

Earthbound Expeditions

Upper Mustang

20 days, from US$2,387 per person

Duration **20 days**	Grade **Moderate**	Max altitude **4,230 m**
Start and end **Kathmandu**	On the trail **4 to 6 hours a day**	Best season **Mar to Nov**
Accommodation **Guesthouses and camps**	Meals **All meals on the trek**	Group size **Up to 10**
Getting there **Fly to Jomsom**		

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.

Key highlights of the Upper Mustang

- The walled capital of Lo Manthang
- Ancient cave monasteries and gompas
- Trans-Himalayan desert scenery
- Restricted area permit included

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 Gompa 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 gompa 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)

Permits and other costs

Permit	Fee	Issued by
Upper Mustang restricted area permit. Introduced by cabinet decision on 18 November 2025, replacing the flat fee of $500 for ten days plus $50 for each extra day. The daily cost is the same for three days or fifteen, so short Mustang itineraries are practical.	$50 per person per day	Department of Immigration, Kathmandu, through an agency
Annapurna Conservation Area permit (ACAP). Upper Mustang lies within the Annapurna Conservation Area, so this permit is also required. It is checked at Jomsom.	NPR 3,000, about $22	Kathmandu or Pokhara, before you start
Licensed guide, and a registered agency. A restricted area permit is issued only through an agency, so it has never been legal to walk this route independently. Since 22 March 2026 the permit no longer requires two foreign trekkers, so a solo traveller with a guide can now book.	Inside the trek price	-
TIMS card. The restricted area permit covers this. Some agencies still issue one for the Jomsom and Kagbeni section out of habit.	Not required north of Kagbeni	-

Other cost	Amount	Note
Upper Mustang restricted area permit	$500	$50 a day for the 10 days north of Kagbeni. Shorter trips now cost proportionately less

ACAP permit	$22	NPR 3,000. Mustang lies within the Annapurna Conservation Area
Jomsom flights, both ways	$240–320	Morning flights only, as the wind closes the airstrip by ten
Kathmandu to Pokhara, both ways	$120–180	Or $20 each way on the tourist bus
Teahouse bed	$8–20 a night	All supplies in Lo arrive by jeep over a 4,000 m pass, so prices are higher than in the Annapurna region
Food on the trail	$28–38 a day	Three meals and tea. Less choice than in the Annapurna region, with more potato dishes
Licensed guide	$30–40 a day	Including their accommodation and meals. A guide who can explain the religious art is particularly valuable here
Porter, one for every two trekkers	$22–28 a day	Including their accommodation and meals
Kathmandu and Pokhara hotels	$35–70 a night	Three-star, six nights in total
Travel insurance to 5,000 m	$100–160	Must cover helicopter rescue
Monastery and museum entry in Lo	$30–50	Several gompas charge separate entry fees, and all are worth visiting
Tips for the guide and porter	$180–280	Per trekker, paid at the end. This is a long trip

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

Altitude profile

Day	Place	Sleep at	Highest point
1	Kathmandu	1,400 m	-
2	Kathmandu	1,400 m	-
3	Pokhara	822 m	-
4	Kagbeni	2,804 m	2,804 m
5	Chhusang	2,980 m	-
6	Samar	3,660 m	3,736 m
7	Gheling	3,860 m	3,900 m
8	Dakmar	4,010 m	4,100 m
9	Lo Manthang	3,840 m	4,230 m
10	Lo Manthang	3,840 m	-
11	Dhi	3,730 m	4,100 m
12	Dhi	3,730 m	-
13	Tsarang	3,620 m	3,870 m
14	Samar	3,660 m	-
15	Kagbeni	2,804 m	-
16	Jomsom	2,743 m	-
17	Pokhara	822 m	-
18	Kathmandu	1,400 m	-
19	Kathmandu	1,400 m	-

Flights to Pokhara and Jomsom

The Pokhara flight is straightforward. The twenty-minute flight to Jomsom operates only until mid-morning every day of the year, and this itinerary uses it twice.

The Jomsom flight and the wind

The flight from Pokhara to Jomsom takes twenty minutes and departs at first light. The Kali Gandaki is the deepest gorge in the world, and it channels a strong up-valley wind that starts around nine or ten in the morning, after which the airstrip closes for the day. This itinerary uses the flight twice, in each direction, and it is the only unreliable part of the transport on this trip.

If the flight is cancelled

There is a road. The drive from Pokhara to Jomsom by jeep takes eight to nine hours on a rough track, and you arrive the same day. For this reason the trek does not include a spare day for weather: a cancelled Jomsom flight costs you a morning rather than several days, unlike flights to Lukla.

The road to the Chinese border

A jeep track now runs from Jomsom to Lo Manthang and on to the Korala pass on the Chinese border, where an immigration office became fully operational in 2025. This has two consequences. Trekkers who lose days can be driven forward or back from almost any point, which provides a useful safety margin. A jeep tour of Upper Mustang is also now a practical alternative to trekking, taking seven or eight days rather than twenty.

Why the trip takes 20 days

The twenty days include thirteen days of walking, two flying days, two driving days, a permit day in Kathmandu and a spare day at the end. The permit day often surprises people: the Upper Mustang restricted area permit is issued in Kathmandu against your passport, so a working day is needed between your arrival in Nepal and the start of the trek. We schedule this on day 2.

Accommodation

Teahouse accommodation

The teahouses in Mustang are flat-roofed village houses built of mud brick and stone around a courtyard, with a family living downstairs and a few twin rooms for guests. The dining room, with its stove, is where everyone gathers once the afternoon wind rises. Rooms are simple, with foam mattresses and thin walls, and bathrooms are mostly shared. Bring a sleeping bag.

Along the route

Kagbeni and Jomsom, at either end, have private bathrooms in the better lodges. Chhusang, Gheling, Dakmar and Dhi are simple or basic. In Lo Manthang you stay inside or beside the walls, and two of the lodges have private bathrooms and a hot shower for a fee. At Tsarang the lodge is in a house belonging to the royal family. Charging uses solar power in some villages, so it may be limited.

Where	Nights	Type	Room	Bathroom
Kathmandu	4	Three-star hotel	Twin or double	Private, hot water
Pokhara	2	Three-star hotel, lakeside	Twin or double	Private, hot water
Kagbeni	2	Teahouse	Twin	Private in the better lodges
Chhusang	1	Teahouse, simple	Twin	Shared
Samar	2	Teahouse	Twin	Shared
Gheling	1	Teahouse, simple	Twin	Shared
Dakmar	1	Teahouse, basic	Twin	Shared
Lo Manthang	2	Teahouse inside or beside the walls	Twin	Private in two of the lodges, hot shower for a fee
Dhi	2	Teahouse, basic	Twin	Shared

Tsarang	1	Teahouse, in a house belonging to the royal family	Twin	Shared
Jomsom	1	Teahouse	Twin	Private, hot water

Heating
One stove in the dining room, lit at dusk. Bedrooms are not heated at any altitude.

Hot shower
Available up to Lo Manthang for $4 to $8, heated by gas or solar power. None above Dakmar.

Charging
$3 to $5 per device. Lo Manthang and Tsarang have mains power from a micro-hydro scheme; the smaller villages use solar power, which is limited.

Wifi
Reasonable at Jomsom, Kagbeni and Lo Manthang. Unavailable or very limited elsewhere.

Phone signal
NTC covers most of the valley and the villages. Because of the road, this is one of the better-connected remote treks in Nepal.

Water
Boiled water costs $1 to $3 a litre. Mustang is dry, and you will drink more than you expect, so carry three litres of capacity rather than two.

Sleeping bag
Provided, rated to -10°C. Returned to us at the end of the trek.

Bedding
A mattress, a pillow and a blanket are provided. Use your sleeping bag on top of these.

Meals

Meal	Time	What it is like
Breakfast	7:00–7:30	Porridge, Tibetan bread, eggs, chapati, pancakes, tea or coffee
Lunch	12:00–13:00	Dal bhat, fried rice, noodles, soup, momo and a variety of potato dishes
Dinner	18:30–19:30	Dal bhat, pasta, thukpa, curry and rice, soup to start
Tea	on arrival	Black, milk, lemon, ginger or masala tea. Included at every stop.

Diet	How we manage it
Vegetarian	Easy throughout. Dal bhat is vegetarian and is the best dish on the menu.
Vegan	Manageable with notice. Tell us when you book so your guide can order in advance.
Gluten free	Rice, dal, potatoes and eggs are safe. Bread, noodles and momo are not, and cross-contamination in a teahouse kitchen cannot be ruled out.
Halal	There are no certified halal kitchens on the route. Vegetarian food is the practical option.
Meat	Available, but we advise against eating meat above Kagbeni, as it is carried up unrefrigerated for two days.

A typical day

Time	What happens
5:45	Tea, and a bowl of warm water for washing
6:15	Pack, and leave your duffel outside your door
6:45	Breakfast, earlier than on any other trek we run, to avoid the wind
7:30	Start walking, to cross the pass before the wind rises
11:30	Lunch, usually in the village on the far side of the day's pass
12:30	One to three more hours of walking, ideally with the wind behind you
14:30	Arrive, have tea, wash and rest if you need to
16:00	Visit the gompa, the caves or the village with your guide. This is the main purpose of the trek
18:30	Dinner, and a briefing from your guide on the next day
20:30	Bed. The nights are dark, cold and very quiet

Difficulty and preparation

Difficulty 3 of 5

Moderate and sustained walking. The wind is more demanding than the terrain.

- Four to six hours a day for thirteen days, with two rest days at Lo Manthang and Dhi.
- A pass on most days between 3,700 m and 4,230 m, followed by a descent to a village. The route goes up and down repeatedly rather than climbing steadily.
- No technical sections, no snow in the trekking seasons and no exposure.
- The high point is 4,230 m at the Chogo La, which you cross rather than sleep at. Altitude is a minor factor on this trek.
- The wind is a significant factor. From late morning it blows strongly up the valley every day, and walking into it with dust in your eyes is what most trekkers find hardest.

Getting ready

8 weeks before: Build endurance
Three cardio sessions a week, 40 minutes each, at a pace at which you can hold a conversation. This trek requires endurance rather than intensity, and a good aerobic base is the main preparation.

6 weeks before: Add ascent
Replace one session with a one-hour hill walk with 300 m of ascent. You cross a pass on most days, so repeated moderate climbs are the best preparation.

5 weeks before: Train in your boots with a pack
From now on, do every walk in the boots you will trek in, carrying a daypack loaded to 5 kg. Thirteen consecutive days is a long time to discover a problem with your boots, and Mustang's dust makes blisters worse.

4 weeks before: Walk on consecutive days
Take a long walk at the weekend, followed by two to three hours the next morning on tired legs. There are only two rest days in thirteen, so walking on consecutive days is the most realistic preparation.

3 weeks before: Walk in the wind
This is the most Mustang-specific preparation on this list. Choose a windy day and walk into the wind for two hours. Being able to keep going in a headwind for an afternoon is more useful here than extra hill training.

1 week before: Rest
Halve the amount of training but keep the frequency. Do not break in any new equipment. Get plenty of sleep.

Altitude and safety

Upper Mustang is technically a high-altitude trek, but it is not an altitude trek in the same way as the Everest or Manaslu treks. You sleep between 3,600 m and 4,000 m for about a week and cross passes up to 4,230 m, and the approach through Pokhara, Jomsom and Kagbeni gives you three nights of gradual ascent first. Acute mountain sickness does occur here, but it is usually mild, and it is rare above Kagbeni for trekkers who follow the itinerary rather than arriving by jeep. Most serious cases in Mustang affect people who drive from Jomsom to Lo Manthang in one day.

What to watch for

- A headache that does not ease with water and paracetamol
- Nausea, or loss of appetite when you would expect to be hungry
- Dizziness, or feeling drunk without having had alcohol
- Breathlessness at rest rather than while climbing
- Poor sleep at Dakmar or Lo Manthang, waking short of breath
- Loss of coordination, which means you must descend immediately

How to prevent it

- Walk rather than drive. The road to Lo Manthang is the greatest altitude risk in Mustang, and this itinerary does not use it.
- Drink four litres of water a day rather than three. Mustang is dry, windy and bright, and you become dehydrated faster than the temperature suggests.
- Use the days at Lo Manthang and Dhi as rest days rather than for extra walking.

- Avoid alcohol until Kagbeni on the return. The local barley beer can wait.
- Eat, even when the dust reduces your appetite. Loss of appetite is often the first sign.
- Cover up. Sunburn and windburn at 3,800 m can make you feel much worse than the altitude.

What we do

1. Daily health checks
From Samar onwards, your guide carries a pulse oximeter and records your oxygen saturation and pulse each evening above 3,500 m, and again on any morning when you feel unwell. The readings are written down, so any decline over several days is clear.

2. Mild symptoms
This is one of the few treks where a rest day can easily be added almost anywhere, as the villages are close together and the days are short. A day at Gheling or Tsarang costs very little and resolves most cases.

3. Serious symptoms
Descent is the only effective treatment, and in Mustang it can be done by vehicle. The jeep track runs the length of the valley, so a serious case can reach Jomsom at 2,743 m in hours rather than days. This makes Mustang a good high-altitude trek for cautious travellers.

4. Helicopter evacuation
Helicopters can reach Lo Manthang, Tsarang and Jomsom, and Pokhara is about forty minutes away. Your insurance covers this: the cost is $3,000 to $5,000, and the helicopter will not fly without a payment guarantee.

5. Hospital at Jomsom
The district hospital at Jomsom is small but staffed, and it is at the end of a road that reaches every village on this trek. This is a better safety position than on the Manaslu trek and similar to the Annapurna region.

Weather by month

This is the only trek we offer that can be walked in every month. Pay attention to the wind column as well as the temperature, as the wind is what most trekkers find difficult here.

Month	Day at Lo Manthang	Night at Lo Manthang	Night at Dakmar	Conditions	Note
January	5°C	-12°C	-18°C	Hard	Very cold, and most residents of Lo move south for the winter. Many guesthouses are closed and the villages are partly empty.
February	7°C	-10°C	-16°C	Hard	Similar to January, becoming warmer late in the month. Residents begin returning up the valley towards the end of the month.
March	12°C	-5°C	-11°C	Good	The season begins. Cold nights, clear air, and a strong wind by midday.
April	16°C	-1°C	-7°C	Best	Excellent. Warm days, cold nights, and barley is being planted around the villages.

May	19°C	3°C	-4°C	Best	The warmest good month, and the Tiji festival usually takes place in it. Very windy in the afternoons.
June	21°C	6°C	-2°C	Good	The monsoon reaches the rest of Nepal but not Mustang. Hot at midday and still dry.
July	21°C	7°C	-1°C	Good	If you are free in July, this is the best place in Nepal to trek. There is the occasional afternoon shower and nothing more.
August	21°C	7°C	-1°C	Good	Similar to July. The one exception is the Pokhara to Jomsom road, which the monsoon damages at lower altitudes.
September	19°C	3°C	-4°C	Best	Clear, warm and settled, while treks elsewhere in Nepal are only just reopening.
October	15°C	-2°C	-8°C	Best	The most popular month. Clear, cold at night and relatively busy for Mustang.
November	11°C	-6°C	-12°C	Good	Cold and excellent, and becoming quieter quickly. The last comfortable month before residents move south for the winter.
December	7°C	-10°C	-16°C	Hard	Very cold and very quiet. Possible with the right equipment, but many lodges are closing.

Averages from station data for Mustang, which sits in the driest rain shadow in Nepal. The wind rather than the temperature is what people find hard here.

Guides and porters

Your guide

A government-licensed guide leads every departure, and one porter carries for every two trekkers. On this trek we send a guide who speaks Loke or Tibetan and can explain the paintings on the gompa walls, because religious art is a large part of what you have come to see, and without explanation much of its meaning is lost. From 11 trekkers, a second guide joins the group.

Porters and luggage

Each porter carries twenty kilos, which is your duffel and one other. This is below the 25 kg permitted by the trekking association and well below the loads you will see on the trail. If your bag is overweight, the load is split rather than added to. Porters carry duffels, not daypacks: your water, camera, jacket and snacks for the day stay with you.

Staff pay and insurance

The salary, insurance, food and accommodation of every guide and porter are included in the price you pay, not collected during the trek. Every guide and porter is insured for altitude and for helicopter evacuation on the same terms we require of you. Porters in this industry have often carried excessive loads, in unsuitable footwear, for very low pay, and including fair pay in the package price is how we avoid contributing to this.

Tipping

Tipping is customary but not compulsory, and it never replaces wages. For this trip, $180 to $280 per traveller for the whole team is usual, given together on the last evening rather than daily. Your guide will not ask for tips and would prefer that you do not tip in front of the group.

Responsible travel

Drinking water

A traveller who drinks bottled water uses around 40 plastic bottles on this trip, all of which are carried in and must be carried out again. Boiled water is available at every lodge for one or two dollars a litre, and we recommend buying that instead. Bring purification as a backup rather than as your main supply.

Waste

We carry out everything we bring in that is not food. Upper Mustang has a waste problem that it did not create and cannot solve alone, and we make sure we do not add to it.

Supporting local communities

The lodges are family businesses in the villages you pass through, and the guides and porters live in this district. The restricted area fee goes to the Department of Immigration and the conservation permit fee to the National Trust for Nature Conservation. The monastery entry fees you pay in Lo go directly to the gompas and fund the ongoing restoration of the fifteenth-century murals in Thubchen and Jampa. Almost all of what you pay is spent within a few days' walk of the trail, which is a good reason to book with a Nepali operator rather than a foreign operator that subcontracts the trek to a local company.

Local customs

Ask before photographing anyone. When a mule train passes, stand on the uphill side of the trail, away from the drop, and let it go by. Monasteries welcome visitors, but they are places of worship: remove your hat and shoes, and if a service is taking place, wait until it ends.

Booking and payment

How to book

Email us or send a WhatsApp message with your approximate dates. Mustang is a restricted area, so we need scans of your passport well before you fly. The permit is issued in Kathmandu against your passport on a working day, which is why day 2 of this itinerary is a permit day rather than a sightseeing day.

Deposit

A deposit of thirty per cent secures your dates, and the balance is paid on arrival in Kathmandu, in cash or by card. At the same time we ask for a copy of your passport, your insurance certificate and any dietary or medical information.

Payment

By bank transfer, or by card through a secure link. Card payments carry the bank's fee of about 4 per cent, which we show you before you pay. The balance in Kathmandu can be paid in US dollars, pounds, euros or Nepali rupees.

Cancellation

If you cancel more than 30 days before departure, your deposit can be transferred to any other date or trip we run, with no time limit. Within 30 days the deposit is retained, because the permits, flights and crew have been booked. If we cancel for any reason other than weather, we refund everything you have paid.

Private and group departures

Private and group departures cost the same for a group of five or more. A private departure runs on your dates at your pace and can be arranged for one person; a group departure runs on the dates in the table above. Most travellers book privately, at no extra cost.

Late bookings

Three weeks' notice is comfortable, and ten days is possible outside the Tiji festival. For a Tiji departure we need six months' notice, because there are very few guesthouses inside the walls of Lo Manthang and they are booked a year in advance.

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.

Frequently asked questions

Answers to the 22 questions travellers ask us most often. If your question is not here, contact us and we will answer it.

Is this a trek or a cultural tour?

Both, with the emphasis on culture. You walk for thirteen days, none of them longer than about seven hours, towards a fifteenth-century walled town where the language is Tibetan and the monastery murals are being restored by conservators from New York. If your main interest is close views of high mountains, this is not the right trek. If you want to see the best-preserved area of traditional Tibetan culture that can be reached without a Chinese visa, this is the only trek that offers it.

How difficult is the trek?

Moderate and sustained. On most days you cross a pass between 3,700 m and 4,230 m and then descend to a village, so the route goes up and down repeatedly rather than climbing steadily. There is no technical section, no snow in season and no exposure. The main difficulty is the wind, which blows strongly up the valley every afternoon.

Do I need previous trekking experience?

It is helpful but not required. The physical demands are closer to Annapurna Base Camp than to the Everest or Manaslu treks, and the altitude profile is gentle, because the approach through Pokhara, Jomsom and Kagbeni gives you three nights of gradual ascent. It is a suitable second trek, and a manageable first trek for someone who walks regularly.

Can I go alone?

Yes, you can book as a single traveller. On 22 March 2026 the Department of Immigration removed the rule that a restricted area permit required two foreign trekkers. You will still walk with a licensed guide, because a restricted area permit is only issued through an agency. A private departure for one person costs $3,090.

How much does the Upper Mustang permit cost?

Fifty US dollars per person per day. On 18 November 2025 the cabinet replaced the previous flat fee of $500 for ten days, plus $50 for each additional day, with a daily rate. For this twenty-day itinerary, which spends about ten days north of Kagbeni, the cost is roughly the same $500. For shorter trips it is now much cheaper, which is why short Mustang itineraries are now available. Many operator websites still quote the old fee.

What other permits do I need?

You need an Annapurna Conservation Area permit at NPR 3,000, because Mustang lies within the conservation area. You also need a licensed guide from a registered agency, which is compulsory with a restricted area permit. Everything is included in the trek price and we arrange it.

Why is day 2 a permit day?

A restricted area permit is issued in Kathmandu against your passport on a working day and cannot be bought in advance. We include this day in the itinerary for that reason, and it is why arriving on a Friday for a Saturday start is not possible.

Why does this trek cost more than Annapurna Base Camp?

Mainly because of the permit: five hundred dollars of restricted area fees compared with twenty-two dollars for the ACAP permit. There are also two extra flights, twenty days instead of fourteen, and higher guesthouse prices, because all supplies arrive by jeep over a 4,000 m pass.

How much cash should I take?

Three hundred to four hundred and fifty dollars in Nepali rupees, in small notes. There is a cash machine at Jomsom, but it is not reliable. Several monasteries in Lo charge their own entry fee in cash, and these fees help fund the mural restoration, so it is useful to carry enough notes.

Can I trek in Mustang during the monsoon?

Yes. It is the only trek we offer where this is the case. Upper Mustang lies behind Annapurna and Dhaulagiri in the driest rain shadow in Nepal, so June, July and August are dry and warm here while most treks in the country are closed. The one exception is the Pokhara to Jomsom road, which the monsoon damages at lower altitudes, so we rely more on the flight in those months.

When is the Tiji festival?

The festival follows the Tibetan lunar calendar, so its dates change each year. It is usually in May, and in 2027 it takes place on 1 to 3 June. It consists of three days of masked dances in the square at Lo Manthang and is the best reason to plan the timing of a Mustang trek. There are a limited number of beds inside the city walls, and they are booked a year in advance, so please plan early.

What is winter like?

Very cold, very quiet and partly empty. Most residents of Lo move south for the winter and many guesthouses close, so the villages you have come to see are partly closed. We do run the trek in winter, and we will tell you clearly what will and will not be open.

How strong is the wind?

The wind is the main feature of the region, and most people underestimate it. From late morning a strong, dusty up-valley wind blows almost every day. For this reason our itinerary starts walking at half past seven and aims to cross each day's pass before the wind rises. Bring two buffs and wraparound sunglasses.

What is the accommodation like?

Simple guesthouses, which have improved in recent years but are not comparable to the Annapurna teahouses. Kagbeni, Lo Manthang and Tsarang are comfortable; Dakmar and Dhi are basic. Hot water is available for a fee as far as Lo Manthang, and the two largest villages have mains electricity from a micro-hydro scheme.

Is there phone signal?

Coverage is better than many people expect. NTC covers most of the valley and the main villages, because the network was extended along with the road. Wifi is reasonable at Jomsom, Kagbeni and Lo Manthang and very limited elsewhere.

Is it still worth walking now that there is a road?

Yes, and this is an important question for Mustang in 2026. A jeep track runs from Jomsom to Lo Manthang and on to the Chinese border at Korala. It has changed the valley, but it has not spoiled it. The trekking route follows the old trails and passes rather than the road for most of the way, the villages are unchanged, and the walking days give you time to see the caves and gompas along the route. If you have only a week, the jeep tour is a good option and we offer it. If you have three weeks, we recommend walking.

What is there to see in Lo Manthang?

About a hundred and fifty houses inside a four-hundred-metre wall of rammed earth, three major gompas, the former royal palace, and the fifteenth-century murals in Thubchen and Jampa, which attract art historians. Two days is the right amount of time; one day is not enough.

Will I get altitude sickness?

It is less likely here than on most treks at this altitude, because the approach is gradual and the overnight altitudes stay between about 3,600 and 4,000 m rather than increasing. Most cases of altitude sickness in Mustang affect people who drive from Jomsom to Lo Manthang in a single day.

What happens if I get ill?

You descend and, unusually for a Himalayan trek, you can do so by vehicle. The jeep track reaches every village on this route, so a serious case can reach Jomsom at 2,743 m in hours rather than days, and there is a district hospital there. Helicopters can reach Lo Manthang, and Pokhara is forty minutes away by air. Insurance covering helicopter rescue to 5,000 m is a condition of booking.

How far ahead should I book?

Three weeks is comfortable and ten days is possible, because the permit, rather than accommodation, is the limiting factor. The exception is the Tiji festival, for which we ask for six months' notice and prefer a year.

Can I combine it with the Annapurna Circuit?

Yes. The Annapurna Circuit finishes at Jomsom and this trek starts there, so you can walk one directly after the other in about a month. It is an excellent combination, and we arrange it regularly.

Is there a shorter version?

Yes, and it is now good value. Since the permit changed to a daily rate, a nine-day itinerary combining jeep travel and walking costs about $1,690, including roughly $250 of permit fees instead of $500. It is the most significant practical change in Mustang travel in twenty years.

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