



Mustang Trek Nepal 2007

Trip Notes

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The Mustang region of Nepal is often referred to as 'The Forbidden Kingdom of Nepal'.

This stark and barren area of the middle Himalayas holds the last remnants of true Tibetan lifestyle untainted by foreign occupation. Whilst being annexed to Nepal, Mustang enjoys its own autonomy and the residents live much the same as they have for centuries. To avoid this unique Kingdom being overrun by tourism the region has been gazetted as a restricted area with only small numbers of tourists given access every year.

Adventure Consultants have been privileged with the approval of permission to enter Mustang in September this year and will travel with a small group through to Lo Monthang, the hub of this tiny Kingdom. These permits come at a price but in a world of ever decreasing natural habitats, we are possibly experiencing history which will be lost to future generations.



We are being supported on this journey by our special Sherpa friends of many years. With their world-wise approach and multi-lingual skills they will help us interpret the landscape and the people in addition to providing scrumptious meals and establishing our camps each night.

Our trip will initiate in Kathmandu, the colourful capital of Nepal. On the next day we fly to the picturesque town of Pokhara. After an evening discovering the pleasures of Pokhara we fly to the high village of Jomsom beneath the 8000m massifs of Annapurna and Dhaulagiri. From here we trek to the edge of the Forbidden Kingdom after a visit to Muktinath, a monastery sacred to Hindus and Buddhists alike.



We leave the tourist route here and trek on foot or ride on horseback through lower Mustang where spectacularly fluted cliffs of red hues overlook the Kali Gandaki River. The Kali Gandaki flows from the high plains of Tibet through Mustang into Nepal before flowing into India.

The upper Mustang is dominated by an endless expanse of yellow and grey rolling hills made smooth by the wind.

We traverse this lonely landscape on horseback via several passes (the highest being the Nyi La at 3990m), camping in villages nestled in their green irrigated oasis until we reach the spectacular walled town of Lo-Monthang. Visually, this is an extraordinary place and home of the Mustang Raja (King) as well as some beautiful temples and monasteries. The people of Upper Mustang are always curious about new arrivals and we can expect children, with scary wind blown hair and apple red cheeks, will gather to confront the spectacle of foreign visitors. The abrasive lifestyle required to survive is easily evident here.



After taking time to explore the area and interact with its small population we return to Jomsom and fly again to Pokhara and Kathmandu.

Overall, Mustang involves a wilderness of huge proportions and offers a truly exceptional experience.

If you are interested in joining the trek please contact the Adventure

Consultants office for further details.

We look forward to welcoming you onto the Mustang Trek 2007.

Itinerary

Dates: September 1 to September 19 2007

Day 01.

The group arrives into Kathmandu to be met by our smiling Sherpa crew. We stay at a hotel in the Thamel region of Kathmandu, which is close to a multitude of shops and restaurants.

Day 02.

Kathmandu to Pokhara: Stay at Tulshi Hotel at Fewa Lake. We can hire boats to take us out onto the lake or wander around town shopping for Tibetan or Nepalese items. We drive by bus to Pokhara if the weather is unsuitable to fly.

Day 03.

Pokhara to Jomsom (2720m): flight (by Twin Otter) up the dramatic ravine of the Kali Gandaki Valley. For centuries this valley was the primary trade route between the Tibetan High Plains and the comparative lowlands of India. The walls of two of the world's highest mountains; Mt's Annapurna and Dhaulagiri, are sheer for 5000m above the valley floor.

We disembark the plane at the small village of Jomsom and trek to Kagbeni (2810m) via Chhanche Lhumba, otherwise known as Ekle Bhatti ("Lonely Hotel"). We follow the river to Kagbeni, a green oasis at the junction of Jhong Khola and Kali Gandaki.

Day 04.

Kagbeni to Muktinath (3760m): Muktinath is one of the most important pilgrimage sights for both Hindus and Buddhists and monasteries from the two denominations exist peacefully side by side. Miraculously a fire burns in water under the Buddhist temple which is staffed by Nuns.

After the monastery visits we return to Kagbeni with a brisk ride down the trail. In the evening after a tasty meal we can wander around the town, sit on the street and chat with the locals or visit the Kagbeni monastery.

Day 05.

Kagbeni to Chele (3050m): Today we enter Mustang itself. After completing the necessary procedures for entering the national park we ride up the valley, sometimes on the riverbed and sometimes along the river terraces. We lunch in Tangbe village where the local children are as interested in us as we are in them! A grassy orchard provides shelter from the sun and one can try out truly organic apples! From Tangbe we have great views of Nilgiri Peak dominating the northern skyline. Riding further we pass through Chhusang with its huge cliffs and cave dwellings across the valley. Not far above Chuksang the trail leaves the Kali Gandaki valley and climbs steeply up to Chele.

Day 06.

Chele to Syangboche (3800m): We ascend a long slope towards the Taklam La (Pass) at 3736m. The trail takes the 'Cliff Road', a very steep trail cut into the side of the valley wall. The horses perform incredibly well in this terrain and it is our own fear which encourages us to dismount and walk the steepest sections. Once over the Taklam La we pass some Chortens in treeless dry terrain and ride on to the town of Samar. After lunching in Samar, the trail follows a large gorge then climbs to enter another valley. We descend to Syangboche (3800m), a unique little enclave where we rest up for the night.



Day 07.

Syangboche to Ghemi (3520m): At first we climb gently to a small pass with views of the surrounding mountains and valleys. We descend into the Tama Khola (River) and traverse above the town of Ghiling displaying lush and plentiful barley fields. Another short ascent onto the Nyi La (4010m) reveals views of Mustang and the bigger peaks of Nilgiri and Annapurnna.

Traversing the high hills with a wide vista we reach the Ghemi La where we look down into the village of Ghemi and our destination for the day. The ripe yellow wheat and buckwheat fields in pink flowers provide a colourful contrast to the barren and eroded hills around.

We stay with the nephew of the King of Mustang and enjoy the relative comfort of his home. There is plenty to see around the town with the harvest in full swing and an active community in full production.

Day 08.

Ghemi to Dhakmar (3820m): We awake to the sounds of the villagers going about their work. The animals are taken out into the hills to feed and rush hour traffic consists of an assortment of goats and cattle coursing through the narrow streets. We cross a narrow bridge over the Ghemi Khola to climb a long slope, which brings us to a traverse into the Dhakmar Khola. The hills here have terrific coloration and the scene is quite stunning as we approach the village of Dhakmar. Beautiful pink and orange cliffs stand above green and lush meadows and many ancient caves abound in this region. We climb up to investigate the closest caves and one gets a real feel for how the long lost inhabitants must have lived.

The village is small and surrounded by an abundance of fields, which are beautifully pink with the buckwheat blooms. This is a veritable photographer's mecca with the cliffs, the fields and the buildings of the village in perfect harmony.

Day 09.

Dhakmar to Charang (3560m): We cross the highest pass on the trip today with a long climb up from Dhakmar to the Mui La at 4170m. After soaking up the views we descend into Lo Gekar and the Ghar Gompa (Gompa means monastery). This site was identified by Buddhist saint Padmasambhava (Guru Rinpoche) and is said to be the first Buddhist monastery in the world. We are privileged to enter this ancient building and be educated on the history of Buddhism.

After lunch we ride through an active harvest into Charang. Here we stay at the house of the Kings sister in a large and comfortable lodge. After an extended tea session we set up our tents on the rooftop. As night descends the town comes alive with the sounds of the villagers singing as they come in from the fields.

Day 10.

Charang to Lo Monthang (3809m): An early morning visit to the old fort in town reveals a sense of the history of the area. The highlight of the fort visit is the room containing a 5th century Kings armoury with all the battle regalia used to keep control in that era. Amongst the weapons is a dried up human hand! As the story goes, the builder of the Charang monastery had his hand chopped off by the king after he had completed the job so he wouldn't build another like it! Brings new meaning to the term performance bonus!

We depart by mid morning and after a long haul out from the river valley the horses have a good sweat going. The trail is virtually a road at this point and we enjoy a solid canter. It sure is great to feel the wind in the hair! Finally we top a rise and look down into a large and open valley with green fields and sporadic villages. Largest of the villages is the high walled Lo Monthang, our ultimate destination and home of the King of Mustang.

Full of anticipation we enter the town and revel in this medieval environment. One can just imagine the security this place must have provided when under siege over the ages. There are houses, monasteries and shops inside the 5m high walls and in the centre is the Kings Palace. After setting up tents within a small enclosure outside the city walls we are invited to meet the King and his wife, the Rani. We are escorted into the palace by the king's bodyguard and exchange greetings with the Royal couple. We present some gifts we have brought for the occasion. After half an hour we leave them and all of us feel a real sense of privilege and appreciation for the hospitality we have been shown.

That evening we dine with a few of the locals. Interesting discussions abound and it is fascinating to realise how worldly these people are given their geographical situation. After such a full day, sleep comes easily!

Day 11.

We are woken early for a light breakfast. We mount our horses and are soon climbing the gentle slopes towards the very green meadows high above the town. After an hour and a half in the saddle we arrive at some large yak-wool tents surrounded by a couple of hundred yaks. The inhabitants of the tents have just finishing milking the yaks and are about to make the coveted yak butter which the locals consider a delicacy. We are invited into one of the tents for yak butter tea, which is made for us over a yak-dung fire. We drink the brew and converse with the nomads through our local guide.



A complete juxtaposition between the medieval and the modern, on top of the tent is a solar panel which powers a light inside, yet everything else about these peoples existence is from a different era to our own. Soon we are heading back down the valley and into Lo Monthang again after yet another very fulfilling day.

Day 12.

Lo Monthang to Ghemi: It is time for us to leave Lo Monthang behind and our small group of local friends make a special effort to bid us farewell. We retrace our steps back to Charang for lunch then explore new territory over the Charang La back to Ghemi. We walk the horses down the hill to arrive at the world's longest Mani wall, opposite Ghemi. Some major chortens nearby provide wonderful photographic opportunities with the changing light and the backdrop of the Dhakmar cliffs and before long we cross the river into Ghemi again. That night we are drawn into a harvest festival where the locals soon have us up on our feet to join them in traditional Sherpa dance.

Day 13.

We ride to Syangboche for lunch then drop into the Syangboche Khola with its' steep and narrow gorge which is sheer for hundreds of metres above us. A right turn in the trail takes us to Bheni Khola, an ancient cave perched on the side of the hill and apparently the place where the Guru Rinpoche (Padmasambhava) meditated to achieve enlightenment. Now there is a resident monk living a solitary existence and he graciously showed us around the cave and explained the meaning of all the statues and the history of the cave. A huge stalagmite stands inside the cave which looks unnatural in the setting of the conglomerate rock of the cave.



We then descend into the valley again and begin the big climb out of the valley to come out on the Bheni La. A short descent brings us back to Samar for the night.

Day 14.

Samar to Chhusang. The descent to the Kaligandarki valley is like a homecoming and it is early afternoon when we stop to have a late lunch and set up camp at Chhusang. We wander around the riverbed in the afternoon looking for saligrams, black rocks that when split reveal nautilus type fossils inside. Altogether a pleasant afternoon activity before retiring for the evening.

Day 15.

Chhusang to Jomsom: We are seasoned riders now and it is no problem for us to ride through to Kagbeni without many stops. We complete formalities at the Annapurna Conservation Committee office then ride on to Elko Bhatti for lunch. We are asked to fill a questionnaire about our experiences and we unanimously agree that restricted entry into Mustang is a good thing as it protects the culture from mass tourism, even if we do have to pay a premium for the experience. The horses can sense that home is close by so we quickly cover the miles back down to Jomsom.

We celebrate the journey we have shared with our Sherpa crew as some of them are departing tomorrow. We share jokes and laugh away the evening. It seems hard to believe the journey is virtually over!

Day 16.

Jomsom to Marpha day trip: The team enjoys a late start so after a relaxed breakfast we ride to Marpha, a pretty town one hour down the valley. With its streets of large flagstones and whitewashed buildings this town seems very modern

to us after our Mustang experience. We meander through stores with lots of new paperback books and enjoy a relaxed lunch before returning to Jomsom.

Day 17.

We fly to Pokhara on the first flight at 8.00am. It is luxury getting back to the modern hotel and team members relax in the afternoon either shopping or merely wandering around the town. A haircut and shave at the local barber is a highlight for the gents and part of the Asian experience!

Day 18.

Too early we arrive at the airport for our flight back to Kathmandu. The high mountains glide past the window as we depart Pokhara and it is a time to reflect on our experiences in this incredible journey. In Kathmandu we meet up with our Sherpa team for a meal in an authentic Sherpa restaurant. It is sad to say goodbye to these wonderful, helpful people and we all promise to return soon!

Day 19.

Depart Kathmandu.

Note: The Mustang trek is of only moderate difficulty as we can ride the horses on most of the trail apart from steep descents and the occasional exposed section. Participants must be of reasonable health and capable of walking/riding for about 4-6 hours a day. As the highest point in the Mustang region is above 4000m there will be effects of altitude to some people, which is not necessarily determined by age, fitness or previous experience. However, by riding on horseback we are rarely faced with much in the way of strenuous exercise unless we choose to walk off the good food!

Our program involves slow and gradual climbs to higher altitudes with time to enjoy the views and meet the hospitable local inhabitants.

If there is any doubt about your health please consult a doctor first.

The Expedition Fee

The cost of the trek ex Kathmandu, Nepal is **US\$3725 per person**

This is an inclusive cost and covers the following:

- Nepalese government royalty fees
- All trek organisational requirements
- Hotel accommodation in Pokhara (1 night in Pokhara)
- All trekking permits
- Air transport and accommodation in lodges or tents ex Kathmandu
- All group equipment for the trek
- All use of horses
- All trek staff, including porter support.
- All meals after departing Pokhara and before arriving back in Kathmandu

The trek fee does not include the following:

- Air travel to and from Nepal
- Accommodation in Kathmandu
- Meals in Kathmandu and Pokhara

- Purchases of bottled water while on the trek, gifts or alcohol.
- Entry visas for Nepal (suggest getting 30 day tourist visa for Nepal on arrival into Kathmandu)
- Personal clothing and equipment including sleeping bag for camping
- Personal travel / cancellation insurance

Deposit

A deposit of US\$500 is payable to secure a place on the expedition trek.

Balance

The balance of US\$3225 is payable by 1 July 2007.

Payments

All payments can be made by bank transfer to the following bank and account:

**Bank of New Zealand
Offshore Branch
Wellington
New Zealand**

for the account of ;

Adventure Consultants Limited Account # **1000-594771-0000**

The corresponding USA bank to the Bank of New Zealand is **Citibank New York.**

Or, we can accept a US Dollar bank draft made out to Adventure Consultants Limited.

We can accept payment of your deposit via Visa, Mastercard or Amex. The balance of payment must be through one of the methods mentioned above.

Cancellation & Refund Policy

A trek member may cancel his/her participation on the following basis:

- A Prior to 1 August 2007, a refund of 50% of the 1 July payment.
- B After 1 August 2007 there will be no refunds.

Team members should take out private insurance if they wish to be covered against cancellation due to medical or personal reasons.

Team Membership

For the Mustang Trek we will take a maximum of 10 trekkers, hence spaces are limited.

Fitness and what to expect

We are travelling in high and remote terrain at moderately high altitudes. Members will best have a moderate level of fitness to enjoy the experience to its fullest. The trails are sometimes steep and a couple of the trek days quite long (about 6 hours). Weather can deteriorate and rain, strong winds and even some snow are possible. However we are travelling at a mild time of the year to best appreciate the surroundings.

Hotel

In Kathmandu we stay at the Hotel Tibet in Lazimpat near Thamel. This is a small family-run hotel, Adventure Consultants expeditions and treks have been staying at the Hotel Tibet for many years. It is our home away from home! The Hotel is a short taxi ride to the heart of the Thamel district which has a lot of shopping and restaurants nearby. You can view the details about the Hotel at www.hotel-tibet.com.

Horses

We do have the option to use horses on this trek and whilst horse transport is fairly common here, these steeds are not too similar to their western counterparts. The horses are mountain trekking horses from the region, which belong to local inhabitants of the region. Hence they are sure-footed and hardy whilst being of appropriate temperament for treks of this type.

The saddles and tack are all of reasonable quality and the saddles very comfortable for riding. During the trek a 'horseman' escorts our group to cater to the needs of the horses.

Food

Food will be of the highest standard possible, given the remoteness of the situation. Please inform us if you have any special dietary requirements. During the trek we will be dining in our mess tent with western meals.

Camping

In Mustang we will be camping in small mountain tents. Each person/couple will have their own tent with foam mattresses. Our 'tent village' will consist of a large dining tent with tables and chairs, a cook tent, and Sherpa and porter tents. Each day while we are travelling the camp will be dismantled and moved to our next camping location.

Equipment List

Please read the list enclosed detailing all necessary clothing and equipment to be individually provided by trek members. If you have any queries about items on the list please do ask.

Medical Examination

Trek members will be provided with a medical questionnaire and asked to visit their family physician to receive a full medical examination. This information will be sighted only by our expedition doctor(s) and treated with confidentiality. Advice on immunisations will be provided at this time.

Documents and Photographs

Expedition trek members will need to provide 3 passport-photographs for trekking permits and a copy of their passport bio-data page.

Clothing and Equipment Check List

Body Wear

- Thermal underwear (long)
- Polarfleece jacket and pants
- Mid layer polar fleece top
- Down jacket (to -10°C)
- Gortex rain parka and overpants
- T shirt and shorts
- Underwear
- Casual wear for evenings
- Comfortable riding pants and jacket

Head Wear

- Fleece/wool warm hat
- Baseball hat or sun hat
- Snow glasses
- Riding helmet optional

Hand Wear

- Fleece gloves
- Riding gloves

Foot Wear

- Socks x 3 sets
- Trekking/riding boots

- Lightweight running shoes

Trek Gear

- Small rucksack/daypack
- Waterbottle
- Medium sized kit bag/duffel with full length zip and lockable
- Extendable ski poles (optional)

Camping Gear

- Down sleeping bag (to -10°C)
- Headlamp and batteries

Accessories

- Personal toiletries
- Personal first aid kit
- Small kit bag/duffel (to store gear in KTM) Pocket knife / leatherman
- Personal medication & personal first aid kit
- Sun cream and lip balm
- Moist towels for personal hygiene
- Camera and plenty of film
- Camping towel

How to join the trek

If you would like to join the Mustang Horse Trek, please fill out an Expedition Application Form and forward along with the deposit.

If you require more information please contact us

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