

Upper Mustang

17 Days Moderate Trek

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The Upper Mustang Trek is a journey into the last forbidden kingdom of Nepal – a stark, windswept land of ochre cliffs, ancient cave dwellings, and medieval walled cities. This remote region, once a separate kingdom, only opened to foreigners in 1992 and still retains strong Tibetan influences in its culture, language, and religion. The trek winds through deep gorges, barren plateaus, and desolate ridges, leading to Lo Manthang, the capital of the former Mustang Kingdom.

Unlike the lush greenery of the Annapurna or Everest regions, Upper Mustang offers a dramatic desert-like landscape, vibrant chortens (Buddhist shrines), and ancient monasteries that speak of a deeply spiritual past. It is more than a trek, it is a cultural exploration into one of the last untouched frontiers of the Himalayas.

About the Everest Region

Located in the rain shadow of the Annapurna and Dhaulagiri ranges, Upper Mustang offers year-round trekking possibilities, even during the monsoon. The region is part of the Annapurna Conservation Area and requires a special permit due to its proximity to the Tibetan border and its protected status.

The inhabitants are mainly ethnic Loba people who maintain a lifestyle and culture that has changed little over centuries.

TRIP OVERVIEW

Duration: 17 Days

Difficulty: Moderate (due to arid altitude and long trekking days)

Max Elevation: Lo La Pass (3,950m)

Best Season: Spring (April–June), Autumn (September–November), and also good during the monsoon (June–August)

TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

- Explore Lo Manthang, the ancient walled capital of Upper Mustang.
- Witness unique Tibetan Buddhist culture, rituals, and traditional mud-brick homes.
- Visit ancient caves, Buddhist shrines, and centuries-old monasteries carved into cliff walls.
- Dramatic desert landscapes, deep canyons, and colourful rock formations.
- Cross through dramatic passes like Lo La (3,950m) with sweeping views of Nilgiri and Annapurna.
- Walk the trans-Himalayan salt trade route once used by Tibetan traders.

OUTLINE ITINERARY

Day 1–3: Arrive in Kathmandu, sightseeing, and travel to Pokhara.

Day 4–6: Fly to Jomsom; trek to Kagbeni, then enter Upper Mustang and reach Chele.

Day 7–9: Trek through Samar, Ghiling, and Tsarang.

Day 10–11: Reach Lo Manthang and explore ancient city and monasteries.

Day 12–14: Return via Dhakmar and Syangbochen to Chhusang.

Day 15–17: Return to Jomsom, fly to Pokhara, and back to Kathmandu.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Physical Challenge: Long trekking days at altitude but with moderate elevation gains.

Accommodation: Teahouses, some basic and rustic in remote villages.

Food: Tibetan-style meals – thukpa, tsampa, and momo, as well as Nepali staple Dal Bhaat.

Weather: Dry and windy; cold nights above 3,000m

Detailed Itinerary

DAY 1: ARRIVAL IN KATHMANDU (1,400M)

Activities: Arrive in Kathmandu, transfer to hotel, rest.

Accommodation: Overnight in Hotel

DAY 2: KATHMANDU SIGHTSEEING AND TREK PREPARATION

Activities: Explore Pashupatinath, Boudhanath, or Bhaktapur or other UNESCO World Heritage sites. Obtain special permits for Mustang.

Accommodation: Overnight in Hotel

DAY 3: FLY OR DRIVE TO POKHARA (820M)

Activities: 25-minute flight or scenic 6–7-hour drive to Pokhara, a picturesque lakeside town.

Accommodation: Overnight in Hotel

DAY 4: FLY TO JOMSOM (2,720M) & TREK TO KAGBENI (2,810M) – 3/4 HRS

Activities: Short flight to Jomsom, where the hinds howl after 12 PM; trek to Kagbeni, the gateway to Upper Mustang.

Accommodation: Teahouse in Kagbeni

DAY 5: KAGBENI TO CHELE – 5/6 HRS

Activities: Enter restricted area of Upper Mustang; trek through Tangbe and Chhusang to reach Chele.

Accommodation: Teahouse in Chele

DAY 6: CHELE TO SAMAR – 4/5 HRS

Activities: Ascend through barren hills, cross Dajori La (3,735m) and Taklam La (3,624m) to arrive in Samar.

Accommodation: Teahouse in Samar

DAY 7: SAMAR TO GHILING – 5/6 HRS

Activities: Trek past Chungsi Cave Monastery; cross small passes and descend into Ghiling.

Accommodation: Teahouse in Ghiling

DAY 8: GHILING TO TSARANG– 6/7 HRS

Activities: Continue across arid highlands and vast open valleys to reach Tsarang, a large village with a red gompa – offering a contrast that is unmissable.

Accommodation: Teahouse in Tsarang

DAY 9: TSARANG TO LO MANTHANG (3,840M) – 4/5 HRS

Activities: Cross Lo La pass (3,950m) and descend into the fabled walled city of Lo Manthang.

Accommodation: Teahouse in Lo Manthang

DAY 10: EXPLORATION DAY IN LO MANTHANG

Activities: Visit Thubchen and Jampa monasteries, King's Palace, and optional hike to Chhoser Cave dwellings or Garphu Monastery.

Accommodation: Teahouse in Lo Manthang

DAY 11: LO MANTHANG TO DRAKMAR (3,810M) – 6/7 HRS

Activities: Return via a different route; visit Ghar Gompa, one of the oldest monasteries in Mustang.

Accommodation: Teahouse in Drakmar

DAY 12: DRAKMAR TO SYANGBOCHEN (3,800M) – 5/6 HRS

Activities: Cross several ridges and descend gradually into Syangbochen.

Accommodation: Teahouse in Syangbochen

DAY 13: SYANGBOCHEN TO CHHUSANG (2,980M) – 6/7 HRS

Activities: Final day in Upper Mustang region; descend into Chhusang village.

Accommodation: Teahouse in Chhusang

DAY 14: CHHUSANG TO JOMSOM VIA KAGBENI – 6 HRS

Activities: Exit the restricted area checkpoint in Kagbeni and return to Jomsom.

Accommodation: Teahouse in Jomsom

DAY 15: FLY TO POKHARA

Activities: Short scenic flight; rest in Pokhara for idyllic activities such as sitting by the lake, or enjoying a boat ride.

Accommodation: Overnight in Hotel

DAY 16: FLY TO KATHMANDU

Activities: Return flight to Kathmandu, free day to explore the city.

Accommodation: Overnight in Hotel

DAY 17: DEPARTURE

Activities: Airport drop for international departure.

