



Escape2 THE HIDDEN KINGDOM OF MUSTANG

1 night Pokhara (Shangri-la Village Resort), 13 night Mustang Trek

A two-week trek into the fabled kingdom of Mustang, one of the most recent areas to be opened to foreigners by the government of Nepal. The trek begins and ends at Jomsom, the administrative district headquarters of Mustang in the Kali Gandaki valley. Formally annexed to Nepal in 1946, Mustang remains entirely Tibetan in character, from its 5000 inhabitants and the Buddhist region, to the crops grown and the dialect spoken. Mustang's unofficial capital, the walled city of Lo Manthang, retains its own king in residence. It remains a kingdom with a kingdom. Fierce winds and a barren landscape await those who attempt to reach Mustang but the rewards are immense, with fewer tourists and the chance to observe a way of life virtually untouched for centuries. Welcome to Mustang.

Duration : 1 night Pokhara, 13 nights trek,
Grade : moderate-strenuous
Trekking style : Camping arrangements throughout

Price: US\$ 3400.00 approximately per person based a private departure and a minimum of 4 persons travelling together.

Price Includes:	Price Excludes:
All airport transfers Kathmandu/Pokhara/Kathmandu airfare X10 day fully inclusive trek arrangements staying in local Lodges enroute with all meals. Sleeping bag and liner Sherpa leader and porter as required National Park entrance fees X1 night Shangri-la Village Hotel in Pokhara on a BB basis X4 nights accommodation in Kathmandu inclusive of breakfast	Lunch and dinner in Kathmandu and Pokhara Personal insurance Price rises beyond our control (e.g.; increase in permit fees, airfares) Charges for unexpected expenses Personal expenses such as gratuities, laundry etc. Personal clothing and equipment International departure airport tax Visa fees International airfare



ITINERARY

Day 01: Kathmandu - Pokhara. We take a scheduled flight to Pokhara and transfer to the Shangri-La Village, which boasts air conditioning, international telephone facilities, a swimming pool and a balcony with mountain views in every room.



Day 02: Pokhara - Jomsom (2730m) - Kagbeni (2760m). This morning we take a spectacular flight to Jomsom up the deep Kali Gandaki river valley. There are great views of the Dhaulagiri and Annapurna massifs either side of the aircraft. It is from here that the trek begins. Jomsom is the administrative district headquarters of Mustang and has a police check-post, radio communication with Kathmandu, an army camp and the STOL airstrip that we touch-down on. One can immediately notice the change in scenery from Pokhara - it is trans-Himalayan - arid and rocky. The barrenness is relieved by splashes of green cultivation.

After crossing the wooden bridge to the east bank of the river Kali Gandaki through the town, the trail continues to the north end of the town and follows the gravel river bed before ascending gently and descending to a couple of houses (Eklabhatti). The trail may follow the river bed or higher on the east bank depending on the season and flow of the river. Continuing along the east bank we bypass the villages of Phalyak, Dakarjong and Panga, and finally reach Kagbeni. The village is located at the confluence of the Kali Gandaki and the Jhong Khola (river) coming down from Muktinath. The village is a community of mud and stone houses enclosed by walls. Flat roofs hold stacks of firewood. The red coloured gompa situated on a raised stretch of land dominates the village. The monastery belongs to the Sakya sect and can be identified as such by the uniformly spaced grey stripes on its outside walls. Kagbeni was once ruled by a gyalpo (king) from his castle which is now in ruins. The dynasty has died out but during its time it was powerful much like the barons of the Rhineland. There are good close-up views south to Nilgiri and Tilicho from here.



Day 03: Kagbeni - Tsaili (3030). The trail passes through the village to the mani walls at the north end. Here we pass the police check-post, descend briefly and then begin a steep climb up to join the broad, loose trail that contours along the east bank of the river. A little later on and we bypass Tiri where the route from Charkabhot (Dolpo) joins the village. Further up the Gyalungbo river drains into the Kali Gandaki and before lunch the village of Tangbe is sighted. A descent then a climb leads to Tangbe where a lunch stop is made.



The trail continues through the village and further up to a group of settlements known as Chusang. Ruins of castles litter the hill-tops behind the village, and prehistoric cave dwellings can be seen on the west side of the river. The Narsinga Khola joins the Kali Gandaki here; the stream is crossed and the trail follows a stretch of the river bank, skirting the edge where the river has eroded the banks. A steel iron bridge spans the Kali Gandaki just as it emerges from a natural tunnel. Amongst the cliff walls a great many caves can be seen. A steep climb out of the valley leads to the village of Tsaili.



Day 04: Tsaili - Tamaghyang (3567m). This morning's climb varies in steepness until we finally reach the Chotare Lapcha pass. From the pass excellent views of the Damodar Himal, Thorongtse, the Nilgiris and Tilicho can be seen. Next, we contour to Samar village. The village is named after the red outcrop of rocks to the east. Samar is a small village among poplar trees which line the irrigation canals. These feed water to the terraced fields below. Three chortens on the ridge ahead mark the point at which we descend to cross another stream before the climb to the Samar La is started. After the pass, a gradual slope and pass a few houses, climb up to another pass and to a teashop and beyond to Yamda with its single bhatti (teashop).

From Yamda climb to the Dawa Lapcha pass (3860m) with its large cairn and prayer flags before descending to Syangmuche and its bhatti. Ascend to the next pass, the Lhakpa la (3680m) with its chorten. The village of Ghiling can be seen below. Ghiling is a large village with two gompas; it was once an important village for the traders enroute from Tibet. The trail divides further down and the upper trail is taken (the lower one goes to the village) until a few Tamang houses of Tamaghyang are reached.

Day 05: Tamaghyang - Tramar (3474m). At Chorten Karpu a slight gradient takes us to Chaiti with its bhatti. Further up the path from Ghiling joins our trail. After a steep climb up to the Tseti La pass we descend along the trail until it forks; the upper trail goes to the village of Gemi whilst the lower trail continues down to the river with its suspension bridge. we take the upper trail. Gemi could be an excellent place to stop for lunch in one of the neatly kept houses run by a family of the sister of the King of Mustang. The trail continues to the left of the village. After crossing a stream we climb steeply to a pass that offers excellent views of Gemi and Damodar Himal. We then contour around the mountain to another pass of 12,000' and descend to the village of Tramar.

Day 06: Tramar - Lo Manthang (3697m). The day starts with a steep ascent towards the north east through the cairns and loose gravel for about one hour to the top of a plateau, an arid and wild high country. We cross the long plateau to reach another small pass and then descend gradually until the Chortens of Marang Gompa are visible with the village of Marang and its fields are visible towards the east (right). We stop for lunch in the compound of an isolated Gompa.



The monastery of Lo Gekar which belongs to the village of Marang is believed to be the oldest here. Armed with torches we visit the monastery which contains beautiful rock slate paintings pasted on the walls. The dark inner chamber of the temple conceals some beautiful statues of Padma Sambhava and Milarappa, which may be illuminated with butter lamps. The roof-top temple has been destroyed over a number of years as a result of heavy snow and lack of maintenance. A small entrance fee is payable.

We then climb a small pass to the pastures towards the north until the base of a long pass overlooking the Lo Mantang valley is reached. One can see the local sheep, goat and horses grazing on the high pastures around the pass. Right across from Lo Mantang is the Tibetan plateau, clearly visible with awesome views of Damodar to the right. A further hour of walking brings us to the walled city.

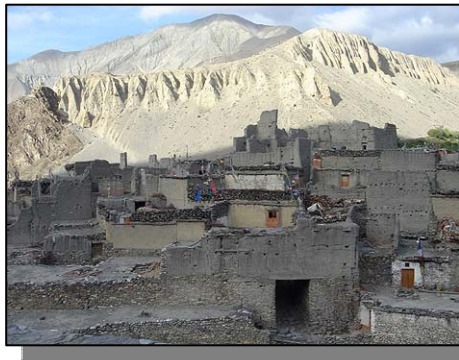
Day 07: Lo Manthang (Exploration Day). Lo Mantang means the "Plains of Prayer". The whole city is walled with houses closely packed together. Narrow alleys run between them. Built on a plain, the walls were essential for defence against bandits and invaders. The king lives in his palace which is the largest residence and easily noticeable among the other houses. The Tibetans referred to the king as "Lo Gyalpo" meaning King of the South, but his name is Jigme Bista. The name Bista was conferred on him by the King of Nepal as an honorary title (Bista is a high caste title in Nepal). The queen is from a noble family in Shigatse, Tibet.



The summer palace of the King is in Trenkar. Lo Mantang has three monasteries -the Chamba Lakhang which houses the massive 45 foot statue of Maitreya, the future Buddha; the Thugchen Lakhang with several large images of Sakyamuni, Avolokitsevara, and Maitreya. Sakyamuni is of gilded bronze with the rest terracotta. The third monastery is Chodi of the Sakya sect which has several monks in residence and this is the site of the annual Mani Rimdu festival in May (called "Tegi" in Lo Mantang). Chodi monastery contains numerous small statues and thankas and the monks are often engaged in prayer and chanting.

Half way to the King's summer palace is Namgyal monastery (victory). Namgyal is the largest monastery in Mustang. It is perched on a hill-side above the village of the same name. Its massive walls are painted in strips of grey, white and yellow. The monastery has a large courtyard inside with galleries around it. The main hall contains a large altar with splendid statues, images and thankas hanging from pillars.

Lo Mantang has a post office, health post, police check-post and radio communication with Jomsom and Kathmandu.



Day 08: Lo Manthang - day excursion to the north. A day hike to the villages of Garphu and Nyphu north of Lo Mantang is worthwhile. There are some interesting cave monasteries and numerous caves with dwellings inside them. On the way back a hike up to the ruins of Ketcher Dzong is recommended for wide panoramic views of the valleys to the north and south. Horses can be hired in Lo Mantang for those that wish to ride and with a horse it is possible to make a circuit of the villages in the east and west valleys. Starting from Lo one begins by heading towards the northwest, passing the villages of Trenkar and Namdol, before crossing a pass to the Choser (east valley) down to Nyphu and Garphu and returning to Lo Mantang.

Important note: Due to the proximity to the Tibetan border regulations in this region often change and occasionally travel north of Lo Manthang is not possible.

Day 09: Lo Manthang - Yara (3472m). From Lo Mantang take the trail south towards Tsarang. Climb up the pass overlooking Lo Mantang and continue for a while until a trail to the south east is taken - this leads to the

Kali Gandaki gorge through which the Mustang Khola flows. The trail is steep and narrow and the last part which drops down to the river is extremely steep until the village of Dri by the banks of the river is reached. From Dri climb steeply up to the village of Yara where a camp in the walled compound of the village is made.

Day 10: Yara - Luri Gompa (3500m) - Dri (3279m). Today we climb steeply up to the village of Gara and continue further up till the site of the cave monastery of Luri is reached. Luri Gompa is an ancient cave monastery built inside the sandstone cliffs with a chapel and an inner room which contains a stupa embellished with deities. The roof of the room (which is dome shaped) is covered with murals depicting flowers, deities and various figures probably of Indian origin.

The site according to locals was built by the Buddhist Sanit Padma Sambhava and it is believed only two such were built in Mustang - this is the only one remaining today. We return to Dri and camp.





Day 11: Dri - Tsarang (3680m). Trek down the Mustang Khola and cross the river to take the trail leading to Tsarang. Tsarang is reached in the afternoon and this will allow time for exploration of the ancient fort and monastery in this village.

Day 12: Tsarang - Sangmoche (3636m). Our return route back over the passes to the tiny hamlet of Sangmoche with its bharti. Camp by the meadows of the hamlet.

Day 13: Sangmoche - Tangbe. Return to Samar and drop steeply down to Tsele village and the bridge over the Kali Gandaki river. Continue to the village of Tangbe.

Day 14: Tangbe - Jomsom. We follow the Kali Gandaki river down to Jomsom.

Day 15: Jomsom - Pokhara - Kathmandu. We take the early morning flight to Kathmandu via Pokhara. Please note that flights into Jomsom are sometimes delayed due to un-flyable conditions; be reassured that our staff in Jomsom and in Kathmandu will be doing everything possible to minimise the inconvenience caused if this happens. Your patience in the trying circumstances which can occur will be greatly appreciated.

Upon arrival you will be met and assisted by an Escape2Nepal representative and transferred to the hotel.

Note: The above itinerary is meant only as a general guideline and the routing may be modified according to local conditions and at the discretion of your Sherpa leader.

Also note that a motor able road now exists from Jomsom-Kagbeni and in Lo Manthang itself. This can take people somewhat by surprise since Mustang has a reputation for being very remote and inaccessible. However, the road is said not to detract from the overall enjoyment of the trek.