

UPPER DOLPO TO JOMSOM, NEPAL



Bönpo gumpa (monastery) overlooking Phoksumdo Lake, Dolpo



HIGHLIGHTS

- Our Upper Dolpo to Jomsom trek is an epic journey travelling past the stunning turquoise Phoksumdo Lake to Shey Gompa and to the villages of Upper Dolpo. In our itinerary we travel from Upper Dolpo to Jomsom through a remote area near Tibet crossing a number of high passes.
- Upper Dolpo has been referred to as the last enclave of pure Tibetan culture with the landscape, culture and Buddhist religion of this region more like Tibet in pre Chinese times than the rest of Nepal. This region has a vast and rugged landscape inhabited by a hardy, enterprising folk who live in some of the highest villages in the world.
- This region is very rich in wildlife look out for herds of blue sheep, musk deer, Himalayan fox, marmots, eagles, lammergeier and of course the elusive snow leopard (in May 2010 we met an American group who saw a snow leopard an hour earlier).
- Gary Pfisterer will lead this trek in May 2011, for information on his background and experience please see <http://www.themountaincompany.co.uk/about-the-mountain-company/our-leaders/gary-pfisterer/>
- A special entry permit with surcharge is required to enter Upper Dolpo resulting in very few other trekkers visiting this remote region of Nepal.
- This trek follows a challenging section of The Great Himalaya Trail (“GHT”) for further information please see our Blog entry <http://themountaincompany.blogspot.com/2010/02/great-himalaya-trail.html>

“Upper Dolpo to Jomsom trek is arguably one of the best treks in Nepal! Many thanks for organising the trip.” Adrian Summers, May 2010

“I had an excellent trip to this remote area. In addition to the great walking I appreciated the attention to the detail around camp to make the experience as comfortable as possible. In particular, the use of camp chairs rather than stools and the provision of hot water after arriving at the campsite.” Bruce l’Anson, May 2010



REASONS TO CHOOSE THE MOUNTAIN COMPANY FOR UPPER DOLPO.

- The Mountain Company organised a successful Upper Dolpo to Jomsom trek in May 2010, please see our Trip Report at <http://themountaincompany.blogspot.com/2010/05/trip-report-for-upper-dolpo-to-jomsom.html>
- In terms of time of year our view is that the best time to do this trek is during the month of May, this gives you the best chance of successfully crossing the high passes out to Jomsom.
- Mountain Hardwear Trango 3.1 tents are used for all of our camping treks in Nepal. These are three person domed tents with plenty of space for two people sharing plus gear.
- We bring a satellite phone for logistical, safety and personal use.
- There will be a range of tasty meals for breakfast, lunch and supper. We bring along a supply of chocolate bars, Pringles, biscuits and nuts. For breakfast every morning we provide fresh coffee from our Bialetti Moka coffee machine.
- We bring a comprehensive first aid kit from UK (Life Systems Mountain Leader) plus high altitude medicine, antibiotics and other medicines. There will also be a portable altitude chamber (PAC or Gamow bag).
- Pre trip support will be given by Roland via email, phone or face to face meetings. In the past members have arranged to meet up prior to the trek.



UPPER DOLPO TO JOMSOM

Total number of days	28 days
Grade & days trekking	Strenuous, 22 trekking days
Accommodation	5 nights hotel, 22 nights camping
2011 price from Kathmandu	£3,350 (US\$4,895) Note: this includes US\$760 for Upper Dolpo permits
Minimum group size	6
Dates	May 1 st to 28 th 2011 April 29 th to May 26 th 2012

THE FOLLOWING IS INCLUDED IN THE PRICE OF THE TRIP

- Internal flight from Kathmandu to Nepalgunj & Juphal and at the end of the trek from Jomsom to Pokhara & onto Kathmandu.
- All transfers including airport collections.
- One day sightseeing in Kathmandu with Nepalese cultural guide and private vehicle.
- Twin share room at Hotel Tibet in Kathmandu.
- Breakfast only in Kathmandu, all meals included while on trek.
- Twin share tents while on trek using our three person Mountain Hardwear Trango 3.1s.
- All trekking arrangements including permits and fees, tents, Western and Sherpa guide, porters and cook.



- Restricted area permit for Upper Dolpo costing US\$760.
- Complimentary Upper Dolpo trekking map.
- Financial protection insurance with International Passenger Protection.
- Pre departure support and advice from The Mountain Company by email, phone or face to face meetings in London. After booking we will send our comprehensive “Nepal Trek Information” notes.

THE FOLLOWING SINGLE SUPPLEMENT IS AVAILABLE:

Single room supplement	£125 (US\$175)
Single tent supplement	£200 (US\$300)

Please note that if you are a single person booking on one of our trips you do not have to pay the single room supplement, this is only payable if you specifically request to have a room or tent to yourself. You will not have to pay this for this option if you happen to end up with a single room or tent due to odd numbers on the trip.

THE FOLLOWING IS NOT INCLUDED IN THE PRICE OF THE TRIP

- International flight to/from Kathmandu (London from £550).
- Travel & trekking insurance.
- Nepal visa for 30 days at US\$40 (approx £25).
- Lunch and evening meals in Kathmandu.
- Personal clothing & equipment, please see the Appendix for suggested kit list.
- Tips (guidance on amounts included in our “Nepal Trek Information” notes).
- Other items not listed in “What is included”.



YOUR COMPLETE FINANCIAL PROTECTION

In accordance with "The Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992" all passengers booking with The Mountain Trekking Company Ltd ("The Mountain Company") are fully protected for the initial deposit and subsequently the balance of all monies paid to us, including repatriation if required, arising from cancellation or curtailment of your travel arrangements due to the insolvency of The Mountain Company.



For further information about our financial protection insurance with International Passenger Protection please see Appendix 2.

PARTICIPATION STATEMENT

Participants should be aware trekking, mountaineering and travelling in a developing country are activities that involve a risk of personal injury or death. As a condition of booking you must accept these risks and be responsible for your own actions and involvement.

Adventure travel requires an open and flexible attitude. You may experience extreme conditions, unpredictable weather and last minute changes to the itinerary beyond our control. Lack of acclimatisation to high altitudes could also be a risk factor. Our itineraries allow optimum time for acclimatising although it is possible that some individuals might be slow acclimatisers.

The majority of our trips visit remote areas where you are away from normal emergency services and medical facilities. In case of a serious injury requiring hospitalisation, it has to be accepted by you, evacuation could take up to several days and may impede your ensuing recovery. Helicopters are the most usual means of evacuation, however they are not always available or they may be hindered by poor weather and flying conditions.



INTRODUCTION

Our Upper Dolpo to Jomsom itinerary visits a remote region of Nepal, instead of following the more popular Dolpo Circuit we head further north to an area very close to the Tibet border and then walked out on the challenging trail to Jomsom thereby completing one section of The Great Himalaya Trail (“GHT”).

Upper Dolpo has been referred to as the last enclave of pure Tibetan culture with the landscape and Buddhist religion of this region more like Tibet in pre Chinese times than that of the rest of Nepal. This region has a vast and rugged landscape inhabited by a hardy, enterprising folk who live in some of the highest villages in the world.

Upper Dolpo is a culturally Tibetan region in West Nepal and during the course of the trek we will visit many Buddhist and Bönpo (shamanistic pre Buddhist) monasteries. Up until 1996 foreigners were not allowed access to this region and as a result Dolpo-pa culture has largely been unaffected by tourism. Of particular interest is Shey Gompa, this is revered as one of most important in Upper Dolpo where twice a year pilgrims make a kora (or circuit) of Crystal Mountain known as a younger brother of Mount Kailash in Tibet.

Upper Dolpo was first written about by David Snelgrove in his book titled "Himalayan Pilgrimage" and more recently by Peter Matthiessen in "The Snow Leopard". This region was used as the location for Eric Valli's superb film "Himalaya".



DETAILED ITINERARY

It is our intention to keep to the day by day itinerary detailed below, although there might be some flexibility due to local conditions or other factors beyond our control. If this is the case the trek leader will do everything possible to work out the changes to the itinerary in order to minimise your inconvenience.

Day 1. Arrive Kathmandu and join the tour at the hotel.

You will be met on arrival at Kathmandu airport and driven back to the hotel. Please provide travel plans on booking and we will arrange the pick up and transfer. A full expedition briefing will be given by Gary in the afternoon.

Day 2. Sightseeing in Kathmandu (1,300m).

Today we explore Kathmandu with a good local guide, the day is flexible depending on what you would like to see but the most popular places generally are:

- Pashupatinath is a Hindu temple with burning ghats on the banks of the Bagmati river.
- Swayambhunath, also known as the monkey temple, is climbed by a long set of steps and has great views of Kathmandu.
- Boudhanath stupa has many traditional gompas hung with strings of multi coloured prayer flags, it attracts many Sherpas and Tibetans for the circumambulations of the stupa (koras).
- Durbar square, which is one of the old capitals of the Kathmandu valley, has a blend of Hindu and Buddhist temples.

Day 3. Fly to Nepalgunj.

We take the short flight to Nepalgunj in western Nepal, there are good views from right side of the plane as we fly close to the Himalayan mountains. Nepalgunj is the largest city in the Terai with a hot and humid climate. Overnight Hotel Batika or Sneeha.

Day 4. Fly to Juphal, trek to Chhepka (2,840m)- 6 to 7 hours walking.

After an early morning start we take a 45 minute flight to Juphal the main airport of the Dolpa district. After an exciting landing at the narrow STOL mountain airstrip we



meet the trek crew. After loading up our pack animals and final preparations we start walking through terraced fields to the Thuli Bheri River. We cross a new suspension bridge at the confluence with Suli Gad River flowing down from Phoksumdo Lake.

At Sulighat our permits will be checked at the entrance to Shey Phoksumdo National Park, this is Nepal's largest and the only trans-Himalayan National Park in Nepal covering an area of 3,555 square kilometres.

For the rest of the day we follow the turquoise Suli Gad, passing through thick forests of pine, fir trees and some giant red cedars. The hillside is covered with lush vegetation and it is likely you will see troops of langur monkeys. We pass the basic houses of Jyalhasa the winter settlement of the villagers from Ringmo. Further along we reach the grassy Campsite at Chhepka in a small Tibetan village, look out for the local women who wear Tibetan turquoise, coral and amber necklaces. Overnight camping.

Day 5. Trek to Amchi Hospital (3,110m)- 6 hours walking.

Today the trail switches over to both sides of the valley with crossings on good bridges sometimes we walk near the river and at other times on a narrow path high up in the gorge. We pass through forests of horse chestnut, larch and birch with several bamboo stands further up the valley.

By the afternoon the valley widens out and we pass a river confluence, one trail follows Pugma Khola to Jumla whereas we follow the Phoksumdo Khola heading north where we soon we reach a bridge that leads to Amchi Hospital. "Amchi" is name for traditional Tibetan medicine developed specifically for the climatic and cultural conditions of the Tibetan plateau. Overnight camping.

Day 6. Trek to Phoksumdo Lake (3,600m)- 4 hours walking.

From Camp we pass Palam another deserted winter settlement then continue climbing for another hour to ridge at about 3,800 meters where we see the highest waterfall in Nepal flowing out from Phoksumdo Lake. The trail descends through a birch forest to the mud plastered chortens and mani walls at the entrance to Ringmo village, it is a short walk to the camp on the shores of the stunningly beautiful Phoksumdo Lake. Overnight camping.



Day 7. Rest & acclimatisation day.

Today we visit the nearby Bönpo Buddhist monastery overlooking Phoksumdo Lake and then explore Ringmo village. Bönpos circumambulate chortens or other religious structures anticlockwise rather than clockwise as done by Buddhists. Overnight camping.

Day 8. Trek to Phoksumdo Lake North Camp (3,630m)- 4 hours walking.

We enter Upper Dolpo beyond Ringmo where it is necessary to have the restricted area permit. This is a superb trekking day following the western side of Phoksumdo Lake along a narrow cliff trail, this is the “Devil’s trail” followed by Thinle in Erice Valli’s film “Himalaya”.

The narrow path ascends to a ridge with spectacular views over the turquoise lake to Ringmo village and the peaks of Kanjiroba (6,612m), Norbung Kang (6,085) and Jhyarko Dingla (5,892m). We make a gradual descent through stands of birch trees to our campsite on the northern shore of Phoksumdo Lake. Overnight camping.

Day 9. Trek to Lar Tsa Camp (4,200m)- 7 hours walking.

Leaving camp we follow a wide valley with braided tributaries of Phoksumdo Khola, after two hours of walking through pine and birch forest we pass Chunemba camp. Today we have a river crossing so it is a good idea to pack your sandals.

We have lunch at the river confluence, after we follow a high trail over a grassy ridge avoiding the narrow gorge and then join the Tuk Kyaksa Khola where it widens below Lar Tsa Camp. This area is well known for producing a lot of *Cordyceps sinensis* also known as caterpillar fungus (or “yarchagompa”). The fungus is a medicinal mushroom which is highly prized by practitioners of Tibetan and Chinese medicine in which it is used as an aphrodisiac and as a treatment for a variety of ailments from fatigue to cancer. In May and June each year many people travel to this area to collect yarchagompa, our pony man from our trek in 2010 reckons he made over US\$3,000 doing this last year!

There is a spectacular view of Kanjiroba Himal (6,612m) from Lar Tsa camp. We believe stopping here, rather than continuing onto Snowfields Camp, is essential for acclimatisation before crossing Kang La to Shey. Overnight camping.



Day 10. Trek to Snowfields Camp (4,650m)- 3 to 4 hours walking.

From Camp we continue walking up the valley with sporadic juniper and azalea before crossing the river on a bridge. We then climb a scree slope on a switchback trail to a crest before descending to Snowfields Camp located next to the river, this Camp was named by Peter Mathiesson in his book "Snow Leopard".

Snowfields Camp is at the foot of Kang La that crosses into Dolpo and in the afternoon it is a good idea to walk towards the pass to check conditions, this is also a useful acclimatisation walk that will certainly help with tomorrow's walk. You are likely to see herds of blue sheep in this area. Overnight camping.

Day 11. Cross Kang La at 5,380m, trek to Shey Gompa (4,400m)- 6 to 7 hours walking.

Out of Camp cross the river then walk up grassy slopes to join the valley approaching Kang La. There are two passes one to the right is often snowy, in May 2010 we followed our mules and porters over the pass to the left. The trail is on loose, slaty scree so it is definitely a good idea to bring your trekking pole(s). It should take about 3 hours to reach the Kang La pass at an altitude of 5,380m, the panorama is spectacular with mountains in Tibet to north and huge massif of Dhaulagiri visible to east.

The descent from the pass is on soft scree making for a rapid descent down to Hubajung Khola where we have lunch. Shortly after the valley narrows to a gorge made of stratified orange rock, after an hour we pass a long mani wall and soon Shey gompa is visible down the valley. Shey is located at a river confluence under Crystal Mountain so called because of the veins of quartz, this is the holiest mountain in Dolpo and known as younger brother to Mount Kailash in Tibet. Twice a year pilgrims make a kora (or circuit) of Crystal Mountain, according to the lama the kora takes them 12 hours.

Our camp is located below the gompa in a grassy area with several herders' huts nearby. Overnight camping.

Day 12. Exploration day at Shey Gompa.

Today we have time to explore Shey gompa, relax and also do some laundry if you like. In the afternoon we recommend that you consider visiting Tsakang gompa perched on cliff an hours walk from Shey. You are likely to see several herds of



blue sheep along the trail, this section is also part of the pilgrims kora of Crystal Mountain. Overnight camping

Day 13. Cross Saldang La (5,060m), trek to Namgung (4,430m)- 5 to 6 hours walking.

Walking out of Shey we head east following Sephu Khola passing many mani walls, several isolated fields and doksas (seasonal settlements for yak herders). After one hour we take a valley heading to the north east that approaches Saldang La through a narrow gorge, this opens up to a bowl with loose scree in varying hues of yellow and orange.

On top of Saldang La the panoramic view encompasses mountains to the north into Tibet, east to Mustang and west to Crystal Mountain and Kanjiroba. The landscape now resembles the arid Tibetan plateau with narrow gorges as seen in Upper Mustang. The scenery is spectacular with folded strata visible in the rocks from the tectonic uplift of the Asian plate.

Descend from the pass keeping left as the dusty trail traverses through hillsides with virtually no vegetation apart from a few isolated pin cushion mosses. The trail continues descending to a stream then contours further until you see the ancient red and white gumpa perched on the cliffs above behind Namgung village. There are only a handful of stone houses in the village as well as a new monastery. Our Camp is outside the village below the entrance chortens and mani wall. Overnight camping.

Day 14. Trek to Dora Sumda (3,770m)- 7 hours walking.

Out of camp the trail traverses high above Namgung village and there are good views back to Saldang La crossed yesterday. After a few hours of contouring we reached a crest where we can see Saldang village below and mountains in Tibet to the north, look out for eagles soaring high in the skies.

The Dolpo-pa (inhabitants of Dolpo) lead a precarious life in this harsh environment trying to grow what they can from this high, dry land as well grazing large numbers of yaks and goats. To make up their shortfall in food supply they trade with Tibet using large caravans of yaks, in the past they traded salt for grain although nowadays is supplemented by manufactured Chinese goods and increasingly the profitable yarchagompa collected in the area.



In Saldang we will have lunch at Thinle's house from the film "Himalaya", in 2010 there was a lama in his fields carrying out a puja for rain. After lunch we take the high level trail to Karang village where the villagers will be busy ploughing and planting their fields. We descend to the valley level and walk along the river bank to our camp at Tora Sumda at the confluence of Wagon Khola and Panzang Khola. Overnight camping.

Day 15. Trek to Mischagaon village (4,200m)- 6 hours walking.

Today is one of the highlights of the trek following one of the most culturally interesting regions on the trek visiting a valley close to Tibet rarely seen by other trekkers. This valley is very rich in wildlife, look out for herds of blue sheep, musk deer, Himalayan fox and snow leopard (in May 2010 we met an American group who saw a snow leopard an hour earlier).

Shortly after Camp we cross the new bridge over Panzang Khola to the north bank. At Yangur village we will visit Dolpo's oldest gumpa surrounded by mani walls and nine chortens, after the village the valley narrows to a beautiful gorge with orange and yellow rock.

It is not possible to follow the Panzang Khola direct to Shimen village instead we have to bypass this precipitous gorge by crossing Muri La to the north. Tonight we Camp in a field on the outskirts of Mischagaon village (or also known as Mugaon). Overnight camping.

Day 16. Cross Muri La (5,030m), trek to Chanpola Goth near Shimen village (4,250m)- 6 hours walking.

From Camp walk through Mischagaon village then start ascending the slopes behind on a good trail up to Muri La. Looking south-west there are a number of 6,000m plus peaks Tshu Kalpo Kang Serku Dholam and Tripura Thumba and from the pass there are superb views over to Dhaulagiri.

There is a steep and loose descent from the pass so it is a good idea to bring your trekking pole(s). After dropping 500m we will stop for a lunch on a grassy area near a river, then from there follow a gorge passing a small waterfall to Chanpola Goth. Heading north from here there is a trail to Tibet where there is frequently trading between Dolpo-pa and Tibetans. Camp is in a grassy area next to a yak



herders' settlement, if you like you can do some laundry in the afternoon in the nearby river. Overnight camping.

Day 17. Trek to Tinje village (4,180m)- 7 hours walking.

From Camp it takes one hour to walk down the valley to Shimen village well shaded with groves of willow, this village has large areas of terraced fields planted with buckwheat, barley and potatoes. Look out for the new school and the mani wall over 600m long. The Panzang valley is one of the four main valleys that comprise Upper Dolpo, the others being Tarap, Nangkhong and Tsharka.

After an hour we walk up a tributary river underneath overhanging conglomerate then climb up to reach Mendo Camp on a grassy shelf. Shortly you will see Pu gumpa on the other side of the river, follow Panzang Khola for a further 1 ½ hour to our lunch spot next to Namygal chorten. After lunch the valley widens and after several hours we get to the hamlet of Phalwa inhabited by Tibetans where the men have red sashes in their hair.

Soon after we arrive to Tinje, this is a major village in a wide valley with extensive fields with two gompas and an old fort. The famous Dolpo-pa artist Tenzing Norbu Lama was born in this village, at a young age he trained in the art of traditional Tibetan thangka painting. Now Norbu's artwork has been exhibited internationally and through Drokpa, a nonprofit organisation, has been involved in helping to train villagers from Tinje to paint and produce handcraft leather goods.

To get to our camp for the night we walk past the disused airstrip then descend to a grassy area by the river. Overnight camping.

Day 18. Trek to Rapka (4,550m)- 6 to 7 hours walking.

Follow Panzang Khola past ruins of an old settlement on the other side of the river, after two hours we arrive to river confluence where we take the left tributary Kehen Khola for a further hour to reach our lunch spot in gassy area next to the river.

After lunch we continue walking up left bank of Kehen Khola passing several doksas before arriving to Rakpa where we camp for the night. Overnight camping.



Day 19. Cross Chharka La (5,015m), trek to Chharka (4,300m)- 7 hours walking.

From Camp we walk up valley after ½ hour cross Kehen Khola, in May we hopped over the river on rocks whereas in Autumn you should bring sandals as the water level likely to be higher at that time of year. At the confluence near a yak herder's camp we take the left river Myantoku Khola, this valley then opens out to a wide floodplain with a number of tributary rivers that we have to cross several times.

We start climbing to reach a cairn at 4,950m then the valley widens again with many yaks grazing on the extensive pastures. From here you should be able to see the cairn and trail climbing to Chharka La. It should take another hour to reach summit of the pass where we rewarded with a spectacular view, after a short descent the huge Dhaulagiri massif is revealed on the right.

It is a further 3 hours walk to get to Chharka village, the trail contours high above Chharka Tulsu Khola several times descending then climbing out of side valleys. After passing the entrance chortens and the school you then enter the old village with narrow alleys and their courtyards filled with goats, horses and yaks. Overnight camping.

Day 20. Exploration day at Chharka village.

Today you can explore the village or just relax before tackling the challenging days ahead crossing Sangda La passes out to Jomsom. We will also visit the two gompas, Buddhist and Bönpo, representing the two religions of Dolpo. This day could also be used as a buffer in case of any delays experienced so far along the way. Overnight camping.

Day 21. Trek to Norbulung (4,750m) or Molum Sumna (4,860m)- 6 to 7 hours walking.

Below Chharka village we cross Chharka Tulsu Khola on a metal box girder bridge and then at river confluence cross on a suspension bridge to follow left bank of Thasan Khola. The trail contours high above the river following a number of undulating ridges, after crossing a landslip zone we then descend to a grassy area for lunch (four hours).

After lunch we continue walking up the valley where the gorge narrows and after two hours you reach doksa at Norbulung, if we time we might consider continuing



for a further hour up to Molum Sumna in order to shorten tomorrow's walk.
Overnight camping.

Day 22. Cross higher Sangda La (5,515m), trek to Sangda Phedi (5,100m)- 6 to 7 hours walking.

After Norbulung Camp we pass through the high yak pastures of Molum Sumdo and then continue to a crest with a cairn at just over 5,100m. From here it is a further two hours to reach Sangda La walking across a grassy plateau with grazing yaks, we then start climbing the trail to the important Sangda La pass marking the boundary between Dolpo and Annapurna.

The trail descends on loose scree to our Camp at Sangda Phedi next to Bheri Khola, this is our highest camp of the trek so it will be a cold night. Overnight camping.

Day 23. Cross lower Sangda La (5,035m), trek to Sangda (3,800m)- 6 to 7 hours walking.

From camp follow Bheri Khola for 45 minutes then contour up and climb the lower Sangda La at 5,035m. The mountain vista is superb over to Kali Gandaki valley and Thorong La plus a range of 6,000m peaks including Tongu Himal and Mukot Himal.

There is a steep descent from the pass on a loose, slatey trail that crosses a crest with cairn at 4,800m then there is a further descent to a big rock at 4,500m. From here there are two trails one to the right is direct and steep that most porters will take whereas the longer trail to the left passes a waterfall then has a short climb to a saddle. From here descend to a grassy plateau with pine trees then turn right along a new trail that is exposed in places to the new suspension bridge at 3,900m. We will have lunch by the bridge, this morning's walk should take 3 ½ to 4 hours from camp.

After lunch there is steep climb then the trail traverses high above Kyalunpa Khola, after an hour we cross a crest with prayer flags at 4,150m. We descend through a steep gully to cross the first tributary river at 3,800m then we traverse for ½ hour to the second river again crossing on rocks. Soon after you will see the entrance chorten to Sangda village followed by a large wall around their fields, this is a compact village to maximise the amount of fields.



Look over to the other side of the valley and you will see the deserted remains of two villages abandoned when their water supply dried up, this brings home the precarious nature of living in this area. We set up camp in the school ground above Sangda village. Overnight camping.

Day 24. Trek to Dhagarjun (3,280m)- 7 to 8 hours walking.

From Sangda we start climbing to the first ridge at 4,050m then traverse to the second ridge at 4,120m. The trail descends into a U shaped hanging valley full of grazing yaks looking up this valley there is the peak of Tasartse 6,343m soaring above. The water supply for Sangda village is taken from the stream in this valley.

After an hour and half you reach a third ridge at 4,250m, from here it is worth taking a look back up the valley where you can now see both higher and lower Sangda La passes crossed over the last few days. It is a further ½ hour to the fourth ridge where there is a good view of Kali Gandaki valley and Thorong Peak. At the tenth ridge or Jeula Danda you get a spectacular vista encompassing Thorong Peak, Nilgiri and Annapurna. It is worth walking 100m to a cairn above his pass to get views into Upper Mustang as well as down to Muktinath and Kagbeni.

From here we have a long traverse heading south, we descend to a river gorge then continue to eleventh ridge where we have views of the green fields of Dhagarjun where we camp tonight. As there is no water source for a lunch spot we will take a pack lunch for today's walk. Overnight camping.

Day 25. Trek to Jomsom (2,670m)- 3 to 4 hours walking.

We climb up to one further pass before heading down to Jomsom located on the ever popular Annapurna Circuit. We stay in the Snowland Hotel probably the best place in Jomsom located opposite the airport. After hot showers you can explore Jomsom, check emails then in the evening we will have a party with our amazing crew. We will also hand out tips to our crew as a thank you for all their hard work throughout the trek. Overnight teahouse lodge.

Day 26. Fly to Pokhara & Kathmandu.

We take an early morning flight to Pokhara then onto Kathmandu. Overnight Hotel Tibet.

Day 27. Spare day in Kathmandu. Overnight Hotel Tibet.

Day 28. Fly back home.



ETHICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Mountain Company is committed to adopting a responsible attitude to the areas we visit. We are guests of the communities visited and with some thought and care we can ensure that everyone benefits from the experience.

We work closely with the International Porter Protection Group (www.ippg.net) who we support as a Camp 1 sponsor. We abide by their 5 guidelines for porter protection.

We also work with other organisations such as Climate Care (www.climatecare.org), Tourism Concern (www.tourismconcern.org.uk), Friends of Conservation (www.foc-uk.com) and Kathmandu Environmental Education Project (www.keepnepal.org).

We have developed a Responsible Tourism policy which aims to ensure that The Mountain Company and its clients act in a way that is socially, environmentally and culturally sound.

The Mountain Company has joined the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Know Before You Go Campaign. The aim is to make sure travellers are properly prepared before travelling overseas. The best way to get the FCO latest advice is to visit their website at: www.fco.gov.uk/travel.

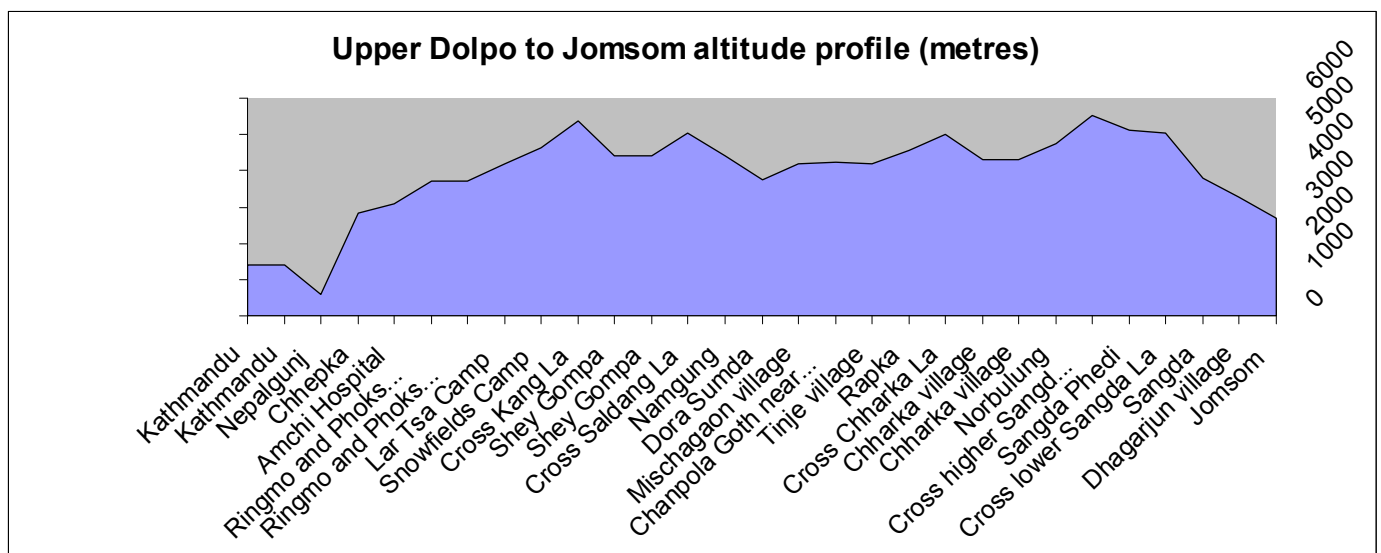




PRACTICAL INFORMATION

ALTITUDE AND ACCLIMATISATION

Our Upper Dolpo itinerary has been designed for gradual acclimatisation to take place, take a look at the altitude profile for the itinerary below:



There are ways of helping the acclimatisation process, as described below:

- Walk slowly: there is plenty of time included in the itinerary so there is no need to rush, go at your own pace and enjoy the incredible views!
- Drink lots of water: it is easier for your body to acclimatise when hydrated so drink water and avoid coffee, tea and alcohol.
- Consider taking diamox (acetazolamide): before using this drug we recommend consulting a doctor and thoroughly researching the pros and cons.



For further information we suggest you take a look at the following websites:

Base Camp MD website:

<http://www.BaseCampmd.com/expguide/highalt.shtml>

High Altitude medicine website:

<http://www.high-altitude-medicine.com>

Medex Travel at High Altitude:

<http://www.medex.org.uk/v26%20booklet.pdf>

BMC website:

<http://www.thebmc.co.uk/Feature.aspx?id=1746>

COMMUNICATIONS

We bring a Thuraya satellite phone for logistical, safety and personal use. Personal calls charged at £3 per minute and £2 to send and receive SMS text.

ACCOMMODATION IN KATHMANDU

In Kathmandu we use Hotel Tibet (three star). The hotel is located close to the British Embassy near to the centre of Kathmandu. It is within walking distance of the Royal Palace and the tourist hub of Thamel.

JUPHAL FLIGHT

Please note that the flights to and from Jupal are dependent on the weather and delays can happen. If you have to wait in Nepalgunj at the beginning of the trip your overnight accommodation is included and you will not have to pay extra for this.

In our itinerary one extra day in Kathmandu is included at the end of the trip in case of delays flying back from Jomsom. If you are delayed longer than this we can help reschedule your international flights however there is likely to be a fee charged by the airline for this. You will also have to pay for all additional costs incurred in Kathmandu such as accommodation and meals.

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A TYPICAL DAY ON TREK

The day starts with an early morning mug of tea brought to your tent by one of the cook's helpers. Before heading over to the mess tent for breakfast it is best to pack your overnight gear into your duffel bag. During breakfast the tents will be packed away and, after the porters have arranged their loads, they will set off on the trail in the cool of the morning.

After breakfast probably around 8am we start walking. The pace of the trek is leisurely with plenty of time to enjoy the scenery, take photos and explore the local villages. Lunch will be around 11am at a spot by the side of the trail and is prepared for us by the cooks.

There is more walking after lunch and normally you will get into Camp by mid afternoon with the tents already put up by the local staff. In the evening a three course meal is served in the mess tent around 7pm. After supper the western leader will discuss the plan for the next day with the group. People might stay in the mess tent chatting about the day's events for a while before retiring to their tent for the night.

FOOD

In Kathmandu there is a wide range of excellent restaurants to try out, some of the more popular ones are: K Too Steak House, Everest Steak House, Rumdoodles, Fire and Ice, La Dolce Vita, Mike's Breakfast and New Orleans. Breakfast is provided each morning by the hotel.

While on the trek, the cook will provide good quality food in sufficient quantities. For breakfast you are likely to get porridge or cereal, toast or chapattis, omelettes and a range of hot drinks. For our Camping treks in Nepal we provide fresh coffee from our Bialetti Moka coffee machine. On arrival to Camp in the afternoon you will be given tea and biscuits and a three course meal will follow later in the evening.



CLIMATE

In terms of time of year our view is that the best time to do this trek is during the month of May, this gives you the best chance of crossing the high passes out to Jomsom. September is probably more popular with trekking groups however often the passes are icy making travel impossible for the pack animals.

In 2010, our TMC group started this trek from Juphal on April 28th and finished in Jomsom on May 19th. We experienced dry conditions over all passes apart from a few residual winter snow patches on Kang La to Shey however our mules still managed to cross this pass fully loaded.

This trek will have a wide range of temperatures depending on the altitude and the time of day. In the mountains over 3,000m the nights will be cool, normally around 5°C, and during the day temperatures sometimes rise to 25°C. At higher altitudes temperatures range from about 15°C to -10°C.

CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT

A list of suggested clothing and equipment for the Upper Dolpo trek has been included in the Appendix below. This is a comprehensive list and experienced trekkers will often take only a selection of these items based on what has worked in the past. It is worth pointing out that you will need a sleeping bag for this trip.

If you do not have the clothing and equipment contained in this list then a good option might be to rent from the UK. Trek Hire is a company that rents out high quality items at competitive prices which would save you the expense of buying. The link to their website is <http://www.trekhireuk.com/>

Alternatively if you are going to buy then please contact the office for the Cotswold Outdoor promo code that entitles you, as a client of The Mountain Company, to a 15% discount in their stores and online.

Each trekker should bring one backpack for items required during the day. Your day backpack will contain items such as warm clothes, jacket, camera, water bottles, personal first aid kit and snacks.



The rest of your personal equipment packed in a duffel bag or backpack will be carried by a pony. **The maximum weight allowance is 15kgs.** Please ensure that your bag is marked clearly on the outside for easy identification

VISA REQUIREMENTS

All foreigners require a visa for entry into Nepal. It is your responsibility to obtain the entry visa. You can get from a Nepalese embassy overseas or on arrival in Nepal. Most people will obtain their visa on arrival to Kathmandu airport.

You will need one passport photo and the following fees dependent:

15 days USD\$25 or equivalent convertible currency

30 days USD\$40 or equivalent convertible currency

90 days USD\$100 or equivalent convertible currency

VACCINATIONS AND MEDICAL

You should obtain professional advice from a travel clinic or your local GP about which vaccinations to have before you arrive in Nepal. A dental check-up is a good idea as there will be no dental facilities while on the trek.

We bring a comprehensive first aid kit from UK (Life Systems Mountain Leader) plus high altitude medicine, antibiotics and other medicines.

FLIGHTS

We recommend Max Travel (ATOL bonded license# 4705) for booking international flights and other travel arrangements. Please take a look at their website at <http://www.maxtravel.co.uk/> or give them a call on 020 7095 0920.

There are a number of good online agents that we also recommend, they are:

Kayak: *an excellent flight cost comparison website* <http://www.kayak.co.uk/>



Traveljungle: *another good flight cost comparison website*

<http://www.traveljungle.co.uk/>

Cheap Tickets: this site quotes airfares in USD\$ & often is very competitive when translated back to GBP£ <http://www.cheaptickets.com/>

Southall Travel: very competitive prices for India, Pakistan and Nepal both online and telephone support <http://www.southalltravel.co.uk/>

INSURANCE

Travel insurance for any Mountain Company itinerary is a condition of booking a holiday. At the very least you should have emergency medical and repatriation insurance which must include the cost of mountain rescue. Cancellation insurance is strongly recommended as all deposits paid to The Mountain Company are non-refundable.

To get an online quote for your personal travel and trekking insurance (UK residents only), take a look at Snowcard's website at

http://www.snowcard.co.uk/pages/d_select1.asp?referrer_id=MC



Please note that The Mountain Company do not act as an agent of Snowcard Insurance and any policy bought via this web link is effected directly with Snowcard Insurance Services Limited.

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CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

For those of you who are visiting Nepal for the first time we have provided some cultural information to help you fit in and feel at ease:

- The dress code is important for both men and women. Men and women should wear trousers rather than shorts while trekking.
- There are hot springs, rivers and lakes where it is pleasant to take a dip, it is fine for men to go bare-chested while bathing but they should not go nude. Women should try and be as modest as possible in these situations. Note: the locals do not allow swimming in Phoksumdo Lake please respect this while on trek.
- Hindus are concerned about the ritual pollution of food when it is touched by someone outside their caste or religion. Therefore, do not touch any cooked foods on display and when drinking from a container used by others avoid touching your lips to it. Do not eat food with your left hand and make sure you only give or receive food with your right hand.
- Shoes are considered degrading so keep them on the ground and remove them before putting your feet on anything. If you enter a Nepali house follow the example of your host in deciding whether to remove your shoes but on entering a temple or monastery you should definitely remove them.
- You will pass Buddhist mani walls, chortens, and stupas along the trek and to follow local traditions you should pass them on your right.
- When visiting a monastery or gumpa it is customary to give a donation for its upkeep.

SUGGESTED READING

Please take a look at The Mountain Company's bookstore for a wide selection of books and maps to Nepal, the link is at: <http://astore.amazon.co.uk/themountainco-21>

High Frontiers: Himalayan Pastoralists in a Changing World by Kenneth Bauer [this is highly recommended, it is available in Pilgrim's Bookshop in Kathmandu]



The Snow Leopard by Peter Matthiessen

Stones of Silence by George Schaller

Himalayan Pilgrimage by David Snellgrove

Himalaya DVD by Eric Valli

Altitude and acclimatisation information and advice

Going higher Oxygen, man and mountains by Charles Houston, MD

The High Altitude Medicine Handbook by Pollard and Murdoch

Medicine for mountaineering by James Wilkerson, MD

MAPS

Upper and Lower Dolpa 1:125,000 by Nepal Map Publisher Pvt. Ltd [by far the best available to this region]. **This map will be included in your welcome pack when you arrive in Nepal.**



APPENDIX 1

SUGGESTED CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT LIST

Footwear:

- Walking boots. A pair of water repellent boots with ankle support.
- Gaiters. A pair used to keep boots dry if walking through deep snow or on wet ground.
- Wool and liner socks.
- Trainers/sneakers or sandals. Can be used in Camp in the evenings.

Clothing:

- Waterproof jacket and trousers (goretex or similar).
- Trekking trousers.
- Long sleeve shirts (not cotton).
- Micro fleece.
- Mid to heavyweight fleece.
- Sleeveless (gilet) fleece.
- Thermals or base layer for top & bottom (merino wool or synthetic).
- Fleece pants.
- Medium weight down jacket (eg. The North Face Nuptse jacket 700 fill)

Handwear:

- Fleece gloves.
- Warm mittens and/or gloves.

**Headwear:**

- Wool or fleece hat.
- Sun hat.
- Bandana or scarf.
- Headtorch. Bring extra batteries.
- Sunglasses.

Personal Equipment:

- Sleeping bag (rated to -10C).
- Sleeping mat (eg. Thermarest). On trek we provide everyone with one foam mat however we recommend two layers for maximum insulation and comfort.
- Backpack large enough to carry water bottles, camera, lunch and extra clothing.
- Stuff sacks for keeping your gear dry and organised.
- Two water bottles (Nalgene wide mouth bottles are the best).
- Sunscreen and lipsalve with a high SPF.
- Insect repellent.
- Water purification tablets (Pristine, Biox Acqua or Acqa Mira).
- Favourite snack food.
- Books, ipod and cards etc.
- Trekking poles (highly recommended).
- Camera with spare batteries and memory cards.
- Insurance certificate.
- Earplugs (optional).
- Baby wipes (optional).
- Hand sanitizer (optional).

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**Travelling:**

- Duffle bag or large backpack for your personal gear on the trek (carried by a porter). Bring a small combination padlock to secure the bag.
- Travel clothes. You will need casual clothing for air travel days and time spent in Kathmandu.
- Toiletry bag include toilet paper, soap, towel, toothbrush, etc.

Personal first aid kit:

Note: we provide a comprehensive group first aid kit but please bring personal medications and other items you might use regularly such as:

- Any personal medications.
- Blister treatment (Compeed patches are the best).
- Rehydration powder eg Dioralyte.
- Analgesics (paracetamol, ibuprofen and aspirin).
- Plasters and zinc oxide tape.
- Throat lozenges.
- Diamox (helps with acclimatisation).



APPENDIX 2

INTERNATIONAL PASSENGER PROTECTION

In accordance with "The Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992" all passengers booking with The Mountain Trekking Company Ltd ("The Mountain Company") are fully protected for the initial deposit and subsequently the balance of all monies paid to us, including repatriation if required, arising from cancellation or curtailment of your travel arrangements due to the insolvency of The Mountain Company.

There is no requirement for Financial Protection of day trips, and none is provided. This insurance is only valid for packages booked that DO NOT include flights.

Consumer aware: Your booking is insured by IPP Ltd and its panel of insurers. This insurance is only valid for passengers who book and pay directly with/to The Mountain Company. If you have booked and/ or paid direct to a Travel Agent for a holiday with The Mountain Company please request proof of how the booking is secured as this will not be covered by IPP Ltd in this instance. For further information please go to www.ipplondon.co.uk

This Insurance has been arranged by International Passenger Protection Limited and underwritten by Insurers who are members of the Association of British Insurers & Lloyds Syndicates.

Claim procedures: download claim form from www.ipplondon.co.uk, any occurrence which may give rise to a claim should be advised within 14 days to: International Passenger Protection Limited, Claims Office, IPP House, 22-26 Station Road, West Wickham, Kent BR4 0PR, United Kingdom. Telephone: +44 (0) 208 7763752. Fax: +44 (0) 208 7763751.

In order to deal promptly with any claims hereunder it is essential that you retain all bills, receipts and other documents relating to your travel arrangements. Claims forms must be submitted to IPP within six months of date of insolvency they cannot consider or pay claims received after this date.