

Lodge trek to Mustang - the Forbidden Kingdom Trek with Tiji Festival – 17 nights 18 days

Tour with 10-day lodge trek and Buddhist festival

Tour JTT-NE-T01: Kathmandu – Pokhara – Jomosom – Kagbeni – Chhusang – Samar – Geling – Tsarang – Lo Manthang – Gekhar – Ghami – Chhusang – Jomsom – Pokhara – Kathmandu

Fixed dates: April 26 – May 13



Introduction

This trek takes you to the once hidden kingdom of Lo and offers you a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to witness the ancient and colorful festival of Tiji.

The region of Mustang lies in the north of the main Himalayan range in the area known as the trans-Himalayas. Called Lo by the locals, Mustang was only opened to trekkers in March 1992. The Tibetan influenced area north of Kagbeni is known as Upper Mustang. A vast high valley, arid and dry, it has a barren desert-like appearance similar to the Tibetan Plateau and is characterized by eroded canyons and colorful stratified rock formations. Mustang was once an important route for crossing the Himalaya between Tibet and Nepal, and many of the old salt caravans passed through Mustang. This trek will take us to this intriguing area, where we will discover the wonders

of architecture, language, culture and traditions that are almost purely Tibetan in this once-upon-a-time mystical kingdom.

The festival is held in the walled city of Lo Manthang (3730m), the capital of Mustang. Lo Manthang is also home to Mustang's former King Jigme Dorjee Palbar Bista who lost his royal title in 2008 after Nepal became a republic. But he is still highly regarded and respected by the locals. He and his family still occupy the royal palace situated at the center of the city square.

Once you reach Lo Manthang, you get to witness the Tiji Festival, one of the most sacred and colorful festivals in this whole region. The festival features a three-day ritual known as the 'chasing of demons'. Monks donning masks and colorful costumes enact the story of Dorje Jono who fought against his demon father to save the Kingdom of Mustang from falling apart. The festival is held annually at the onset of the spring season. Just as the spring season symbolizes the renewal of life, this festival is about hope, revival and affirmation of life.

Itinerary

Day 01: Arrival Kathmandu

After arrival at the Kathmandu airport, you will be met by our representative and taken to a comfortable hotel in Kathmandu.

Day 02: Sight seeing in Kathmandu

After a day of travel, this is a relaxed sight seeing day. Today, you will visit the Boudanath Stupa and Bhaktapur while your guide buzzes around town arranging the trekking permits.

Day 03: Kathmandu – Pokhara (200 km/ 6-7 hrs.)

We go to Pokhara in the tourist bus, which is also quite an interesting journey. Once we reach Pokhara, we relax and explore the pretty town of Pokhara.

Day 04: Fly to Jomsom & Trek to Kagbeni [2780m] – Lodge accommodation

We take the spectacular early morning flight to Jomsom (famous for its apples), where our trekking crew will meet us at the tiny airstrip. After the initial rearranging of luggage and load carrying, we begin our trek to the pretty village of Kagbeni. Just out of Jomsom, we cross a small suspension bridge and then walk along the riverbank of the Kali Gandaki. The trail is flat and quite barren, with craggy rocks and sand littering the trail. This makes it very easy going.



We will get magnificent views of huge peaks such as Dhaulagiri, Tukucho and Nilgiri, whilst to the south can be seen the entire Annapurna massif. Kagbeni with its narrow alleyways and tunnels, irrigation canals, fields of wheat and barley and a large red Gumpa, give us a preview of scenes that we would come across in Upper Mustang. At the north end of the village is the police check-post. Here we will complete our paperwork before entering this long forbidden region of Nepal.

Day 05: Trek to Chhusang [2920m] – Lodge accommodation

After breakfast, we continue on the trek passing through the beautiful village of Tangbe, with its picturesque traditional houses and fields of barley, buckwheat and apple orchards. We enjoy views of the magnificent Nilgiri peak and cross several ridges.

Day 06: Trek to Samar [3290m] – Lodge accommodation

After Chhusang village, we cross a stream and leave the Kal Gandaki valley behind and reach the village of Chele. From Chele, we climb the steep path carved out of the mountain. On the ridge, there is a small village known as Samar where we stay for the night.

Day 07: Trek to Geling [3440m] via Chungsi Cave – Lodge accommodation

You climb above Samar to a ridge and then descend into a large gorge past a chorten before entering another valley filled with juniper trees. You then cross a stream and after climbing to a pass, you descend along a ridge to Shyangmochen a tiny settlement with a few tea shops. The trail climbs gently from Shyangmochen until you enter another huge valley before descending to Geling with its extensive fields of barley.



Day 08: Trek to Tsarang [3490m] – Lodge accommodation

From Geling, the trail climbs gently through fields, up to the center of the valley, passing above the settlement of Tama Gun and an imposing chorten. You then begin a taxing climb across the head of the valley to the Nyi La [3840m]. The descent from the pass is quite gentle and about half an hour further, you come to a trail junction; the right trail is the direct route to Charang, while the left trail leads to Ghami. Ghami is a large white-washed village sheltered by overhanging cliffs.



The wide path now becomes wider as you approach the Nyi La-pass (3950m) and descend to Ghami (3440m). The pass is the highest elevation on this trek. At Ghami, there is the health and agriculture office of the government and a police check -post. We cross the bridge over a small river and continue the journey through a spectacular long stretch of Mani Stone, about 244 meters long. The trail gradually climbs to a ridge and descends to a relatively large and prosperous village. The maroon color structure of the monastery is visible as you reach Tsarang. We visit the monastery at Tsarang where there are several thanka paintings hanging on the ceiling and on the pillars of the monastery. Fresco paintings of a thousand Buddhas and a large collection of Buddhist texts are staked in the corner.

Day 09: Trek to Lo Manthang [3730m] – first day of festival – Lodge accommodation

We will spend part of the morning exploring the interesting village of Charang and its large monastery, before setting out for Lo Manthang. We climb gently above the valley to a large isolated Chorten that marks the boundary between Charang and Lo Manthang. The trail then broadens and eventually we get our first view of the walled city of Lo Manthang. The city has only one entrance so we circumambulate the wall to the gate on the north-east corner.



Day 10 - 11: In & around Lo Manthang and the colorful Tiji festival– Lodge accommodation

Inside the fortress-like Ghare Gompa, there are 3 monasteries. One of them has an image of a huge sitting Buddha in meditation and the other has several statues of various deities including the Buddha as well. Old and beautifully painted thanka paintings are hanging from the ceiling and pillars of the monastery. Inside walls are painted with stories of Buddha and other epics and beliefs. The Gompa appears old and in original shape. The Lamas use the third monastery located in the center. This is Thugchen-gompa. The monks use this monastery for prayer and other functions. People in Lo Manthang believe that this monastery came into existence because of the tantric power of various Gods of Hindu mythology with different names but similar connotation. Inside the monastery, in addition to living quarters of the monks, there is a separate chamber that stores masks and costumes. These costumes are worn at the Lama dance festival that takes place every year in May/ June. This festival continues for 3 days. The King of Mustang attends this festival in his ceremonial dress. The story of the Lama Dance is based on a tantric legend.

In Lomanthang, we visit the surrounding villages like Namgyal, Chosar or Chornup or grace the last day of the festival.

Day 12: Trek to Lo Gekar – Lodge accommodation

We begin our return journey from Lo Manthang, taking the upper highland route. This highland route offers dramatic views of Lo Manthang and the Charang Valley, with snow clad peaks in the background.

Lo Gekar Monastery was built in the 8th century by the famous Tibetan magician Guru Rinpoche. He had to kill a powerful demon first and the blood of the demon has painted the rocks around Dhakmar bright red. This is one of the best parts of the trek.



Day 13: Trek to Ghami [3460m] – Lodge accommodation

This is an easy and relaxed day as we trek nice and slow through the red cliff.

Day 14: Trek to Chhusang [2920m] – Lodge accommodation

We retrace the trail to Chhusang.

Day 15: Trek to Jomsom [2710m] – Lodge accommodation

We retrace the trail to Jomsom.

Day 16: Flight Jomsom - Pokhara

We fly to Pokhara where we stay in a comfortable –hotel.

Day 17: Pokhara – Kathmandu

We take the bus back to Kathmandu. In Kathmandu, we stay in a comfortable hotel.

Day 18: Departure

We drive to the airport to take a flight out of Kathmandu.

Price

2 pax US\$ 2326 per person

3-5 pax US\$ 2245 per person

6-8 pax US\$ 2155 per person

Single supplement: US\$ 155

Price includes:

- All meals and accommodation in tent during the trek
- Cooking and eating utensils
- Service of sardar (guide), cook, kitchen and sherpa assistants
- Porters to carry personal baggage (15 kg per participant), food and camping equipment
- Warm clothing, shoes, blankets and dark goggles for high altitude porters as required
- Accident insurance for staffs and porters.
- Tourist bus – Kathmandu/Pokhara/Kathmandu
- Flight Jomsom/Pokhara/Jomsom
- Mustang special trek permit and ACAP permit as per itinerary
- Arrival and departure transfers
- Local / Public transport as shown in the programme for staffs
- Accommodation on BB basis (CP) in Kathmandu (3 star category) as per programme

Price does not include:

- Personal clothing and sleeping bag
- Personal accident and health insurance
- Emergency evacuation and oxygen cost, and medical-box
- Alcoholic and bottled beverage, laundry, and tips
- Any other services and expenses that are not specifically mentioned in the programme
- Expenses due to flight delay, sickness other contingencies