

## MUSTANG, NEPAL

"Lo-Manthang"  
"A Mystic Land"

May 5-21, 2017



Lo-Manthang or Mustang, situated at an altitude of 3770 m, was once an independent kingdom within Nepal, although closely tied by language and culture to Tibet. The last official and currently unofficial king is Jigme Palbar Bista who traces his lineage back to Ame Pal, the warrior who founded this Buddhist kingdom in 1380. Ame Pal oversaw the founding and building of much of the Lo and Mustang capital of Lo-Manthang, a walled city surprisingly little changed from that time period. Though the people call themselves Lobas, people from Lo, they are very much Tibetan and have a

sophisticated culture and economy. The King's palace is an imposing 4 storey building in the center of the walled city. Though the king's duties are largely ceremonial, he is respected by the people and is consulted about many issues by villagers throughout Lo.

Upper Mustang is located north of Annapurna and at an average altitude of 4,000m is geologically and culturally part of the Tibetan plateau. The valleys are arid and dry with colourful rock formations containing many cave dwellings high up in the cliffs. The first trekking parties were allowed into Upper Mustang in 1992 and there are still very few people (about 700 trekkers each year) visiting Upper Mustang as a result it is one of the few places left where one can see undisturbed Tibetan culture. Most trekkers travel over largely the same trade route used in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

### ITINERARY

#### Friday, May 5~~Day 1 : Kathmandu: (Arrival)

On arrival at Kathmandu's Tribhuvan International Airport, you will be met, assisted and transferred to the hotel. (Individual transfers will be available)

Overnight at Hotel Heranya  
Breakfast included

#### Saturday, May 6~~Day 2 : Kathmandu

Trek briefing  
Rest of the day free for personal activities and trek preparation

Overnight at Hotel Heranya  
Breakfast included

### Sunday, May 7~~Day 3: Kathmandu-Pokhara

Transfer to the domestic airport for our flight to Pokhara.  
Day free for checking out Pokhara and trek preparation  
Overnight Temple Tree Resort and Spa  
Breakfast included

### Monday, May 8~~Day 4: Fly to Jomsom & Trek to Kagbeni: 3 hours.

Early morning transfer to the Pokhara airport and fly Pokhara/Jomsom (20 mins). Our horses will load up and we will head to Kagbeni. Our trek to Kagbeni is only 2-3 hours, which will help with acclimatization.

Overnight at camp or lodge in Kagbeni.

### Tuesday, May 9~~Day 5: Trek to Chailey Village (3050m) 5 ~ 6 hours.

The trail is up the east bank of the Kali Gandaki River, climbing over many ridges as it heads north. Depending on weather, we will use a combination of high trails and the riverbank routes. From here we can see the Gompa Kang and some caves on the west bank of the river. Unlike most Gompas in upper Mustang, Gompa Kang is of the Nyingmapa sect. Alongside the east bank is the village of Tangbe at an elevation of 2930. M. Here are the first of the trio of black, white and red chortens that typify upper Mustang. The Nilgiri peak, which dominates the southern skyline from Kagbeni, looms at the foot of the valley with its whitewashed houses, fields of barley, buckwheat and apple orchards. We carry on to Chhuksang, a village at the confluence of the Narshing and the Kali Gandaki at 2920 m. Across the river are some spectacular red, eroded "organ pipe" cliffs above the mouths of inaccessible caves. We continue north, leaving the Kali Gandaki valley climbing steeply up a rocky gully to Chailey.

Overnight at camp in Chailey Village

Wednesday, May 10~~Day 6: Trek to Syangboche (3770 m) 6 hours.

The climb from Chailey is up a steep spur to a cairn at 3130 m. From here there is view of the Gyagar village across a huge canyon. The climb continues along the side of the spectacular steep canyon to a pass at 3540 m. The trail makes a long gradual descent to some chortens on a ridge and then further descends on a pleasant trail to Samar (3290 m) situated in a grove of poplar trees. From Samar we climb to a ridge then descend into a large gorge past a chorten painted in red, black, yellow and white. The trail continues into another valley filled with juniper trees, crosses a stream and then climbs up to a ridge at 3800 m and drops to Bhenra. We climb through yet another pass and continue to Syangboche village.

Overnight in camp at Syangboche.

Thursday, May 11~~Day 7: Trek to Ghami (3440m) 4 hours

After breakfast climb gently to a pass at 3770 m and enter another east west valley. The path slips through dunes and creeps through narrow passages and ghostly labyrinths, going gradually down to Tamagoan and its imposing chorten. Vast fields of barley grow in the valley. From here onwards there are ruins scattered everywhere; castles, houses and temples. We climb up to the Nyi La Pass (3950 m), which is the southern boundary of Lo itself. The descent from Nyi La is gentle and down hill to Ghami village.

Overnight in camp at Ghami.

Friday, May 12~~Day 8: Trek to Tsarang (3720 mts) 4 hours.

The trek begins with a short descent to the bridge crossing the river and then a steep climb up to a pass at 3600 m. After the pass descend to Tsarang at 3520 m. It is a maze of fields, willow trees and houses separated by stonewalls at the top of the large Tsarang Chucanyon. The huge 5 storied white Dzong (Tibetan style fortress) and red Gompa are perched on the edge of the Kali Gandaki gorge at the eastern edge of the village. The Gompa houses a

collection of Thankas as well as many large paintings of seated Buddhas.

Lunch at Tsarang.

After lunch visit the Lo Gekar Gompa which is situated in a grove of large trees along side a stream. Lo Gekar meaning pure virtue of Lo, is also known as Ghar Gompa or house temple as the structure is built like a house with small separate rooms. The Gompa is decorated with paintings and statues and several large prayer wheels. The real treasure of Lo Gekar is the hundreds of painted carved stones displayed on the walls in wooden frames. There is no village nearby but there are a series of quarters for monks and pilgrims near the Gompa that provides protection from the wind.

Overnight in camp at Tsarang.

Saturday, May 13~~Day 9: Trek to Lo Manthang. (3820 mts) 4 hours

The trail descends about 125m from Tsarang, crosses the Tsarang Chu and climbs steeply up a rocky trail to a cairn on a ridge opposite the village at 3580m and then enters the Tholung valley. The trail turns north and climbs gently to an isolated chorten that marks the boundary between Tsarang and Lo. Still climbing, the trail crosses a stream then becomes a grand wide thoroughfare traveling across a desert-like landscape, painted in every hue of grey and yellow. Finally, from a ridge at 3850 m, there is a view of the walled city of Lo. A short descent leads on to the "plain of aspiration" at 3780m. The trail crosses a stream and climbs up onto the plateau of Lo-Manthang itself at 3730m. The whitewashed wall around Lo Manthang resembles a misshapen "L" with a short vertical arm oriented north south and a very fat, almost square horizontal arm.

Lunch at Lomothang.

After lunch we visit the major temples within the city walls. Champa Lhakang (God House) which houses the massive 45 ft. statue of Maitreya, the future Buddha, The red Thugchen Gompa with several

large images of Sakyamuni, Avolokitesvara and Maitreya, and the Chyodi Gompa of the Sakya sect which has several monks in residence and is the site of the annual Mani Rimdu festival in Lo Manthang. The King's palace is an imposing 4 storey building in the center of the city. It is the home of the unofficial king, Jigme Parbal Bista. The Honorary title "Bist – a high castetitle in Nepali" was conferred by the King of Nepal.

Overnight at Lo-Manthang.

Sunday May 14~~Day 10: Explore the Garphu and Nyphu:

There are two valleys above Lo-Manthang, which we visit today. There are some interesting caves and monasteries in Garphu and Nyphu and numerous caves with dwellings inside them. On the way back, we hike up to the ruins of Ketcher Dzong for wide panoramic views of the valleys to the North and South.

Overnight at Lo-Manthang.

Monday May 15~~Day 11:Trek to Ghami (3440m)

After breakfast backtrack to Ghami.

Overnight at Ghami.

Tuesday, May 16~~Day 12: Trek to Geling (3660 mts) 5 - 6 hours.

From Ghami climb about an hour and a half to Nyi La Pass (3840 m). The descent from the pass is quite gentle as we enter another huge valley before descending to Geling with its extensive fields of barley. As in all settlements in the region, the white and ochre painted houses are constructed using mud and stones with roofs made of twigs, straw and a mixture of mud and pebbles.

Lunch on arrival at Geling.

After lunch explore Geling Village with a walk to the local school and monastery above the village.

Overnight at Geling.

Wednesday, May 17~~Day 13: Trek to Samar (3150 m) 6 ~ 7 hours.

From Geling we climb gently to the hill top and then descend to Shaynbochen, a tiny settlement with a few tea shops. From here we climb up to a pass before entering a valley filled with juniper trees, then another climb up the ridge to enter Samar Village.

Overnight at Samar.

Thursday, May 18~~Day 14: Trek to Kagbeni via Tangbe 6 hours and drive to Jomsom

After breakfast we have a steep descent to Chailey, then a hike along the river banks to Chhuksang Village where lunch will be served. After lunch the route is well traveled as we head towards the village of Tangbe. This village is culturally united with four other villages namely Chele, Gyakar, Chhuksang and Tetang. The inhabitants from these villages call themselves Gurungs but closely resemble the Manangis rather than the Thakalis or Lobas.

On arrival at Kagbeni we transfer to jeeps to Jomsom

Overnight at Jomsom Hotel Alka, Jomsom

Friday, May 19~~Day 15 : Fly to Pokhara from Jomsom – 20 minutes

Transfer to hotel

Overnight Temple Tree Resort and Spa  
Breakfast included

Saturday, May 20~~Day 16: Pokhara-Kathmandu

Transfer to airport for flight to Kathmandu

Overnight Hotel Heranya

Breakfast included

Sunday, May 21~~Day 17: Kathmandu (Departure)

After breakfast transfer to airport for international flights home

**COST** (All costs are subject to changes made by airlines, hotels, government fees and permits)

TWIN/DOUBLE SHARING: US\$3625

SINGLE: \$4145

**COST INCLUDES**

- All airport transfers
- 3 nights accommodation with breakfast at Hotel Heranya, Kathmandu
- 2 nights accommodation with breakfast at the Temple Tree Spa and Resort, Pokhara
- 11 Nights/ 12 Days Upper Mustang camping trek with all meals included (last night of trek will be at a hotel in Jomsom)
- 2 man mountain tents with foam mattresses
- Sleeping bags with liners
- Dining, kitchen and toilet tents
- Sirdar (our old friend Shyam who has been ur sirdar since 2004), cook, Sherpa guide team, kitchen helpers, and pack horses
- Insurance and medical facilities for trek staff



- Transportation of trek staff, camping and kitchen equipment and food for pre and post trek
- Annapurna Conservation Area Project fees, trek permits and fees
- Jeep hire from Kagbeni to Jomsom at end of trek
- All tips including full trek team and hotel porters
- Tip for Razu who will accompany us on entire trip (huge bonus!)
- Government Restricted Area Fees (Please refer to note below)
- 4 domestic flights: Kathmandu/Pokhara return and Pokhara/Jomsom return
- Domestic airport taxes

### **NOT INCLUDED**

- Items of a personal nature such as bar bills, telephone calls, mineral water, and laundry
- Extra costs incurred due to natural calamities, flight delays etc.
- Lunch and dinner in Pokhara and Kathmandu.
- Personal insurance, evacuation and medical expenses
- Nepal entry visa
- International flights

### **SPECIAL NOTE**

Upper Mustang is a restricted area and a special permit has to be obtained from the government authority. The cost of this permit is US \$500 for 10 days. **Once the permits are issued they are non refundable.** The permit cost is included in the above costs.

As always in Nepal, weather and flights are not within our control. Razu and I try to stay with the planned itinerary but sometimes we have to make changes. Many of you have travelled with Razu and me before and know that changes are often for the better and the

fact that we have the privilege of Razzu actually accompanying us, gives us a special measure of support that most other groups do not have.

### CANCELLATION POLICY

As above, the permit fee is non refundable once issued.

10% of the cost of domestic airfares will be charged once tickets are issued.

In addition, the following cancellation charges will apply once final payment is made:

Up to 45 days before arrival: 25% of trip cost  
From 30 to 45 days before arrival: 40% of trip cost  
From 15 to 29 days before arrival: 50% of trip cost  
Under 15 before arrival days: no refund