hotel for the night. You can utilize the rest of the day either by relaxing or exploring this charming lakeside town, with its abundance of things to do, regardless of whether you are in an adventurous or relaxed frame of mind: you can go for a leisurely boat ride on the lake; take a 2-hour return up the World Peace Pagoda its ‘incredible views to the Himalayas; visit one of the Tibetan refugee villages that dot the area, where Tibetan carpets and other handicrafts can be haggled over; hire a bike and cycle the lakeside. You can try your hand at tandem paraglide with a professional pilot! Of course, it is also lovely to just relax and take in the surroundings in one of the many lakeside cafés. Lunch and dinner are free to choose the food of your choice (we will give some good recommendations)

04 [Fly to Jomsom](#)  
[2720 m trek to Kagbeni](#)  
[2900 m](#)

We get up early this morning and head towards the airport for our spectacular mountain flight to the district headquarters of Mustang, Jomsom. Once on the ground at 2,720 meters, we can explore the town a bit and then trek up the Windy Kali Gandaki valley to Kagbeni, where we camp the night. Kagbeni, spectacularly situated atop a cliff overlooking the confluence of the Kali Gandaki and the Jhong Khola rivers, is the last village in Lower Mustang and guards the entrance into Upper Mustang, visible across the Kali Gandaki riverbed. It is an oasis of green fields in the midst of rocky, arid mountains, with Niligiri looming grandly behind it. This ancient, partially ruined citadel town provides us with a taste of scenes to come in Upper Mustang with its narrow alleyways and tunnels, irrigation canals, green fields of barley, and its massive, newly-restored brick-red Sayaka Gompa, 800 years old. We can also enjoy wandering past the ancient, crumbling, and 100-room King’s palace. At the police check post at the north end of the village where a sign reads ‘Restricted area, tourists please do not go beyond this point, we will complete our paperwork to enter Upper Mustang tomorrow.

05 Trek to Kagbeni to Tsaile Today we enter the restricted area of Upper Mustang! We will be on rough jeep trails for most of today and we first head high up to a ridge, where we have wonderful views of the patchwork fields at Kagbeni and all the way to Nilgiri down the valley. We continue along the eastern side of the Kali Gandaki, climbing high up onto a highland above the river-bed, all the time breathtaking views from all sides. We plunge down to a stream and have a short climb to the village of Tangbe (3030m), a labyrinth of narrow alleys and white-washed houses, apple orchards, and fields of buckwheat, barley, wheat. We continue up to the dusty valley, crossing the Kali Gandaki River on a narrow bridge just below a naturally-formed tunnel through which the river flows. We have a short but steep climb from the river up into Tsaile, a lively village several guesthouses and extensive wheat and barley fields and orchards.

06 Trek to Zhaite (3820 m) We continue our Upper Mustang Journey ascending steeply to the ridge above the town. The scenery is marvelous, the classic high altitude desert of the Tibetan plateau. We trek past the river valley's leading into the Kali Gandaki river until we reach the spectacular steep canyon-side trail leading towards the Dajori La(3600m). We then head into the small hamlet of Shyangmochen (3765 m) and have a short climb to the Shyangmochen La, where the trail interacts a wide-east valley, and we take the upper fork in the trail across the charming tea house at Zhaite (3820m), where we relax in the cozy house and garden until the supper. Note: If you are feeling the altitude this day, then it is advisable to take the right-hand fork and go down to sleep at Gelling.

07 Trek to Tsarang (3575 m) From here we head down along the road until we get to the walking and contour the hillside to the Ghemi La and then descend steeply down to the village of Ghemi (3570m), marveling at the red oxide and silver hues off the towering cliffs across the valley. This is yet another stunning village, with tiny secrets and high walled houses creating the 'fortified' feeling so characteristic of this region. Looking past the chortens we look up to our next pass, the Choya La (3870m), from which we have only a few hours to reach the fortified village of Tsarang. In this large village built on top of the Tsarang Khola canyon, we find stone walls separating the houses and forming tunnel-like paths, with willow trees and an irrigation ditch, its own hydro-electric plant, and quite a few guesthouses! The village is dominated by the huge, five-story Tsarang Dzong, a Tibetan-styled fortified palace built in 1378 and the large, ochre-hued Tsarang Gompa, said to have the greatest library in Lo.

08 Trek to Lo Manthang (3820 m) Leaving Tsarang on a trail leading down and across the Tsarang Khola, we ascend towards steep rocky trail on the opposite ridge and then follow the Thuling Khola on the new dirt road towards Lo. The Multi-hued canyons spread themselves impressively around us, and the landscape becomes very Tibetan in character; the high desert expanses north of the Himalaya. We start to see a few snow peaks ahead of us as we near the Lo La (La means pass), at 3960 meters. The pass leads through a partial tunnel of rock, and to the right of this are strung Tibetan prayer flags.

09 Lo Manthang – Visit the Chosar Valley Leaving Lo Manthang along a wide, canyon trail, past dry gullies, and an ancient, ruined fortress, we finally reach the cave village of Chosar, with the deep-red Gharphu Gompa incredibly built into the rock face. This Gompa is full of children! It is a heartwarming place to visit and learn about how young begin the life of a monk. Past the Gompa is an ancient cave-dwelling site called Jhong Cave, which you negotiate by ladders and through small tunnels. This fascinating site is reputed to be 2500 years old. In front of us, a range of small peaks marks the border with Tibet, and around us, gurgling streams and green meadows line our trail. On our return journey to Lo, we have the Himalayan range spread out in front of us, with great views of Annapurna, Tilicho, and Nilgiri.

10 Lo Manthang – Visit the Namgyal Gompa & the Thinggar Valley In the mornings of our days in Lo, it is recommended to visit or revisit the monasteries in the old city — morning light is the best time to see the artworks, as it gets much darker once the sun is high in the sky. You should take a torch with you in any case as it's dark inside these ancient buildings — please note that taking photos is not allowed in the monasteries (unless express permission has been given). In the afternoon we can get out and explore the wonderful land and culture around Lo. Hiring ponies are the best way to do this for the different experiences but if you prefer then you can just relax or wander around the intriguing streets of Lo.

11 Trek to Dhi

Sadly, we must leave magical Lo Manthang, but new adventures await us on our route to the south as we take the higher, less explored route on the eastern side of the Kali Gandaki to Mukt&igrave;nath and down to Jomsom. We head out from the gates of Lo and up to the Lo La pass where we have one last glimpse back down to this myth-like, walled city. We trek back down the main trail for a while until we reach the intersection to Di & Yara, and then we veer left (east) off the trail and head to Dh&igrave; along the eastern, winter route. We follow the trail along the western side of the Mustang Khola, contouring around tiers of high, arid slopes, a spectacular walk high up in the expansive, colorful canyons and gorges. Once over the Dhi La (4090m), the really interesting trail begins; heading straight down a narrow, sandy trail, we reach the intersection to Tsarang but continue straight down a steep, dramatic trail towards Dhi, eventually visible as a green swath far below us, with Yara and Ghara in the distance. Finally, we reach the windy campsite at Dhi. This is one of the best-preserved villages in the Lo Kingdom and as it is less visited by trekkers is it well worth the time to go for a walk and get a taste of old Mustang life.

12 Trek to Yara  
3610 m (trip  
to Luri  
Gompa)

From Dhi, we cross a bridge over the Kali Gandaki take the trail leading to Surkhang. Crossing a small, wooden bridge we drop down to the rocky, Saligram-filled riverbed. We follow small trails along the riverbed for about an hour, and then climb a bit to reach the wonderful, shady village of Yara, with a small Gompa and a few campsites. This is a great day through the dramatic gorges and canyons of the Puyang Khola, stopping at Yara for the night. Descending back to the Puyang Khola on a narrow trail, we head east past fantastic, sculpted canyons where we see the remains of a network of ancient caves, now eroded enough to be inaccessible. It takes us approximately another 2 hours to reach the fabled Luri Gompa of the Kagyupa sect and its complex of caves, some of which are accessible. There is a small Gompa in the lower section we may be able to visit the upper prayer-room and the famous &lsquo;Kabum Stupa&rsquo; painted with wonderful murals and caves. The Luri caves are filled with simply stunning Buddhist frescos and large, intricately painted chortens. Historians estimate them to be from the 13th or 14th century and linked to the Tashi Kumbum caves, one of a group of connected cave dwellings throughout this region. The style of painting is said to be similar to the Newar tangka style (of the Kathmandu Valley) and art historians speculate that the work was done by Nepali (possibly Newar) artisans, commissioned by Tibetans. Unfortunately, or fortunately, most have been rendered inaccessible due to the intense erosion in Mustang, so will remain hidden throughout history. On the way back, we take the high trail through the interesting village of Ghara, surrounded by terraced fields, before reaching Yara again.

13 Trek to Tange 3370 m After breakfast and filling up all our water bottles we head towards well and truly off the beaten path towards Tange. From Yara the trail follows the river for about 2 hours and then crosses a river that flows from Damodar Kunda, a sacred lake high above us to the east. There is no bridge across this river so we will need to get our sandals out and get our feet wet! After crossing the river the trail climbs up to a pass at 3850m where we find ourselves in a uninhabited, grassless, treeless and waterless hillside. After the pass the trail again drops to Tange village at an elevation of 3370m, entering through the distinctive tri-color chortens that are such a classic part of the Mustang landscape. Tange is a small village of around 30 houses; most of those being attached to each other. sandals out and get our feet wet! On the rooftops one can see piles of dry wood and branches; this is juniper and is an auspicious sign of prosperity in this society. There is a beautiful viewpoint in the village where you can look across a mass of chortens to the high mountains in Dolpo in the Wild West.

14 Trek to Tetang 3000 m We continue our journey as soon as we finish our breakfast as we have a long day ahead of us. We have a fine trail for about an hour and then stop to put our sandals on for a river crossing- should be nice and chilly! After crossing the river our trail climbs high up to reach the Cha Cho La (4200m) from where we can revel in an incredible view of many towering peaks including Dhaulagiri, Nilgiri, Tukche peak, Tilicho Peak and Thorang Peak. Strangely enough, this area is one, where we can see different varieties of flowers, and if we are lucky we will see blue sheep as well. From the pass we head down to the Narshying Khola and down this river to Tetang, cleverly built between 2 hills to avoid the strong wind that hits the entire Kali Gandaki Valley on most days. Tetang is the upper village of the Chuksang, which we visit on the first day entering Mustang from Kagbeni.

15 Trek to Muktinath 3750 m Taking the remote back route to Muktinath, we head up high again to cross the Gyu La (4075m) for amazing views down to Lower Mustang and the surrounding peaks. Thankfully it's pretty much downhill from here on in and we descend to Muktinath where we have incredible views of Nilgiri and Mt. Tilicho to the southeast, Dhaulagiri to the southwest, and Thorang peak and Yakawa Kang to the north. Muktinath is a holy place where both water and flames coming from the side of the mountain. It is one of the most important pilgrimage sites of Nepal for both Buddhists and Hindus. It is a great example of a sacred place shared in harmony by devotees of two religions. The traditional caretakers are the Muktinath Nuns of the lineage of Lama Wangyal. Every year, thousands of devotees from Nepal, India, and Tibet come on pilgrimage for purification and salvation and it is said that throughout history many Kings throughout Asia did the same.

16 Trek via Lupra Jomsom Hitting the trail this morning, we first climb to the little pass to the Lupra valley. We stop at the pass and enjoy the mesmerizing views of Mt. Dhaulagiri, Mt. Nilgiri, and the Upper Mustang valley. Then descending down, we'll end up in Lupra village 2790 where there is a Bonpo Monastery. While we start out by having to go up the mountain again for away in order to reach the trail, it is a great route that trekkers on the Annapurna circuit don't normally use, so we will be far away from any crowds and the jeep trail to Jharkot and Muktinath. Bonpo is an ancient pre-Buddhist religion not represented by many monasteries these days, so it is a rare and special chance to learn about this ancient animist religion while taking a stunning alternate route.

17 Fly to Pokhara, relax Finally, it's time to leave the magical Kingdom of Lo and bidding farewell to Mustang and head back to Kathmandu. We board an early morning Mountain flight from Jomsom and head back down to Pokhara, where you can enjoy the lovely lakeside town.

18 Fly back to Kathmandu Today you head out to the domestic airport for your flight back to Kathmandu, where we'll escort you to your hotel and help you with any advice for things to do today if you're wanting to get out and explore. We will organize a farewell dinner.

19 Extra day in Kathmandu This day will be an extra buffer day just in case the domestic flight gets canceled due to bad weather. We will have a farewell dinner in the evening.

20 Final departure Our adventure in Nepal ends today. An Adventure Ascent representative will drop you off at the Tribhuwan International Airport a few hours before the scheduled flight for final departure towards your sweet home.

## **Includes**

Airport Pick up and transfers to hotel.

All accommodation as BB in 4/5 star hotel. Depending on choices

Welcome & farewell dinner,

Experience professional guide for tour, trekking.

Full insurance, transportation & salary for staff during the trip.

Full board meals on trekking breakfast lunch & dinner.

Properly tea and coffee whatever hot drink available during the trekking.

Transportation from the starting and ending points of the trekking.

All domestic flight tickets

First Aid Kit for staff.

Oxygen gas in case (extra safety)

National park, conservation entry fee and TIM's card or trekking permit whatever needed.

All entrance fees during the sightseeing.

Sleeping bag.

Trekking stick.

Duffel bags (for trekking Luggage).

## **Excludes**

Lunch and dinner in Kathmandu

All hard drinks such as: Mineral water, whisky, rum, cola, fanta, etc.

Any extra cost offering from unfavorable circumstance such as weather bad.

Any extra cost offering from unfavorable circumstance such as weather bad.

Personal equipment.

Personal equipment.

Tips for trekking staff.