



**28**  
DAYS

# UPPER DOLPO

Circuit of Upper Dolpo and  
Lower Mustang Trek

## DATES

Best Months to travel  
September/October  
& April/May

**HIMALAYAN  
ASCENT** 



Starts from

**\$6250**

### **GRADE/FITNESS**

This is a camping based trek. Trekking and camping experience is advised; Dolpo is a remote region and minimal facilities will be available along the trail. Good fitness is required as most days will involve 4-8 hr of trekking carrying a ~8kg day pack. The trail is non technical but will cross 5 passes above 5000m.

### **Cost includes:**

Trekking permits, 4 nights Kathmandu hotel, trekking guides, transport in Nepal, extensive high altitude wilderness first aid kit, all meals outside Kathmandu, porters to carry personal/group equipment, down jacket, sleeping bag and expedition duffel.

### **Cost excludes:**

international flights to Kathmandu, meals in Kathmandu (USD 10-15 per meal), aerated and alcoholic beverages, personal items (e.g. phone calls, laundry), tips, travel insurance (incl. early departure, mountain rescue) and personal trekking gear.





## Overview

The Himalayas offer an endless variety of landscapes, cultures and people. The unbounded diversity means it is a destination you can visit over and over again. Upper Dolpo is difficult to reach and is very arid. Few people live in the harsh climate. They are farmers, traders and shepherds, often all in one because this is the only way to survive. We pass through a great variation of scenery between Dolpo and Mustang, rice and wheat fields, incredible mountains, high altitude desert. All in the rain shadow of the Himalaya, this variation makes this trip very interesting. Foreigners have 'discovered' Dolpo only recently. Even after the opening for tourism 17 years ago it remains relatively untouched. It is still a restricted area and high visa fees keep away many tourists, the costs are increased further by the lack of infrastructure.

Our Route starts at Juphal in Lower Dolpo. After walking some days in dense forests we will reach Ringmo. The village lies amidst lush fields near the beautiful Phoksundo lake. From there we continue northwards along the lake, after crossing the first high pass the scenery changes all of a sudden, and we are in Inner Dolpo. A horseshoe of high mountains encloses the area, endless barren hills and ranges dominate the landscape.

We then keep going north towards Nishal and Mushi Gaun, these village lies just 3km away from Tibetan border. Once we cross Musi La we will start our decent towards Chraka Bhot. Where we will find wide golden barley fields instead of desolate deserts. From here we attempt to reach Jomsom, possibly the most difficult part of the journey. Apart from two villages the area is uninhabited and wild, often trails are non-existent, bridges may be absent and campsites not easy to find.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Road less travelled trails into remote untouched Dolpo
- Stunning high pass crossings above 5000m
- Rain shadow high altitude desert
- Ancient nomadic Tibetan life culture





### **Day 1 Arrive in Kathmandu**

A Himalayan Ascent representative will collect you from the airport. It's a free day to recover from your international flight. Later in the evening, there will be a group briefing and welcome group dinner.

### **Day 2 In Kathmandu**

This is a free day for you to explore the crazy, yet wondrously beautiful city of Kathmandu. Home to 5 World Heritage sites, Kathmandu is a stunning landscape of handcrafted wooden palaces (durbar or palace squares of Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur) and glorious Buddhist stupas (Swayambu and Boudhanath). It's a city that stimulates all senses, so be prepared because Kathmandu is a city that demands attention.

### **Day 3 Fly Kathmandu to Nepalgunj**

Overnight in Nepalgunj, a large town just 6km from the Indian border on the Terai (plains) of western Nepal. Stay in a local hotel. Afternoon is free to ride a bicycle rickshaw to the India-Nepal border and to enjoy the hotel pool.

### **Day 4 Fly Nepalgunj to Juphal, trek Juphal (2440m) to Dunai (2150m) ~2.5 hrs**

An early start as we escape the heat of the plains, flying up forested steep valleys and into Juphal in the Himalayan foothills. It's just a short day's walk, descending through the hillside village of Juphal to the river valley (the Thuli Bheri Khola) and then following the river to Dunai, a large village where we have lunch and make camp for the night.

### **Day 5 Dunai (2150m) to Chhepka (2670m) ~6.5 hrs**

We follow the Thuli Bheri Khola on a gently undulating trail, turning up the Suli Khola (river) valley and entering Shey Phoksumdo national park mid-morning. An easy day with some short steep sections, camping along the river under a sheltered rock face.

### **Day 6 Chhepka (2670m) to Sumdowa (3150m) ~6 hrs**

Another day with some steep sections, following the Suli Khola through forest and crossing side rivers on solid log bridges. We camp just past Sumdowa, on a plateau high above the river and tree-line giving us views across the valley and our next day's trail.

### **Day 7 Sumdowa (3150m) to Ringmo (3620m) ~3 hrs**

A long uphill to 3850m giving great views of rocky karst and snowy peaks up two valley systems as we turn into the Phoksundo Khola valley. We cross the ridge high above a thundering waterfall and then descend to Ringmo through a forest of silverbirch and spruce. Our campsite is beside the beautiful turquoise lake Phoksundo and surrounded by snowy peaks.

### **Day 8 Rest day in Ringmo**

Plenty of time here to explore this ancient Bon culture village and surrounds, visit the local monastery just a short walk further around the lake or relax and enjoy the views with a good book.



### **Day 9 Ringmo (3620m) to Chunemba (3650m) ~5.5 hrs**

Our path skirts along the edge of lake Phoksundo, slowly climbing to 4040m before we descend through forest to the point where the upper Phoksundo Khola joins the lake. After lunch we say goodbye to the lake for an easy short walk heading up-river to a beautiful pine forest camp backed by a high snowy ridge. Explore the river banks or test your skills at bridge building to cross and reach untouched side valleys.

### **Day 10 Chunemba (3650m) to Lar Tsa (4180m) ~5.5 hrs**

A gentle rise along the Phoksundo Khola ends with a steep climb to 4250m before turning into the Tra Chu river valley, leaving the forest behind for alpine desert. It's just a short descent to our camp in a sunny alpine meadow along the Tra Chu river surrounded by steep rocky escarpments.

### **Day 11 Lar Tsa (4180m) to Mendok Ding (4610m) ~3 hrs**

A short day as we gain altitude and prepare for our first pass. We ascend on scree and alpine meadow to 4640m then follow a narrow path cut into the mountain-side, possibly crossing our first patches of snow. We camp below the pass in a valley paddock (Mendok Ding means 'flower valley') alongside the Tra Chu as it races steeply down the valley.

### **Day 12 Mendok Ding (4610m) to Shey (4300m) ~9 hrs**

We cross our first pass today, the 5130m Kang La, starting the day with a steep climb for magnificent views at the top over the Tra Chu valley behind us and the Shey valley ahead. We are now in wild desert mountain territory and a magnificent mountain-ringed lunch site is welcome after descending snowy scree slopes and to strengthen us for another climb back up to 5000m before the long descent to Shey.

On the way down, we see a 500 year old Buddhist monastery (Gompa) perched on a ledge in the cliff-face. Our campsite is on a grassy flat beside Shey village with the river (the Sephu Khola) a short climb below us.

### **Day 13 Rest day in Shey**

Today is a well deserved rest day. You can spend the day exploring this tiny ancient village and visit its 800 year old Buddhist monastery, Shey Gompa; kick a ball with the local kids; read and relax by the river; go marmot and blue sheep spotting; enjoy a bucket 'shower'; or if you're feeling energetic and we find the lama, trek back up the valley for a special experience visiting the cliff Gompa.

### **Day 14 Trek Shey (4300m) to Namgung (4400m) ~5.5 hrs**

We leave Shey and cross our second pass, the 5040m Gela La. It's a long steep climb but well worth magnificent views from the top all the way to the snow-covered mountains marking the border with Tibet. Continuing down a gentle slope, we camp by a stream just outside the village of Namgung and should arrive with plenty of time to visit the village and monastery, at 600 years, one of the three oldest in Dolpo.

### **Day 15 Namgung (4400m) to Nishal (3800m) ~9 hrs**

Climbing gradually, we pass above the village of Saldang and past the house of Tingle, who played the patriarch in the Eric Valli movie 'Himalaya'. There's a steep descent to our lunch spot and then on down to the Nang Kong Chu (river) which we follow to its junction with the Panzang Chu (river). The day's landscape is all rock, folded into impossible vertical waves and eroded scree and rocky towers, disappearing into distant snowy peaks. Rivers snake through wide river valleys, while tiny settlements are marked by Buddhist chortens, both formed from and blending into the landscape. The day finishes with a 200m climb to our camp in the village of Nishal.



**Day 16 Nishal (3800m) to Musi La base camp (4600m) ~ 6 hrs**

We head up a side valley, with some easy walking following the Musi Khola all morning, stopping for lunch in the village of Musigaon. After this a steep uphill, zig-zagging through low alpine flowers to camp at the top of the ridge at the base of the Musi La. A spectacular camp with 360 degree views and a great spot for a bit of snow leopard spotting (if you're super lucky you might even see one).

**Day 17 Musi La base camp (4600m) to Panzang Chu river camp (4000m) ~8.5 hrs**

Our third pass, climbing up to the 5000m Musi La then dropping steep down to another small river which we follow to the village of Shimengaon, notable for its clever irrigation system. Here we meet back up with the Panzang Chu, with easy walking covering the distance to our camp on a grassy area by the river (and a wash for the brave - the water is inviting but cold).

**Day 18 Panzang Chu river camp (4000m) to Charka Phedi (4400m) ~6.5 hrs**

It's just a short walk from camp to the quite sizable village of Tinjegaon where we stop to restock our kitchen. An easy day's walking with a bit of rock hopping, moving slowly and ascending gently up the wide river valley. We camp by the river on a wide grassy site surrounded by steep hills.

**Day 19 Charka Phedi (4400m) to Charka Bhot (4190m) ~9 hrs**

After following the wide riverbed all morning gradually increasing altitude, we climb our fourth pass, the 4950m Charka La. From the top it's a long gradual descent skirting along the side of a wide valley to the village of Charka Bhot with a few steep hidden gullies to climb down and up in the last stretch.

**Day 20 Rest day in Charka Bhot**

We take another rest day in Charka Bhot to recover from our last pass, 4 down and 1 to go! Charka is an interesting traditional village. You can explore its maze of narrow alleys and stone walls, and rammed earth houses with colourful timberwork.

**Day 21 Charka Bhot (4190m) to Norbulung (4750m) ~7 hrs**

Our walk continues to follow the river, now the Charka Tulsu Khola, with some steep sections, rock hopping and a climb for lunch to a high meadow where the river cuts through a narrow gorge. After lunch we tread carefully along a narrow trail high above the river that eventually opens up to a wide valley, making camp at the base of the next day's pass.

**Day 22 Norbulung (4750m) to Rose garden camp (3700m) ~10 hrs**

A long and hard day, starting with our last pass, the 5120m Niwar La. The descent starts gently on alpine meadow, soon leading into a steep long canyon where we climb down a rock fall and then on a narrow path high above a long steep drop to the river. The canyon opens out to a wide valley as we continue following our narrow path past numerous side valleys until we reach a final steep descent on loose rock to our camp between wild rose bushes just below the village of Sangdok on the Jarche Khola.





### **Day 23 Rose garden camp (3700m) to Dharadhong (3200m) ~8.5 hrs**

Another long day on more well-worn paths, ascending and descending from ridge to ridge, reaching a top of 4400m and ending with a steep descent to our camp in this large town which we see from a distance standing out as a green oasis in the mountain desert.

### **Day 24 Dharadhong (3200m) to Jomson (2720m) ~3 hrs**

We leave Dharadong, climbing for the last time to 3450m and getting our first views of the stunning mass of the Annapurna range right in front of us. It's a 750m drop to Jomsom below where we arrive in time for lunch and the formalities of leaving Shey Phoksumdo national park. After a very welcome shower we can explore the town, catch up on the news or just kick back and enjoy some of the luxuries of civilisation.

### **Day 25 Fly Jomsom to Pokhara**

Our early morning flight out gives us spectacular close-up views of the Annapurnas before winding through valleys to the large lake-side town of Pokhara. We arrive with plenty of time to catch up on some handicraft shopping, grab a massage to sooth 20 days of walking muscles and finish up with a sunset paddle on the lake.

### **Day 26 Fly Pokhara to Kathmandu**

After a lazy breakfast, we take a short 30 min flight to Kathmandu. The afternoon is free to finish souvenir shopping or just to relax.

### **Day 27 In Kathmandu**

Our last day to catch in some sight seeing, shop, relax and prepare for departure.

### **Day 28 Depart Kathmandu**

We bid Kathmandu and Nepal farewell....until next time.

Note: daily walking hours include a lunch break





# WHY HIMALAYAN ASCENT?

Himalayan Ascent is owned and managed by local Nepalese guides Sumit Joshi and Lakpa Sherpa. With more than 40 years of guiding experience between the pair across the Himalayas in Nepal, Tibet, India, Pakistan and Bhutan, Himalayan Ascent know the Himalayas, its challenges, people and mountains.

As avid rock climbers with a passion for the mountains, Sumit and Lakpa have led numerous expeditions to Everest, K2, Cho Oyu and Ama Dablam. Raised in the outdoor wonderland of the Solukhumbu, the Himalayan Ascent difference is a guiding and support team of personnel who are intimately familiar with the Himalayas, who actively enjoy the outdoors and love sharing the experience with others. With a growing reputation for providing affordable, international standard complete guiding service for challenging treks in remote areas or demanding 8000m expeditions, Himalayan Ascent has the experience to deliver the type of service that's desired by international outdoor adventurers.



## OTHER INFORMATION

### SLEEP AND FOOD

Whilst on the trail, you'll be sleeping in serviced campsites, twin-sharing 3-man tents. Our porters and mules will carry your duffel, sleeping gear and tent. A camp cook and kitchen staff will keep your energy levels up with tasty continental meals (European, Nepali). We promise you won't go hungry!

In urban centres, accommodation will be in hotels (Nepalgunj - standard local hotel, Pokhara - 3-star, Kathmandu - 3/4 star). You can choose from a wide range of restaurants from traditional dhal bhat bhattis to delicious pizzas and Western favourites. Note that meals in Kathmandu and Pokhara are not included in the cost. Plan for USD 10-15 per meal on these days.

### VISAS

Tourist visas can be obtained directly at Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu. Bring at least 2 passport sized photos, a copy of your passport and USD 40 cash for a 30-day tourist visa. You can also prearrange a visa from your nearest Nepalese consulate.

### HEALTH TIPS

This trek includes 5 passes over 5000m with a maximum altitude of 5360m at Kang La. As such, you may experience some affects of high altitude.

Nepal is a developing country so some travel vaccines are advised. Obtain these at least 2-6 months before arrival to ensure good immunity. Typhoid, Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B and Japanese Encephalitis are recommended. Ensure that you are up to date with routine immunisation (MMR, DPT). We will only be spending a short amount of time in the south of Nepal (Nepalgunj) so malaria tablets are not needed.

Your guide will carry a well stocked first aid kit along the trail. It will contain commonly used medication including ibuprofen and general antibiotics. It is easy to stay healthy and avoid bacterial/parasitic infections by eating from hygienic venues, and avoiding salad (raw) and unpeeled fruits.

### DOLPO CULTURE

Remote and removed from the general miasmas of mixed cultures in Kathmandu, the people of Dolpo (Dolpali) live relatively untouched as they did hundreds of years ago. Primarily of Tibetan descent, Dolpalis continue to practice bone culture and live nomadic lives in a harsh environment. This trek offers an insight into a culture rarely experienced by Nepalis or non-Nepalis alike.

### WHAT'S A TYPICAL DAY ON THE TRAIL?

You will be woken up around 6am by a staff member with a bowl of warm water for your morning ablutions and a cup of tea. Breakfast will served around 7am in the dining tent. The aim will be to leave camp and hit the trail by 8am.

On the trail, you'll carry a small day pack (20-40L, ~8kg ) with your personal items, water, warm clothing and wet weather gear. There will be a break for a picnic lunch about 12pm for 1 hr. Then it's back on the trail until 3pm to 5pm depending on the trekking demands of the day.

You are then free to relax waiting for dinner ~7pm. Generally trekkers head to sleep early ~8-9pm to prepare for the next day's adventure.





## CLIMATE

Dolpo lies in the rain shadow region protected from June-October monsoon rains. Therefore, expect little rain and pleasant temperatures for walking. Above 4000m, nights can drop between -5oC to 0oC. Otherwise, the day should be between 10oC-20oC.

## PACKING LIST

- 20-40L day pack
- Trekking clothes (1 shorts, 2 t-shirts, 1 pants, etc)
- 1 set windproof/waterproof shells
- 1 fleece (mid-heavy weight)
- 1 mid layer shirt or fleece
- 1 fleece pants
- 2 sets thermal underwear (top/bottom)
- 1 pair of insulating gloves
- 5 pairs of trekking socks
- 2 pairs of liner socks
- 1 pair of gaiters (high calve)
- 1 pair of waterproof trekking boots
- 1 pair of sandals (e.g. crocs)
- 1 set of trekking poles
- 1 warm hat (wool/fleece)
- 1 balaclava
- 2 sets of buff/scarf
- 1 sunglasses (category 3)
- 1 sunhat
- 2 One litre water bottles (e.g. Nalgene)
- 1 head torch (plus batteries)
- Personal toiletries (including sunscreen, hand sanitiser, body wipes, etc)
- Passport, travel insurance (including mountain rescue), copies of passport
- Entertainment (e.g. books, notebook, camera, cards)
- Sleeping bag/mat, down jacket, tents and duffel will be provided by Himalayan Ascent



# **HIMALAYAN ASCENT**



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