



## Nepal: 28d Upper Dolpo Trekking

**Grade: Sophisticated**

**Altitude: 5,360 m.**

**Tent Days: 22**

### Highlights:

Shey – Phoksudo National park is situated in the mountain region of Western Nepal covering parts of Dolpo and Magu districts. Gazetted in 1984, it is the largest national park in the country with an area of 3555 Sq. km. The main objectives of the park are to preserve the unique Trans-Himalayan ecosystem, its typical Tibetan type of flora and fauna, and to protect endangered species such as the Snow leopard, Blue sheep (only found Shey Gomba and Dolphu), Goral, Himalayan Tahr, Wolf, Jackal, Himalaya Black Bear, Himalayan Weasel, Himalayan mouse Hare, Yellow-throated Marten, Langur, musk deer and Rhesus Monkeys. About the local communities, there are several settlements in the park, totaling an approximate population of 2000. The people's lifestyle and culture are strongly reminiscent of Tibet. Local inhabitants believe in the Buddhist religion but the community of Phoksundo area practices Bon, a pre-Buddhist sect. Almost all villages have their own communal gompas. Route Highlight Duration: 28 days Best season: Oct-May Trekking grade: D (Challenging) Trek starting Point: Nepalgunj Ending Point: Nepalgunj Culture: Different Community with the majority of Tibetan, Thakalis, and Brahmins. Mode of Trekking: Fully Organized Camping Trek. Himalayan Sights: Annapurna, Dhaulagiri Himalayan ranges Thorong Peak and Tibetan rugged mountains. Highlights: Dolpa is the most remote and least developed isolated corner of Nepal, The region offers opportunities to visit ancient villages, high passes, beautiful Lakes, isolated Buddhist monasteries and also experience the vast array of wildlife inhabiting the region, including Blue sheep, Mountain Goat, Jackal, Wolf and the legendary Snow Leopard. Note: B=Breakfast, L= Lunch, D=Dinner

### Day to day:

#### Day 1: Arrival in Kathmandu o/n in a hotel (D):

Arrival and pick up from the international airport in Kathmandu, after some refreshment we will invite you for a traditional Nepali dinner.

#### Day 2: Sightseeing in Kathmandu valley o/n in a hotel.(B):

After breakfast, we will spend half our day sightseeing of Pashupatinath temple, which is one of the biggest Hindu temples of Lord Shiva in the world located on the banks of the Bagmati river. The temple served as the seat of national deity, Lord Pashupatinath until Nepal was secularized. The temple is listed in Unesco World Heritage sites list. We resume our trip to Boudhanath which is one of the holiest Buddhist sites in Kathmandu. The Buddhist stupa of Boudhanath dominates the skyline. The ancient Stupa is one of the largest in the world. You also visit Budhanikantha Narayan (Sleeping Vishnu) which lies peacefully on the coils of the multi-headed snake Ananta. Then we will go to the famous and relaxing Swayambhunath temple. The complex consists of a stupa, a variety of shrines and temples. A Tibetan monastery, museum, and library are more recent additions. The stupa has Buddha's eyes and eyebrows painted on. In the evening we will attend a typical Nepalese cultural program

#### Day 3: Flight to Nepalgunj o/n in a hotel. (B):

As per the flight timetable for Nepalgunj, we transfer to the domestic airport for one and half hour scenic flight to Nepaljung. At Nepalgunj, we will have time in the late afternoon or evening to have a look around the town which is situated on the southern Nepal border with India. Here it is quite hot and tropical in character

**Day 4: Flight to Juphal (2475m) and trek to Dunai (2/3hrs, 2145m) o/n in camp. (B.L.D):**

Early in the morning transfer to airport for the 45-minute flight to Juphal (2,420m) over the Himalayan foothills, with views of Annapurna and Dhaulagiri peaks to the north. On arriving at Juphal our trekking staffs will receive you, who have walked all the way from Nepalgunj with the camping gear and food supply taking 5-6 days. Here at Juphal, a short 2-3 hrs walk from the airstrip leads to our overnight camp at Dunai village (2,850m). Our first-day adventure begins with an hour downhill walk through the village below the airstrip, then leading through the terraced fields to the Bheri River and the narrow gorge taking 2-3 hours to camp at Dunai. This is a much larger village or small township, with a new hospital and it is administrated headquarter of the Dolpo region. Here we have ample time for the leisure walk around the village

**Day 5: Trek to Ankhe (2660m, 6/7hrs) o/n in camp +B+L+D:**

From the camp at Dunai, route diverts from the King Mahendra statue to cross the new suspension bridge and turning west, following the trail past the hospital. The path soon begins to climb up the side of the treeless Thulo Bheri valley, where it crests a ridge and then enters the Phoksundo river valley, finally reaching another ridge which is marked by cairns. During the walk can be seen the excellent view of the Kagmara Peak up the valley. This wonderful walk leads to a large side canyon, then descending gently on the long downhill slope through the scattered houses and walnut groves to a stream at 2,810m/9,217ft the trail below the stream leads to Dhera, a winter settlement where people from higher villages keep herds of cows and goats, however, the route leads the upper trail climbing to Rahagaon, a Thakuri village at 2,900m, where there is a Gompa dedicated to the local god, Mastha, guardians of this village. Trek from here passes through the lower part of Rahagaon and then descending to the village water supply at the Phoksundo Khola. Passing through another canyon, the path heads downhill through deep dark forests to a large stream, finally emerging at the entrance to the Shey Phoksundo National Park at Ankhe (2,660m).

**Day 6: Trek to Sulighat, (5/6hrs) o/n in camp +B+L+D:**

The journey from this camp leads to small ups and downs along the forested riverbed, then ascending steeply to about 2,900m. The ups and downs can begin to get a bit monotonous, but there are several streams along the way that offer a chance to cool off. The trail eventually leaves the forests and traverses a grassy slope high above the river. After a while, the path once begins to descend steeply into the forest until it reaches a cliff, whereby a dizzying drop on a wobbly stone staircase to the river bank has to be undertaken. You can almost look down between your toes to see the fast-flowing river below. After reaching the river at 2,950m, the trail becomes a collection of rocks and sticks that form a dike along the river bank. It's hard to imagine how the local people bring their yaks and cows along this trail, but they do. The journey continues upstream to a bridge near Ryajik village for the overnight camp 3,500m, after a good day's walk.

**Day 7: Trek to Phoksundo Lake (3500m, 4/5hrs) o/n in camp +B+L+D:**

The journey continues along the valley floor to the confluence of the Phoksundo and Pungmo Kholas. After crossing to the western side of the Phoksundo Khola on a wooden bridge, then the path follows the west bank of the Pungmo Khola which leads all the way to Phoksundo Lake 3,500m near Ringmo village. The path passes through a cedar forest and finally to Palam, a winter settlement used by the people of Ringmo village. The houses here are almost buried in the sandy soil. From here our route heads up to open country, at an altitude of around 3,350m. From the ridge, one can see the distant views of Phoksundo Lake and a spectacular 300m high waterfall, one of the highest in Nepal. After a brief stop here with the great views, finally, the walk descent through birch forests to the upper reaches of the Phoksundo Khola, and then to the picturesque settlement of Ringmo with its mud plastered Chortens and mani walls. From here it is a short walk to the shores of Phoksundo Lake for the overnight at camp.

**Day 8: Rest Day at Phoksundo Lake o/n in camp +B+L+D:**

A well-deserved rest day free from packing, at Phoksundo we can go for a short hike to the village of Ringmo and its Tibetan Buddhist Monastery is well worth a visit.

**Day 9: Trek to Phoksundo Khola (4/5 hrs) o/n in camp +B+L+D:**

From Phoksundo, adventure continues skirting the shore of the lake as it contours on a rocky ledge along the western bank. This unsteady trail suspended on a gangway of wood supported on pegs driven into crevasse in the rocks, signals

the remoteness of the area we are about to enter. At the westernmost edge of the lake the path leads through a lush meadow that opens up into the flood plain of the Phoksundo Khola. Then the walk leads through the valley, crossing the river and avoiding the occasional boggy marsh underfoot and then coming on the bank of the river to the overnight camp.

**Day 10: Trek to Phoksundo Bhanjyang, (6/7 hrs) o/n in camp +B+L+D:**

Today's first hour walk leads along the level path through a glacial valley that now heads due north. At the confluence of the Phoksundo Khola and another mountain stream, there is an old wooden bridge. Here taking the barely distinct path to the north-east of the valley. There is no trail as such, so it is necessary to clamber over the rocks and boulders and to ford a stream that rushes down the steep valley. A long climb brings us to a sheep meadow where the trail veers up a steep ravine. A hard climb to the top brings to yet another valley where one can see the Kang-La, the pass which will lead towards Shey Gompa. Overnight camp will be just before the pass in a place that Peter Matthiessen christened 'Snowfields Camp'.

**Day 11: Trek to Shey Gompa via Kang-La pass, (5/6 hrs) o/n in camp +B+L+D:**

Morning walk leads up to a steep climb littered with slate towards the pass. The climb is quite strenuous, especially on the slate scree. From the top of Kang-la 5,360m, there are excellent views down upon a large valley which is bisected by a gushing river. On descending steeply to the valley floor, then the path leads a long meandering trek along the banks of the river, crossing and re-crossing it several times. There are mud caves lining the hills overlooking the river and we pass through meadows where hairy yaks, hundreds of sheep and domestic mountain goat (Chengra) can be found grazing as well near the odd nomadic hut of the herders. A red chorten heralds our arrival at Shey Gompa 4,500m, where a quaint wooden, log bridge leads up to our destination at Shey Gompa compound for our overnight camp.

**Day 12: Rest day at Shey Gompa the crystal monastery:**

Another well earned rest day for local hike around Shey meaning crystal, this monastery is also known as the Crystal Mountain (well described in Peter Matthiessen classic novel Snow Leopard). The lama of Shey resides at a red hermitage known as Tsakang gompa which is north of Shey. It is rather a retreat than a monastery. Tsakang had been a meditation centre of many famous lamas from Tibet. Shey Gompa belong to the Chaiba community, followers of great saint Padmasambhava, known as Guru Ringpoche and Kagyu sects. It was the first Kagyupa monastery and its founder was the lama Tenzing Ra-Pa, built during 11th century. Shey is famous for its ancient pre-Buddhist culture the Bon Po. In Dolpo the ancient Tibetan way of life combines animism with the teaching of Buddha. Drutup Yeshe first introduced Buddhism in the Dolpo valley. Hundreds of years ago he came to Dolpo encountering a wild people whose supreme God was a 'fierce mountain and nature spirit'. Crystal Mountain is to the east of Shey gompa it is one of the strangest mountain, as its contorted cliffs are laced with quartz and embedded with a rich variety of marine fossils. Shey Gompa stands above the confluence of Kangjunala and Yeju Nala River. Near the confluence there is a group of prayer mills turned by water wheels. Each year people from all over Dolpo region travel great distances to attend the festival at Shey and to complete the circuit of Crystal Mountain. This is an amazing trip to here that certainly makes this trek as special as only few Westerners have ever ventured up to Shey gompa

**Day 13: Trek to Namduna Gaun via Saldang La (6/7 hrs) o/n in camp +B+L+D:**

The day begins by following a pleasant trail amidst juniper which descends into a grey, stony canyon. Then the path begins to zig zag over bare rocks and coarse eroded soil until it eventually brings us to the top of Saldang-la 5,200m. The subsequent descent towards the north which is long and tiring but we finally come upon the welcome sight of pastures of grazing yaks and sheep, and nomadic tents made from yak hair. This signals our approach to Namduna Gaun 4,800m. Like Shey, the Namgung monastery is of the Karma-pa sect. The monastery, a red stone structure, is built against the backdrop of a cliff on the north wall of a gorge. The red and white colors of the gimpy and its stupas are the only color in this stark landscape. The village itself consists of only six stone houses and has terraced fields on both sides of the tributary, which flow down to the Nam Khong valley. The economy of the region is based on agriculture, animal husbandry and trading. In Dolpo only one crop a year can be grown and this is mainly barley. In some villages, buckwheat, oil seed, potato and radish are also cultivated. Recently the main cliff temple collapsed and the villagers have now built a beautiful new monastery in the village itself.

**Day 14: Trek to Saldang (4/5 hrs) o/n in camp +B+L+D:**

On leaving the Namduna Gaun our route leads to a climb up a scree slope. Further on it begins a long traverse along some dusty barren mountains. After 3-4 hours of hard climb, Saldang (3,620m) appears below on a plateau high above the Nam Khongmala. It has a picturesque appearance. Saldang is the largest village of the inner Dolpo area. Though the village lies at about the same altitude as Ringmo it is totally different than Ringmo, a Himalayan village is situated below the tree line while Saldang belongs to the arid zone of the Trans-Himalayan Tibetan plateau. The village stretches for nearly two kilometers on an open slope. Saldang consists of five villages having about eighty well built houses with nearly six hundred people. Saldang is a prosperous village not only agriculturally but also for its strategic location on a trade route to Tibet. After the Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1959, trade with Tibet was virtually stopped. It has been restored to some extent through the barter system by which Tibetan salt reaches mid-Nepal. The Drokpa people from the western plains of Tibet collect salt from the dried lakes north of Tsangpo.

**Day 15: Trek to Yangze Gompa (4/5 hrs) o/n in camp +B+L+D:**

Journey from here diverts further far north to the least unexplored area by westerners or by any other commercial adventure trekking companies. The trail follows the Nang Chu river most of the way on this wild barren windswept terrain. Walk begins along the fairly gradual path with few ups and downs slope and then passing through the small settlement of Tiling and Lurigaon till we reach to our overnight camp at Yangze also known as Yangtsher, just before Yangze near Lurigaon. Here we cross the tributary Panzang river, a short walk from here brings us to an unexplored region of Yangze 4,960m and its very old Bon-Po Monastery for the overnight halt with time for exploration around the villages and the Monastery

**Day 16: Trek to Sibü (6/7 hrs) o/n in camp +B+L+D:**

From Yangze there are two trails that connect Sibü (4,560m), the long way trail heads due west passing through the very remote villages of Nishalgaon and further past Shimengaon. To save time and energy we will retrace the path back towards Saldang village which will be much easier and shorter than the other north western route. From Saldang the trail following the river bed we pass through terraced fields, stupas, chortens, heaps of mani stones and a Chaiba monastery, then passing through the Namdo village which is also prosperous with about sixty houses having nearly 400 inhabitants. It stretches for more than 5 km on the high slopes to the left of Nam Khong Khola. The Namdo monastery is located near the river bed. Our journey continues further down the river for another two hours to camp near the small settlement of Sibü.

**Day 17: Trek to Tokyu Gaon via Jeng la, (5/6 hrs) o/n in camp +B+L+D:**

The trail follows the Nam Khong Khola for a while on the morning walk coming across caravan of laden yaks that are on their way towards Tibet border. After days of following the same river, finally we part turning east till we arrive at the confluence of two small tributaries, from here our walk leads to a steep climb to the bottom of Jeng la (4,900m), where we stay for the overnight on a nice meadow.

**Day 18: Trek to Shey Gompa (6/7hrs, 4160m) o/n in camp. (B.L.D):**

Morning trek leads to two hours climb towards the top of the Jeng La (5,090m). An excellent view of snow ranges emerges to the south. The north face of the Dhualgiri massif shines in the morning light. After a wonderful moment here at the pass, our walk leads to descend on the rough path towards Tarap valley. By afternoon we come to the green valley which leads us on the pleasant track down towards Tarap Chu. Tarap is a fascinating valley with vast plains in high mountains. It extends twenty kilo meters along the river. Tarap Chu is having ten villages with its cultivated fields and many gompas, chortens of both sects. We stop for the night at Tokyu monastery (4,200m). This monastery also belongs to the Chaiba sect.

**Day 19: Trek to Dho Tarap, (4/5 hrs) o/n in camp +B+L+D:**

Today, the route leads eastward along the downhill course of Tarap Chu in a plain valley with patches of lush verdant grass on both sides of the river which is completely different from other parts of inner Dolpo. There is also a marsh which is a common feature in the Desert Mountains of Tibet and the Ladakh Himalaya. In this valley both Bon Po and Chaiba sects reside together in harmony. After a short trek on this beautiful valley we come to Dho Tarap (4,040m) for the overnight camp with ample time to visit around the villages. This village is surrounded by an irregular stone wall. At

Dho, about 40 houses are divided into three clusters and built in a haphazard way inhabited by few Tibetans and mostly Magars hill tribe of Nepal who have lived here for many generations.

**Day 20: Rest Day at Dho Tarap+B+L+D:**

Today, we have a full rest day or exploration of local areas. During the visit you will have an opportunity to make friends with the people from Dolpo. They wear home spun clothing that is sometimes dyed maroon and they prefer Tibetan style somba (boots with upturned toes) for footwear. Men and women often wear both religious amulets and strings of coral and turquoise. The villagers are both Bon Po and Buddhist of Nyingmapa sect. The Buddhist gumpa is the nearest one to the campsite, the Bon Gumpa is further 40 minutes walk

**Day 21: Trek to Tarap Khola (Kamakharka) (6/7 hrs) o/n in camp +B+L+D:**

Today can be quite a long day or moderate walk depending upon the choice of several different campsites so the itinerary can be as flexible as you like. From the quite bare country around Tarap, we descend towards a wide valley which eventually narrows into a gorge. We walk along the juniper bush and wild rose, typical of dry inner Himalayan valleys, to just above the tree line. On this route we might see herds of blue sheep. By the afternoon time we reach at the confluence of the Tarap Chu and the Lang Khola, a stream that joins with Tarap River from further east. We will make our camp on a nice meadow, this place is also known as Kamakharka (3,800m), while our porters will perhaps take shelter in a nearby spacious cave.

**Day 22: Trek to Khanigaon (4/5 hrs) o/n in camp +B+L+D:**

This morning again continues down the gorge of the Tarap River, at times alongside it, rising high above on a trail built from the steep slopes might come across people from Dolpo taking their herds to lower pastures for the winter. There are many possible campsites by the river. This will be one of the exciting days of this trip walk, as the valley becomes so narrow in a deep gorge that in some places we can jump from one side to another. Sometimes there is no trace of any path and we have to walk across stone slabs fitted on logs in between the walls which act as a bridge. The gorge also provides unexpected adventure and thrills. At some places, the bridges are either damaged or washed away and we may be forced to cross the icy torrent on foot. Finally, reaching to the camping spot beside the Tarap khola at Khanigaon (3,150m).

**Day 23: Trek to Tarakot (4/5 hrs) o/n in camp +B+L+D:**

Today from this camp path follows an indistinct trail to the village of Lalberi. Then passing through an area of impressive forest, before descending into another gorge our walk continue following the river again downstream to reach Tarakot where colourful terraced fields greet us. Tarakot (2,537m) is an old fortress town known by the local people as Dzong, meaning 'fort'. Before the Gorkha dynasty Tarakot was the capital and had a dzong. The famous Sandul gumpa lies about 8 km east of Tarakot and at the junction of Barbung Khola and Tarap Chu. It stands on a knoll to the south of Bheri River and at one time supervised collections of tolls for the trading caravans traversing an area called Tichu Rong. It is possible to camp by the river about 150 meters below Tarakot, near the police post or we climb a steep hill for over an hour to the small village on a spur on the other side of a valley opposite Tarakot. There are chortens and a gumpa here on the edge of a grassy plateau, with an interesting solitary tree.

**Day 24: Trek to Dunai, (5/6 hrs) o/n in camp +B+L+D:**

The walk continues beside the Bheri River in a tremendous gorge with pine trees and an ingenious path built about seven meters above the river. On reaching Dunai (2,140m) after completing the circuit with time for celebration, particularly as bottled beers is available in Dunai or else try the local brew.

**Day 25: Trek to Jhuphal, (2/3 hrs) o/n in camp +B+L+D:**

We retrace the journey back to Jhuphal, which is a short distance walk along the Bheri River to the small airstrip for the last overnight camp of this great memorable adventure.

**Day 26: Flight to Nepalganj, flight further on to Kathmandu o/n in a hotel. +B:**

Early morning, a short scenic flight for thirty five minutes to Nepalgunj, over the Himalayan foothills overlooking stunning

views of the main peaks including Annapurna and Dhaulagiri to the north. On arrival at Nepalgunj depending upon the connecting flight schedule to Kathmandu. If it is in the afternoon have time for few hours refreshment in the comfort of the Hotel Batika or similar at Nepalgunj. Then connect with the flight back to Kathmandu

**Day 27: Rest day in Kathmandu o/n in a hotel +B:**

Rest day in Kathmandu for shopping.

**Day 28: Departure +B:**

Transfer to international airport in Kathmandu.(B)

**What is included?**

- Arrival and transfer transport from to international and domestic airport in Kathmandu
- Government licensed guide for sightseeing in Kathmandu valley
- Government licensed trekking guide and porters during trekking
- 3 meals a day during trekking (B, L, D)
- Welcome dinner by arrival
- Hotel with breakfast in Kathmandu and Nepalganj
- Domestic flight tickets and airport tax (Kathmandu - Nepalganj – Jumla - Nepalganj - Kathmandu) During the trek:
- Overnight in 2-man-tents incl. sleeping mat, camping equipment and staff insurance, staff pension's fund
- Trekking special permit and conservation fee
- All the necessary kitchen equipment, member, dining, kitchen and toilet tent during trekking
- Staff insurance, pension fund, wages, equipment and local transport
- Accommodation in hotel and camp

**What is excluded?**

- Travel insurance incl. Repatriation by helicopter rescue in case of emergency
- Personal expenses and tips for staff
- Nepal visa fee USD 40 for 30 days and 4 passport sized pict
- Personal expenses like soft and hard drink, laundry, telephone
- Lunch and dinner in Kathmandu and Nepalganj
- International flight ticket
- Extra transport or porter incase of accident or any emergency