

## Forbidden Mustang & Tilicho Lake | 24 Days



Forbidden Mustang, formerly the Kingdom of Lo, has lured intrepid travellers to its remote realm for centuries, but only the most adventurous made it to this mountainous and inaccessible bastion of Tibetan Buddhism. Tucked away along the upper Kali Gandaki River, the deepest river gorge in the world, it is a remote, ethnically Tibetan region of medieval villages, ancient cave hermitages, Tibetan Buddhist monasteries, arid, high desert, wild rock formations and soaring snow peaks. People have inhabited this harsh region for thousands of years, some of the early dwellers living or meditating in ancient caves, rich in Buddhist art, which pepper the bizarre rock formations. Later, Mustang became part of the Yarlung Dynasty of central Tibet, and in the fifteenth century, the independent Kingdom of Lo was founded, ruling such other remote regions as Dolpo. It was only incorporated into the Kingdom of Nepal in 1951. Soon afterwards, renegade Khampa freedom fighters battling the Chinese used Mustang as a base of operations, and it was closed to all Westerners until 1992. This mythical land north of the 8000-meter peaks Annapurna and Dhaulagiri still requires a special restricted area permit to enter, and numbers are limited, thus helping to preserve its unique heritage.

Tilicho Lake at 5,200 m collects the glacial melt of the entire northern slopes of Annapurna and Thorong Peak. It is claimed to be the highest located lake in the world and an extension from Muktinath to Tilicho Lake is an amazing route for people looking for an alternative to the well-trodden route via Thorung La on the Annapurna Circuit. This route is more demanding and requires at least couple of night camping. There are no teahouses or lodges past the Tilicho Base Camp lodge some kilometres east of the lake and the next village of Thini Gaon in the Kali Gandaki valley.

Most groups spend two nights between these places. There are two passes leading to Thini Gaon and Jomsom; Mesokanto La and Tilicho North pass known also as Tilicho "Tourist pass". These routes via Tilicho Lake are more often closed by snow than the higher Thorong La. With self-sufficient food & camping gears for at least 3 nights camping, and crossing any one of the two Passes is possible. You have to be prepared for bad weather, including freezing temperatures and snow storms even in the dry season.

Mustang

Tucked away along the upper Kali Gandaki River, the deepest river gorge in the world, Mustang is a remote and starkly beautiful region of medieval villages, ancient cave hermitages, Tibetan Buddhist monasteries, arid, high desert, wild rock formations and soaring snow peaks. People have inhabited this harsh region for thousands of years, some of the early dwellers living or meditating in ancient caves, rich in Buddhist art, which pepper the bizarre rock formations. Mustang became part of the Yarlung Dynasty of central Tibet, later falling under the jurisdiction of the Malla Kingdom of Nepal (Jumla) and in the fifteenth century, the independent Kingdom of Lo was founded, ruling such other remote regions as Dolpo. It was only incorporated into the Kingdom of Nepal in 1951. Soon afterwards, renegade Khampa freedom fighters battling the Chinese used Mustang as a base of operations, and it was closed to all Westerners until 1992. This mythical land north of the 8000-meter peaks Annapurna and Dhaulagiri still requires a special restricted area permit to enter, and numbers are limited, thus helping to preserve its unique heritage. We will have a 10-day permit, allowing us to trek to the remote eastern and western valleys, old salt trade routes with Tibet, above Lo Monthang. We also trek along the eastern, winter route from Lo to rarely visited Dhi village, Yara and Luri Gompa, as well as taking the less-trek route to Tetang, also east of the Mustang Khola, to arrive at the sacred village of Muktinath via many picturesque villages in the lower reaches of Mustang.

### Trip Highlights

- 'Old Tibet' & Medieval culture, colorful Mustang villages
- Fortresses, palaces, cave hermitages & gompas
- Incredible sculpted valleys & wild rock formations

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- Classic scenery of the high Tibetan plateau in trans Himalayan Region of Nepal
- The Kali Gandaki gorge & explore fossil-rich riverbed
- A Visit the King's palace of Lo
- Grandiose landscape
- Extension to Magical Tilicho Lake at 5,200 m over Thorong La Pass

### Detailed Itinerary

#### Day 1: Arrive in Kathmandu

Welcome to Nepal! Upon arrival in Kathmandu a *travel-to-nature Asia* guide/representative will be at the airport to greet and take us to our hotel. Please look out for your name-card once you exit out of arrival area.

**Accommodation:** Manaslu Hotel

#### Day 2: Spiritual Mysteries of Kathmandu Valley

##### Pashupatinath - Boudhanath – Bhaktapur

Weather permitting, we start our day with a scenic Everest Mountain flight (optional) over the Himalaya to view Mt. Everest and many eastern ranges of Himalayas. Or begin our morning, visiting Hindu Pashupatinath (UNESCO Heritage site) and its sacred temple complex on the banks of the holy Bagmati river. Here, monkeys run up and down the steps of the burning ghats, and trident-bearing saddhus draped in burnt-orange and saffron sit serenely meditating - when they're not posing for photos-for-rupees.

Next, the striking Buddha eyes of Boudhanath Stupa (UNESCO Heritage site) watch over a lively and colorful Tibetan community and attract pilgrims from all over the Himalayan Buddhist realm. In the midst of traditional gompas, and hung with long strings of multi-colored prayer flags, Boudhanath attracts Sherpas, Tibetans and tourists alike for daily circumambulations (koras) of the stupa.

For lunch we will drive to Bhaktapur city. Bhaktapur (UNESCO Heritage site) is a home of medieval art and architecture and it is like a living museum. As we walk along its cobblestone streets, notice the many ornately carved windows for which the town is famous. Over dinner we go over gear for trek & wildlife Safari and get to know your trekking guide. Overnight stay in Kathmandu.

**Accommodation:** Hotel Manaslu

**Meal:** Breakfast



#### Day 3: Fly Kathmandu - Pokhara (900 m)

Transfer to domestic terminal and fly to Pokhara. During our half an hour flight the view of the mighty Himalayan range, including the Annapurna, Ganesh, Mt. Nilgiri, and Manaslu will be a life time experience. Upon arrival, our local representative will meet us and transfer to our hotel.

Pokhara, centre of the Western Development Region and traditional trading centre in the shadow of the Annapurna Massif. We have the afternoon to wander to the lake, do some shopping, or sit and relax in a café with a book. We'll head for Moondance Cafe or Boomerang restaurant for dinner and drinks in the evening, great spots.

**Accommodation:** Hotel Mount Kailash

**Meal:** Breakfast

#### Day 4: Fly Pokhara - Jomsom (2,720 m) | Trek to Kagbeni (2,810 m | 4.5 hrs)

Up early for our spectacular mountain flight to the district headquarters of Mustang, Jomsom. Once on the ground, at 2720 meters, we are greeted by the sound of jingling horse bells as the Mustangi people pass by with their pony caravans. After sorting out gear and loading our porters, we trek up the windy Kali Gandaki valley to Kagbeni. The wide trail along a sandy, saligram-filled riverbed provides views of the surrounding peaks of Dhaulagiri, Tukucho and Nilgiri, and to the south the entire Annapurna Massif. 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

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is an oasis of green, patchwork fields in the midst of rocky, arid mountains. 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 gumpa. 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. We'll stay at the New Annapurnas Lodge or similar for the night, with time to explore the village in the afternoon. Overnight stay in Kagbeni.

**Accommodation:** Lodge/Guesthouse

**Meal:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



### Day 5: Trek Kagbeni - Chele (2,920 m | 6 hrs)

After breakfast, we enter the restricted area of Upper Mustang with our staff and horse caravan in tow. We head up a trail along the east bank of the Kali Gandaki, climbing over several ridges as we head north to the fortress-like village of Tangwe (3,100 m), a labyrinth of narrow alleys amongst white-washed houses, fields of buckwheat, barley, wheat and apple orchards. This village is unique in Mustang with its moat-like drainage system. Tangwe is split into two sections, the ruins of its ancient dzong (fortress) in the upper section. There is a salt mine two hours from Tangwe; the salt trade was of utmost importance to Mustang in years past. Nilgiri, which dominates the southern skyline at Kagbeni, continues to loom massively at the foot of the valley. Beyond Tangwe we reach Chhuksang (3,050 m) village and a naturally-formed tunnel through which the Kali Gandaki flows. The trek now leaves the Kali Gandaki valley and climbs steeply up a rocky gully to Chele (3,030 m), a village of extensive wheat and barley fields where we set up camp for the night. Overnight stay in Chele.

**Accommodation:** Lodge/Guesthouse

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



### Day 6: Trek Chele - Syangmochen (3,800 m | 6 hrs )

After a good breakfast, we hit the trail. The scenery is awesome, the classic high altitude desert of the Tibetan high plateau. Our trail ascends and descends as we trek past the river valleys leading into the Kali Gandaki River. We trek along the side of a spectacular, steep canyon to the Dzong La pass (3,550 m) marked by rock cairns. We then descend gradually to a group of chortens on a ridge, eventually arriving at the village of Samar (3,700 m), with its lovely poplar grove, formerly a staging post for Khampa raids into Tibet. The Annapurnas, although still dominated by Nilgiri, are visible far to the south. The route continues over a chorten-topped ridge and through the small village of Bhona, and then climbs sharply up to the Baga La, down to the few-house village of Yemdo, back up to the 4000-meter Yemdo Pass and back down to Syangmochen village for overnight.

**Accommodation:** Lodge/Guesthouse

**Meal:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

### Day 7: Trek Syangmochen - Ghami (3,510 m | 6 hrs)

Right after our breakfast we have 4,000-meter pass, the Syangmochen La, where the trail intersects a wide east-west valley, before the final descent to the lovely village of Geling.

There is an impressive, red gumpa in the village, and traditional Mustangi houses surrounded by barley fields to explore before heading further to Ghami.



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From Geling, the trail climbs gently to a beautiful pass, the Nyi La (4050m), and descends to a bridge crossing the Tangmar Chu (river). From here, the trail looks across the valley to ochre, blue and steel-grey cliffs, and leads us past perhaps the longest and most spectacular mani (prayer) wall in Nepal. After crossing the minor Ghemi La (3,520 m) we arrive the village of Ghami (3,690 m) with a small gumpa, and built along the steep edges of the cliff as many villages in Mustang are. Overnight stay in Ghami.

**Accommodation:** Lodge/Guesthouse

**Meal:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

### Day 8: Trek Ghami - Ghar Gumba (3,920 m | 2.5 hrs) - Lo Manthang (3,840 m | 4 hrs)

We continue along the western route, stopping occasionally for passing herds of sheep and goats. Once past the village of Dhakmar, which is dominated by a dramatic, red canyon wall with many ancient cave dwellings, we cross the Mu-i La, drop back down and the climb yet again to high meadows by a meandering, rocky stream. Finally, Lo Ghekar, 'Pure Virtue of Joy'. in Ghar Gumpa. The gumpa is reputed to be one of the oldest gompas in Nepal, and is connected by legend to Samye Gumpa in Tibet, as well as to the ubiquitous Guru Rimpoche. The name means 'house gumpa' in Nepali after the style of architecture, and it harbors many frescoes as well as wonderful carved and painted stones.

After lunch at Ghar Gumpa, we head north towards Lo, descending a bit to cross a small, wooden bridge first. Ascending out of the canyon, the trail contours around two valleys, before passing the small village of Marang. Once atop the Marang La (4,353 m), we are treated to magnificent mountain views. We pass by Samduling Gumpa and the ruins of several old houses, and after a short descent and an easy stream crossing, we climb back up to the plateau of Lo Manthang, aptly named the 'Plain of Aspiration'. The fabled walled city of Lo, with a single entrance through which only the king is allowed to ride - all others must walk - is a wonderful sight! The late King Jigme Palbar Bista, called 'Lo Gyelbu' by the Mustangis, used resides at his four-storied palace inside the city walls. He was an avid horseman, and kept his own stable of horses, some of the best in Mustang. Those days, the king played a somewhat ceremonial role although he was well loved and respected throughout Mustang.

In the 1380's, King Ame Pal established his reign in Lo, with the walled city of Lo Manthang as the capital and its inhabitants called Lobas. Within the walls of Lo Manthang

are about 150 houses built among narrow streets, and some of the largest and finest Tibetan Buddhist gompas in Nepal. The city is quite prosperous due primarily to its past salt and wool trade along the Kali Gandaki with Tibet, and the Lobas themselves are still very Tibetan, living in Tibetan-style dwellings which we'll have a chance to visit. And perhaps, we we'll have a cup of the infamous solja (salt butter tea), or chang (barley beer) with our guide who also will know the best vantage points for sunsets and sunrises. Overnight stay in Lo Manthang.

**Accommodation:** Lodge/Guesthouse

**Meal:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

### Day 9: In Lo Manthang

Relax, sleep late and linger over coffee as we have a free day to explore within the ancient, exotic city walls of Lo Manthang. There are four major temples within the medieval walls of Lo, Jampa Lhakhang, Thubchen Gumpa, Chodey Gumpa and Choprang Gumpa. There is also the Raja's Palace, home to the late King and Queen (who were from an aristocratic Lhasa family) and an interesting maze of a village to explore. And plenty of time to marvel at the surrounding panoramic views of the Tibetan Plateau and the Himalaya.

### OPTIONAL EXCURSION

#### Chosar Valley (or)

We will visit one of the two regions, two valleys to the northeast and northwest of Lo Manthang or Tingkhar, Namgyal & Nyamdok since we have only 12-day restricted permit; horses are available for the day for a small fee for those interested. We head up the eastern valley, today, to so some exploring. It is a two hour walk from Lo along partially eroded trails, past dry gullies and an ancient, ruined fortress, across a bridge and through a cultivated area until we view the cave village of Chosar, with the deep-red Nyphu Gumpa built into the rock face. Plenty of time for photographs before rounding the chorten-topped bend, where we get views of Gharphu Gumpa on the east banks of the Mustang Khola. We'll need to cross two bridges to arrive at the gumpa, at 3760 meters, and then will circle back to visit Nyphu Gumpa on the way back to Lo.

The Chosar valley was the main trading route with Tibet and Lhasa, and is peppered with the ruins of old fortresses guarding this strategic valley. Just north of this valley, over the border in Tibet, Lhakpa and I met a Tibetan man who still dealt in the trade of rare animal skins with Mustangi

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traders, a risky and of forbidden endeavor. It will be interesting to see if we can find out anything of this trade on the Nepal side of the border.

### Tingkhar, Namgyal & Nyamdok

More adventures in store for us as we head up the western valley towards Namgyal Gumpa (the Monastery of Victory), set spectacularly on top of a desolate ridge and the newest and most active gumpa in Lo. Just past the gumpa is Tingkhar, where the King has his summer palace. Further on, we reach Kimaling Gumpa (and Phuwa Gumpa on the way down), and eventually Nyamdok, a 3 or 4 hour walk from Lo. We'll pack lunch as it could be a long, rewarding day-trip. Back at Guesthouse, and cold beers are available from the tea-shops, so relax and enjoy our last evening in this magical capital.

**Accommodation:** Lodge/Guesthouse

**Meal:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

### **Day 10: Trek Lo Manthang - Yara (3,650 m | 7 hrs)**

Sadly, we must leave magical Lo, but new adventures await us on our route south. We will attempt to trek to Dhi (Dri) along the eastern, winter route, following the trail along the western side of the Mustang Khola to Dhi. If this route to Dhi isn't possible because of weather or trail conditions, we will trek over the Lo La (3950m) to Tsarang and head east to Dhi from there. Following is the main route to Tsarang; leaving Lo Manthang, we trek down the east side of the valley. The trail descends steeply from the cairn on a ridge at 3,850 m called Lo (Dry) La, passes an impressive chorten high up on another ridge, and crosses the Charang Chu. We then head back up the trail to Tsarang, perched on the edge of a beautiful canyon, with magnificent views of the villages of the distant hillsides. The huge five-story white dzong and ochre-hued gumpa contain a fascinating array of statues, thankas and large Buddha paintings. Elaborate sand mandalas are created here at festival time, and then ceremonially deposited into the river at the festival's end. From here, we will continue to Dhi village, one of the best villages of whole Lo Manthang and it seems more prosperous and settled in a very suitable place. We then cross a river to follow a path along the left bank of a river side to Yara village at (3,650 m). Overnight stay in Yara.

**Accommodation:** Lodge/Guesthouse

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



### **Day 11: Explore Yara & Luri Gumpa (4,000 m)**

An exploratory day-trip out to the village of Yara, and further on to famous Luri Gumpa. The sgo-nyer, or key-keeper of Luri Gumpa is reputed to live in Yara, so we will stop en route to look for him. There is a newly discovered group of six cave dwellings nearby, called Tashi Kumbum, with incredible ancient murals and chortens which perhaps the key-keeper can show us. However, Gary McCue (trekking guide/author), who went there over fifteen years ago, wrote that the approach is very difficult/dangerous although though only an hour from Yara. We'll have to ask if there have been improvements in the formerly crumbling trail.

The Luri caves are filled with wonderful, 'Newari-style' (Gary McCue) Buddhist frescos and old 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 particular region. Unfortunately, or fortunately, most have been rendered inaccessible due to the intense erosion in Mustang, so will remain hidden throughout history. Overnight stay in Yara.

**Accommodation:** Lodge/Guesthouse

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

### **Day 12: Trek Yara - Tange (3,370 m | 7 hrs)**

From Yara, the trail goes through the river for around 2 hours and crosses a river from Damodar Kunda, one of the sacred lakes. There is no bridge on the river so you need to walk across in bare feet to cross this river. After crossing the river the trail climbs high above a pass of 3,850 m. The trail goes through a grassless, treeless bare hill. After the pass, the trail again drops directly to Tange village at an

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elevation of 3,370 m. Tange is a small village of around 30 houses but most of the houses are attached to each other. On the rooftops, one can see piles of dry woods, which also reflects the prosperity in their society. Overnight stay in Tange.

\*\*\* Note: depending on weather, trail conditions and the stamina of the group, we could try the remote eastern route to Tetang via Tange, but this would require at least one long, strenuous day. But the rewards would be incredible, with a broad panorama stretching from Tsarang to Lo Manthang to the Tibetan border, and continuing with views of Dhaulagiri and other 8,000-meter peaks. Open to discussion.

**Accommodation:** Lodge/Guesthouse

**Meal:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

### Day 13: Trek Tange - Tetang / Chhusang (3,022 m | 9 hrs)

The trail walks through a steep ridge of hills providing some fine views of the wind carved hills. Tetang village is formed between 2 hills; they must have found it a safe place to avoid the strong wind that hits the entire Kali Gandaki valley. Tetang is the upper village of Chhusang, which we visit on the first day entering to Mustang from Kagbeni. It will take around 9 hours to reach Chhusang. Overnight stay in Chhusang.

**Accommodation:** Lodge/Guesthouse

**Meal:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

### Day 14: Trek Chhusang - Muktinath (3,800 m | 5-6 hrs)

Another exploratory day as we continue south over the Gnyu La (4,200 meters), which boasts a panoramic view of Annapurna, Dhaulagiri and the Tukuiche range. A trail from the east intersects our trail just below the pass; soon after passing this trail we veer east towards Muktinath and the balmy villages of Lower Mustang via Chhengar village, with a small but active red gompa, and continues past a nunnery to join the main trail from Manang.

We finish the trek at the serene temple complex of Muktinath, where we stay in a guest house just five minutes down the trail from Muktinath at Ranipauwa for two nights. Overnight stay in Muktinath.

**Accommodation:** Lodge/Guesthouse

**Meal:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

### Day 15: Rest and Explore Muktinath

Muktinath is an important pilgrimage site for Buddhists and Hindus situated in a tranquil grove of trees, and contains a wall of 108 waterspouts in the shape of cows heads spouting sacred water, the Jwala Mai temple with a perpetual spouting flame and the pagoda-styled Vishnu Mandir, all of which make up the auspicious combination of earth, fire and water. From Muktinath, we have outstanding views of the colorful valley and neighboring villages, patchwork after patchwork of barley and potato fields, and walled enclosures of apple orchards. We may head half an hour down the mail trail to explore Jharkot village, a bit less touristy and return back to Muktinath (optional).

Cold beers available; or try some Marpha apple brandy, the best in the region, and certainly the strongest brew around! Overnight stay in Muktinath.

**Accommodation:** Lodge/Guesthouse

**Meal:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

(It is the longest day on the Annapurna Circuit, trekking from Muktinath to Throng La Phedi via Thorong La Pass. This takes over 8-9 hours and a distance of 15 kilometers. It is a steep climb and descent resulting in one of the most physically challenging on this trip.)

### Day 16: Trek Muktinath - Thorong High Camp - Phedi (4,450 m) via Thorong La Pass (5,416 m) (8-9 hrs)

We start very early in the morning in order to cross the Thorong La pass and arrive Thorong La Phedi on time and before it gets dark. The trail from Muktinath ascent gently for about couple of hours to Muktinath Phedi at Charabu at 4,200 m with only few lodges open in the high season. This is where people hiking the Annapurna Circuit from Muktinath to High Camp will stay one night to help acclimatize at 4,200 meters. The mountain landscape is breathtaking and trail is relatively harmless. Due to the high altitude, we will slow our space moving up. As we climb up for the last 100 m to the pass, we will take in-between short rest and in about 5-6 hours we should be on the top of Throng La pass at 5,416 m. At the pass there is a small teashop which usually serves tea, noodle soup and dal baht is usually boarded up. The surrounding with Himalayan Panorama is just breath taking. Even though this is the highest trekking pass in the world and the highlight of the

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Annapurna Circuit, the journey to get here is second to none. We take some obligatory photos to celebrate our success. The land around us is barren, just hundreds of rocks making up the ground. After a short break with some Nepali Tea & Noodle Soup or even Dal Bhat, we descend slowly down the mountain. It is a difficult descent as you try to avoid slipping on the loose rocks. In about two hours we should arrive High Camp. If time permits and if we are not too exhausted, we continue all the way down to the Throng La Phedi for overnight at the guesthouse, otherwise we stay in High Camp.

**Accommodation:** Lodge/Guesthouse

**Meal:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

### Day 17: Trek Phedi - Shree Kharka (4060 m | 5-6 hrs)

We take our time this morning. After our leisurely breakfast we hike down to Tilicho Shree Kharka for overnight stay.

**Accommodation:** Lodge/Guesthouse

**Meal:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



### Day 18: Trek Shree Kharka - Tilicho Lake Base Camp (4,200 m | 5-6 hrs)

Today we hike up to Tilicho Lake Base Camp. The Mountain Panorama is just stunning with upfront view of Annapurna IV (7,525 m), and Gangapurna (7,454 m) as we head towards the lake.

With through a series of zigzags trail to the downhill brings us to one point is an intersection. One path maintains the elevation, traversing the slopes towards a place where the valley is narrow; the other continues to ascend towards the

line of the ridge. The former is the old trail and is much more difficult as it goes on really vertical scree; the latter is the new path that goes a completely different way. We continue along the new trail, reach a high peak, and descend on switchbacks carved out through the scree slopes to a side valley of the main valley. At its bottom is a brook. On the other side of it is a building known as the Tilicho Base Camp at an elevation of 4,200m. Trail to Tilicho base camp would get very interesting if things get icy. There is a lodge at Tilicho base but opened only in the season and we are not sure if it's open when we are there. In many ways it is more outstanding than crossing Thorong La. Hertzog's grand barrier (Annapurna north barrier) is in your face the entire time and closes views of Tilicho Mountain from the camp. We will camp here for couple of nights.

**Accommodation:** Camping

**Meal:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Mountains: 1) Annapurna I, 2) Tilicho peak, 3) Khangsar Kang or Roc Noir, 4) Gangapurna, 5) Annapurna III, 6) Khatung Kang, 7) Yakawa Kang

### Day 19: Trek to Tilicho Lake & Return to Tilicho Base Camp or Trek to Mesokanta Base Camp (6-7 hrs)

Today, we will climb up for Tilicho Lake (4,949 m).

The trail takes us through icy moraine offering the perspectives of Mt. Nilgiri, Tilicho, Muktinath, and Khangsar Peaks. When you reach near the lake, you will take nothing in excess of a couple of more minutes to scoff up the perspective on such admirable lake. Since more often than not the lake stays frozen, it is as well named the 'Frozen Lake'. We spend some time at the lake side to enjoy and may click lots of pictures with the view around us.

We will return back to the Tilicho Base Camp full with the memories at the Tilicho Lake. Depending up on the weather pattern and personal physical condition, we may continue trekking up to Mesokanta base camp for Overnight.

**Accommodation:** Camping

**Meal:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

### Day 20: Trek to Yak Kharka via Mesokanta La Pass (5,099 m)

We will start our return journey with lots of memories with us. Today is little bit tough day of this adventure, starting



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early morning to cross two high passes, heading up the high slope traversing high Tilicho pass then with short descend to the base of Mesokanta La pass, with short rest then climb the last pass of this adventure over Mesokanta-la at 5,099 meters. Parts of the way are very steep with loose rocks and gravel! On the top festooned with Buddhist prayer flags, here with mind-blowing scenery of surrounding high peaks.

The trail continues to climb out of the Marsyangdi Valley. The the vegetation now consists of scrub juniper and alpine grasses. This will lead us around and down to cross the river on an old log bridge between Gunsang and Yak Kharka. It's fun to see large yaks grazing at Yak Kharka. The view of Annapurna III is excellent. We will stay overnight in Yak Kharka. The sunset here can be one of the most stunning!

**Accommodation:** Camping

**Meal:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

### Day 21: Trek to Jomsom

A lovely, gentle walk back down to Jomsom. After our last breakfast up in the mountain we will start the journey towards Jomsom and today is the last day of our trek on these magnificent mountains, we will move through the trail of Kagbeni or Lupra to arrive in Jomsom along a long, cobbled trail in time for lunch, with the afternoon free to wander and shop.

We'll celebrate our trek through 'forbidden' Mustang with a few cold beers at the lodge in the evening. Overnight stay in Jomsom.

**Accommodation:** Lodge/Guest House

**Meal:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

### Day 22: Fly Jomsom - Pokhara and connect flight to Kathmandu

We board an early morning flight from Jomsom to Pokhara and connect flight to Kathmandu. Overnight stay in Kathmandu.

**Accommodation:** Hotel Manaslu

**Meal:** Breakfast

### Day 23: In Kathmandu

Today is at leisure to give your body some much needed rest after a long and strenuous trekking. Just relax or go for last minute shopping in Thamel.

**Accommodation:** Hotel Manaslu

**Meal:** Breakfast

### Day 24: Depart Kathmandu

Transfer to airport and depart for your homeward-bound flight.

**Meal:** Breakfast

### Includes

- Arrival & departure airport transfers
- Accommodation on twin sharing basis with daily breakfast
- Guided city tour in Kathmandu valley by private tourist vehicle, including entry fees to all monuments
- All standard meals (Breakfasts, Lunches and Dinners) during the trek
- Guesthouse accommodation during the trek in mostly twin-share and occasionally dormitory-style rooms.
- 3 nights camping service including meals, porters and service crew during the trek around Tilicho Lake from Mukthinath to Jomson.
- Experienced English speaking trekking guide
- The required number of local staff, porters and mules to carry your luggage/camping equipment/gear during the trek - one porter for every two participants.
- Food, accommodation, salary, insurance, equipment and medicine for all staff
- Special Upper Mustang Permit US\$ 500 per person for the first 10 days
- Annapurna conservation permit (ACAP) and all necessary permits
- Domestic airfare for your guide who will escort you throughout the trip



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### Excludes

- International flights
- Visa fee
- Travel insurance
- Meals not mentioned in the itinerary
- Personal clothing & equipment
- Tips for tour leader/guide, driver, hotel staff and porters
- Items of personal nature such as alcoholic beverages, soft drinks, laundry, showers and other unforeseen expenses
- Any item/service not mentioned under "included"

### Accommodations

#### Hotel Manaslu, Kathmandu

Hotel Manaslu located in the immaculate area of Lazimpat, Kathmandu is a heritage hotel established in 1972. We have kept the proud heritage of Nepal alive throughout its operation by offering unparalleled service and warm hospitality, that defines the values and culture of Nepal. The architecture of our hotel includes many ancient pieces that have been carefully restored and incorporated.



#### Mount Kailash Resort, Pokhara

Whether you are in Pokhara for business or pleasure, this modern social venue attracts not only hotel guests but also local shoppers, business people, and clubbers. With 51 beautiful rooms meeting with all the modern amenities, two dining spaces along with terrace dining experience, a beautiful garden, and spa. Our bar is a great place to chill out.

#### Lodge/Guesthouse

Lodges/guesthouses in the trekking routes of Nepal range from simple buildings made out of stone, mud, and wood,

to modern-looking concrete ones depending upon their geographic locations. Bedrooms generally have two single beds (and a table) or several beds in case of a dormitory. Usually, the kitchen and dining are combined into one common room (area).

#### Camping Tent

Our classic A-frame or ridge tents are sturdy and have plenty of room for two people. We use water and windproof flysheet which help make the tent nice and cozy inside. To complete the setup we provide a high-quality foam mattress together with an insulation pad so that you get a good sleep after a long tiring day.



### Internal/Domestic Flight/s

Please note that adverse weather conditions at Jomsom airport occasionally mean that flights to/from Pokhara cannot operate.

Should there be a lengthy delay at the start of a trip we will aim to provide a shortened version of this trek, but if adverse weather conditions continue and the main objective of the trek becomes impossible to reach, an alternative trek to another region of Nepal will be offered. Should there be a significant delay at the end of your trek, we will endeavour to get you on the first flights to Kathmandu available. Should helicopters be able to fly, we will consider for these on a case-by-case basis to enable you to meet your international flight. In the case of persistent adverse bad weather, travel-to-nature Asia will help & assist you re-booking international flights, but please be aware that your booking on a Land Only basis will be responsible for re-booking your onward travel and for any associated costs.

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### Group/Individual

You are traveling privately with your family & friends with our guide & porter who are at your service throughout your trek. Our representative/Tour Manager in Kathmandu who will look after your transfers to and from the airport and will be around to answer other questions you may have about your trek.

An English-speaking Nepali Sherpa trekking guide will accompany you throughout the trek, who will be assisted by a porter (we assign one porter for every two guests). All our Trekking guides/leaders are highly experienced and professional. Our trekking guides are licensed by Department of Tourism, (Government of Nepal). They are trained by Nepal Academy of Tourism & Hotel Management (NATHM) and also receive additional training through Dyckhoff-Karki Himalayan Nature Treks & Expedition.

Your trekking guide assisted by additional helper/ porter as necessary to carry your baggage (kitbags/duffel). All your main gear is carried for you and you only have to carry whatever you require for that day's trek. Please limit your kitbag to maximum 15 kg only because a porter carrying weight limit is 30 kg maximum. All the trekking staff are insured by travel-to-nature Asia or Dyckhoff-Karki Himalayan Nature Treks & Expedition.

### Accommodation - Hotel & Lodge

In this you tour you spends nights in a comfortable hotel in Kathmandu and during the trek nights in lodges (teahouses). In Kathmandu you stay at the Hotel Manaslu Hotel, centrally located.

The teahouses are basic but adequate; please be realistic about what to expect in the mountains. The hub of the teahouse is the dining room, usually decorated with colorful traditional rugs, sometimes with a stove or heater (some lodges charge a fee to put the heater on). Most teahouses sell snacks and other essentials such as tissues, soap and toilet paper. Almost all lodges have electricity but it is not wholly reliable and lighting may not be bright enough to read by – a torch is essential. Electrical charging facilities are generally available only in the dining room (**charged at approx. Rs 150-350 per hour per device**). Many of the lodges use solar power so sometimes there is not enough electricity for charging. Many lodges have Wi-Fi these days – in some areas it works well but in others it is slow and temperamental.

We try our best to book a single/double bedroom throughout this trek for you. However, at places like **Luri Gumpa, Tange, Chhusang and Tilicho Lake Base are sometimes overcrowded and we not be in a position**

**to guaranty a single room for you.** Beds are with foam mattresses; bed sheets and a pillow are provided. Bedrooms are generally unheated and can get cold at night so you will need to bring or rent a sleeping bag.

Most lodges have only one or two basic toilets and sometimes these are located outside the main lodge building. Toilets are usually Asian 'squat' style; although many lodges have now installed 'western style' seated ones. Toilet paper is not provided so you should bring your own or buy it locally (please dispose of it the bin provided – do not put it in the bowl). If there is not a flush handle, there should be a container of water to pour down – if it is empty (or frozen) please either refill it or ask the lodge to.

Some lodges now have hot 'showers' (charged at approx. Rs250-500 per shower). Sometimes a hot shower is simply a bucket of hot water and not a shower head. Standards of cleanliness vary especially in the peak trekking season and in winter when the water freezes at night. Please report any problems to your guide or the lodge and be vigilant in your personal hygiene regime – use soap or hand sanitizer gel before and after toilet breaks, snacks and meal times.

**As a general rule, the higher altitude you go to, the more basic & demanding the lodges and the more expensive food and services become.**

### Extra Accommodation

If you require any additional accommodation in Kathmandu either before or after the tour, we can book this for you (subject to availability), please enquire with our Sales Consultant/Tour Manager.

### Single Accommodation

We offer double room accommodation for the nights in Kathmandu only, unless single room is requested. While in the teahouses, double rooms cannot be always guaranteed.

### Food & Transport | Eating & Drinking

Only breakfast is included in Kathmandu and all meals (Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner) are included throughout the trek. On trek the breakfast will be a set menu usually consisting of porridge, toast and egg. For lunch and dinner on trek allowing you to choose what you want to eat and when. The menus in the lodges are almost identical to one another but offer a varied choice, ranging from traditional Nepalese dhal bhat to pizza and apple pie. **For every meal 2 cups**

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**of tea or coffee is included. If you prefer to drink more than two cups you have to pay extra yourself.**

**Dhal Bhat** is the staple diet in Nepal and comes in many different forms but generally comprises some curried lentil dhal and meat or vegetables, some rice, and a pickle/chutney. Another popular snack is momos; a type of Nepalese dumpling, fried or steamed, filled with meat or vegetables. Although meat is available in the teahouses, we advise against eating it on trek. The meat has often been carried in the heat from lower altitudes for several days before reaching the lodges, and can cause stomach upsets or illness. Germs can also be spread by handling dirty money - we recommend using hand sanitizer.

### Drinking Water

Staying hydrated is important when undertaking any physical activity but particularly so at altitude where it is generally recommended to drink at least 3-4 litres per person per day. We strongly encourage you not to buy bottled water on trek as this contributes to the growing problem of plastic pollution in Nepal's trekking areas.

All teahouses will provide cold water free of charge, if requested. Although this should not be drunk untreated, we recommend that you bring a reusable bottle with a wide opening with you and use a SteriPEN to treat it with. A SteriPEN is a handheld UV water purifier – small, lightweight and battery powered so easy to pack for a trek. In Nepal's trekking regions most of the bottled water isn't strictly 'mineral water' anyway but is UV treated, so it's exactly the same technology. It's quick to use, far more effective than purification tablets, and the water is ready immediately.

SteriPENS are widely stocked on Amazon, outdoor shops and other online retailers; look for the latest models but avoid USB charging ones. Better still, a SteriPEN will pay for itself over the course of the trek and you won't leave behind a single plastic bottle – you will end up spending the same or even less than you would on bottled water, plus you can keep it for future trips. If you prefer not to invest in a SteriPEN, the teahouses also sell boiled water for **approx. Rs 150- 300 per litre (the price increases the higher you trek)** which should not require treating. This is also perfect for a bedtime refill as it can double up as a hot water bottle.

### Transportation

For airport and sightseeing transfers, we use a private car. Flights to and from Pokhara and Kathmandu will be in ATR

plane and to/from Jomsom would be either in a Twin Otter or Dornier plane.

### Weather

Generally speaking, the main trekking season in Nepal is from mid-September to end-May. But as far as Mustang trek is concerned rainy season May-August is recommended since Mustang falls in rain-shadow thereby getting no or little rain. During the trekking season conditions at most altitudes are generally comfortable for walking and rain or snow are occasional occurrences. Daytime temperatures will vary from 15°C to 35°C in the Kathmandu Valley to around 10°C at 3,600m and progressively lower the higher you go. Within the trekking season there are three further distinct seasons in the weather, each offering different advantages for trekking.

Please remember that in any mountain area the weather is never wholly predictable and you should be prepared and equipped to deal with any changes in weather beyond the conditions described above.

## WHAT TO TAKE

### Essential Equipment

1. On trekking we assign one porter for every two guests and a porter carries about 30 kg (kitbags/duffel), therefore please respectfully limit your kitbag/duffel to 15 kg maximum. Any baggage/items not needed on trek can be left in storage at the hotel in Kathmandu free of charge. Please also see the internal/domestic flights weight limit to/from Jomsom is 10 kg.
2. 2 passport photos for your trekking permit (plus an additional 1 if getting your visa on arrival)
3. 4 season sleeping bag (5 season for December, January and February departures)
4. 3/4 season jacket (4 season for winter departures)
5. 1-2 x 1 liter water bottles (ideally with a wide opening.
6. Waterproof synthetic or leather walking boots (worn in)
7. Waterproof jacket and trousers Gaiters Trainers for the evening
8. Warm hat Scarf/Buff (which can be pulled over your nose and mouth to protect against fine mountain dust)



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9. Warm gloves
10. Several pairs of walking socks
11. Tracksuit or thermals for the evening
12. Warm mid-layer (fleece)
13. Light - mid weight trousers (warmer for winter)
14. Shorts or skirt for women
15. Sunhat, sunglasses, sunscreen and lip salve with sun protection
16. Daypack
17. Towel
18. Head-torch (headlamp)
19. Trekking pole(s)
20. Plastic bags (bin liners) to line daypack and for packing clothing in the kitbag
21. Toilet paper
22. Small personal first aid kit
23. Plug adaptor

### Optional Equipment

1. Water treatment: SteriPEN / water purification tablets
2. Trekking pole(s)
3. Hand washing gel
4. Biodegradable soap/shampoo
5. Sleeping bag liner
6. Solar charger/spare batteries/power bank

There are many equipment shops in Kathmandu where you can buy much of the above clothing. The quality does vary and cannot be guaranteed so you should choose carefully. Internal Flights Weight Limit There is a weight restriction on the flight to/from Jomsom/Pokhara of 15kg checked baggage plus 5kg hand luggage. It is not a problem for you to check in 1-2kg more than this as long as you are happy to pay an excess luggage charge (approx. €2 per kg).

## ESSENTIAL/PRACTICAL INFORMATION

### Passport & Visa

All nationalities require a full passport that must be valid for 6 months beyond the intended length of stay. It is your responsibility to have the correct personal documents and

to obtain your own visa, if one is necessary, in accordance with the regulations of the country you are to visit. The information below is primarily for European passport holders, and other nationalities should check with their travel agent or the relevant embassies. We are not responsible for the actions of local immigration and customs officials, whether at points of entry or otherwise, and any subsequent effects.

If you wish to apply visa before departure, please visit this link: <https://at.nepalembassy.gov.np/tourist-visa/> or <https://nepaliport.immigration.gov.np/> The current cost of a tourist (multiple entry) visa is €30 for 15 days, € 50 for 30 days and € 125 for 90 days. The visa on arrival fee can be paid in cash in US Dollars or Euros. Application forms are available in the immigration hall (or for electronic passports, there are visa registration machines which, after inserting your passport, automatically fill out a form for you).

If you use the machine, you will not need a passport photo). You must first join the queue to pay the visa fee and then go to the relevant immigration desk to obtain your 15, 30 or 90-day visa stamp. If you use the paper form to obtain a visa on arrival then you will also need one passport photo (a photo is not required if you use the electronic registration machines but we recommend you bring one with you anyway just in case, for any reason, the machines cannot read your passport). There might be long queues for visas on arrival.

**Please note:** Visa regulations may change without notice, therefore please make sure to check the most current/updated regulations or contact us.

### Vaccination

There are no mandatory vaccination requirements. However, recommended vaccinations are: Polio, Tetanus, Diphtheria, Typhoid, Hepatitis A. There is low to no risk of malaria throughout Nepal and antimalarial tablets are not usually advised although may be considered for certain higher risk groups; you may wish to consult your GP/doctor or travel health clinic for further advice. The risk is highest in the low lying southern 'terai' districts bordering India.

A yellow fever certificate is only required if traveling from a country with a risk of yellow fever transmission or for travelers having transited for more than 12 hours through a country with risk of transmission.

Dengue fever is a known risk in Nepal. It is a tropical viral disease spread by daytime biting mosquitoes. It's not mandatory to have a dengue vaccine but you may want to

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consult your doctor/health care professional for getting one. Currently, TAK-003 (Qdenga) and CYD-TDV (Dengvaxia) vaccines have received approval for use in the European Union. We urge you to discuss your travel medical with health care professionals.

Most of our trips to Nepal go to high altitudes where there is a risk of being affected by Acute Mountain Sickness. Our itineraries are designed to enable everyone to acclimatize to these altitudes, but you should be aware that it is still possible for you to be affected. Please refer to the information below on Altitude Warning for further advice on AMS.

Travel health can often be something people forget about before going away, but a little preparation and knowledge can go a long way to help you stay fit and healthy while abroad.

The above information can change at short notice; as we are not qualified to answer all your questions about travel health, we strongly recommend you contact your Medical Professional or a Travel Health Clinic at least 8 weeks prior to departure for up-to-date information.

### Altitude Warning

This trek includes one or more nights over 3500 m above sea level, where there is a genuine risk of being affected by Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS). If left untreated AMS can be life-threatening. We expect most clients to experience some mild symptoms of altitude sickness, such as headaches and shortness of breath while walking or sleeplessness. Our guides (leaders) are trained to identify symptoms of severe AMS and if a guest requires extra care, arrangements such as rapid descent will be made immediately.

On some days this trip climbs faster than commonly published ascent rate recommendations. Based upon an assessment by our external safety and medical advisors and our risk assessment process, we consider the ascent rate is acceptable due to the additional safety measures that are in place for our customers. All our trips operating at high altitudes meet our internal altitude safety standards that minimize the risk of serious incidents occurring whilst travelling at altitude.

A number of medical conditions or medications can reduce your body's ability to acclimatize. This may affect your performance and make you more susceptible to AMS. If you are worried about any pre-existing conditions, such as heart conditions, or your overall physical ability, you must

seek medical advice prior to your trip. The drug Diamox (also known as acetazolamide and normally only available on prescription) has been shown to aid acclimatization in some individuals and therefore may reduce the risk of AMS. Clients considering using Diamox should speak to their doctor about the drug, its side-effects and a prescription.

Please note that while we endeavor to assist all our clients in achieving their goals, there may be times when your leader decides to delay or stop your ascent based on your overall condition, or the onset of AMS. Please note: that while we endeavor to assist all our clients in achieving their goals, there may be times when your leader decides to delay or stop your ascent based on your overall condition, or the onset of AMS.

We recommend you buy Travel Insurance, and make sure that your policy covers you up to the maximum altitude on this trip (if trekking in the Himalaya your policy should also cover the use of a helicopter for emergency medical evacuation). You must be fully insured against medical and personal accident risks (including repatriation costs and air ambulance or helicopter rescue services where appropriate). On arrival in destination for your trip, you will be asked to present details to your leader or local representative of your policy.

### Local Time

Nepal's Time zone:

Asia/Kathmandu +04:45 (CET +04:45)

### Electricity

230V, 50Hz. You might experience temporary 'load shedding' (electricity power-cuts), occasionally. On teahouse treks the majority of lodges now have electricity and charging facilities in the communal areas for batteries, for a fee (around Rs150- 350 per hour). Battery life can be affected by cold - lithium batteries are best.

### Money

The national currency of Nepal is the Nepalese Rupee (NPR), with a current (Feb 2025) exchange rate of approximately 145 to the Euro and 140 to the US\$. It is illegal to import or export rupees, but foreign currency is not limited, provided it is declared on arrival. Keep your change receipts, as you will need them if you want to change rupees back into hard currency at Kathmandu airport.

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### ATM Availability

There are ATM machines in Kathmandu and Pokhara only. You can exchange cash in Pokhara as well. Please do not rely wholly on ATM machines as many are broken or have run out of money and all have a per day withdrawal limit of approximately €150-175 or US\$ 175-190.

We recommend you bring most of your money for the trek in cash and change it at the airport on arrival. Credit cards are accepted in many of the larger shops and restaurants in Kathmandu.

### Extra Expenses & Spending Money

It is illegal to import or export rupees, but foreign currency is not limited, provided it is declared on arrival. We recommend taking your personal spending money in cash (dollars or euros can all be changed easily). Cash can be changed easily at the airport on arrival in Kathmandu or at money changers in the Thamel area of Kathmandu. Please note that travellers cheques can NOT be exchanged in Nepal.

Please allow Rs1000-2000 (€7-14) per day for extra drinks, showers and charging on trek, and for meals not included in Kathmandu. This amount is given as a rough guideline only. If you plan to take a SteriPEN to treat non-boiled water on trek you will spend less than this, whilst if you buy imported snacks and drinks you may spend a few euro extra each day. There are teahouses selling drinks and snacks along the entire length of the trekking route.

### Tipping

Tipping is of course entirely at your discretion, but it is part of the culture in Nepal. Tipping can be an awkward affair especially when you are not familiar with the country. Your leader will help with tipping and will provide a list of suggested tips. This will include tips for drivers, hotel porters and other hotel staff, local sightseeing guides, and if trekking will include staff such as guide, assistants and porters.

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:** On all guided trips although our leaders/guides are well trained to deal with different capabilities, if they have any concerns about someone's ability to safely partake in an activity, or their impact on other people's enjoyment, we authorize them to take necessary action which, in some circumstances, may involve asking someone to miss that activity.