Lower Dolpo Trek

> Dolpo is culturally and geographically similar to Tibet, as locals still practice ancient Bon religion that predates Buddhism. A visit to 11th-century Sandul Gompa is a major highlight of this trek and so is Thashung Gompa located near Phoksumdo Lake.

Nepal is known for its stunning landscapes and rich cultural heritage, and the Lower Dolpo Trek is a perfect example of both. This off-the-beaten-path trek offers a unique experience for those seeking to explore the remote corners of Nepal. With breathtaking views of snow-capped peaks, ancient monasteries, and traditional villages, the Lower Dolpo Trek is an adventure of a lifetime.

Location and History

The Lower Dolpo Trek is located in the Dolpo region of Nepal, which lies in the western part of the country. The region is bordered by the Tibetan Plateau to the north and the Dhaulagiri range to the south. The Dolpo region is divided into two parts: Upper Dolpo and Lower Dolpo. The Lower Dolpo Trek takes you through the southern part of the Dolpo region, which is less visited than its northern counterpart.

The Dolpo region has a rich history and culture. It was once an important trading route between Nepal and Tibet, and many ancient monasteries and fortresses can still be found along the trekking route. The people of the Dolpo region have a distinct culture and language, and they have preserved their traditions and way of life for centuries.

Trekking Route and Highlights

The Lower Dolpo Trek is a moderate to strenuous trek that takes around 17 to 18 days to complete. The trek starts from Juphal, a small town in the Dolpo region that can be reached by a short flight from Kathmandu. From Juphal, the trek takes you through remote villages, ancient monasteries, and high mountain passes.

One of the highlights of the Lower Dolpo Trek is the Phoksundo Lake, a turquoise blue lake that is considered one of the most beautiful lakes in Nepal. The lake is surrounded by snow-capped peaks and is home to a variety of aquatic life, including trout fish. The trek also takes you through the Shey Phoksundo National Park, which is home to rare wildlife such as the snow leopard, musk deer, and blue sheep.

Another highlight of the trek is the traditional villages that you will pass through. The people of the Dolpo region have a unique culture and way of life that has remained unchanged for centuries. The villages are adorned with colorful prayer flags, and you will get a chance to interact with the locals and learn about their customs and traditions.

Best Time to Trek

The best time to trek the Lower Dolpo Trek is from April to November. During this time, the weather is mild and the skies are clear, offering stunning views of the surrounding mountains. The trek can also be done during the winter months, but it can be more challenging due to the snow and cold temperatures.

Accommodation and Permits

Accommodation along the Lower Dolpo Trek is basic and consists of teahouses or camping. Teahouses are small lodges that offer a bed and a meal, while camping involves setting up tents in designated areas. Permits are required to trek in the Dolpo region, and they can be obtained from the Nepal Tourism Board in Kathmandu or from a registered trekking agency.

Conclusion

The Lower Dolpo Trek is a journey through Nepal's hidden gem, offering a unique experience for those seeking to explore the remote corners of Nepal and immerse themselves in the rich culture and history of the Dolpo region. With breathtaking views of snow-capped peaks, ancient monasteries, and traditional villages, the Lower Dolpo Trek is an adventure of a lifetime. Trekking through the Shey Phoksundo National Park and visiting the Phoksundo Lake are just some of the highlights of this trek. It's important to note that this trek is moderate to strenuous, and basic accommodation and permits are required. The best time to trek is from April to November, but it can also be done during the winter months with proper preparation. Overall, the Lower Dolpo Trek is an unforgettable experience that should be on every adventurer's bucket list.

Duration: 25 days

Price: $3610

Rating: 5 Star

Grade: Strenuous

Destination: Nepal

Activity: Trekking in Nepal

Region: Dolpo Region

Quick Facts

Location: Lower Dolpo Trek is located in the far-western region of Nepal, bordering Tibet.

Difficulty: The trek is considered moderate to strenuous and requires good physical fitness.

Duration: The trek takes around 18-20 days to complete, depending on the route and itinerary.

Accommodation: Basic lodges and tea houses are available along the trekking route, but camping is also an option.

Permits: Trekkers need to obtain a special permit to enter the Shey Phoksundo National Park, which is mandatory for the trek.

Best time to go: The best time to go for the Lower Dolpo Trek is from April to November, but it can also be done in winter with proper preparation.

Attractions: The trek offers breathtaking views of the snow-capped peaks, traditional villages, ancient monasteries, and the turquoise Phoksundo Lake.

Altitude: The trek reaches a maximum altitude of 5,360 meters at the Kang La Pass. Culture: The Dolpo region is home to the indigenous people of Dolpo who have preserved their unique culture and traditions for centuries.

Wildlife: The Shey Phoksundo National Park is home to a variety of wildlife, including snow leopards, Himalayan black bears, musk

deer, and more.

Equiment Lists:

1. Trekking boots
2. Thermal innerwear
3. Warm jackets and pants
4. Fleece or down jacket
5. Windproof and waterproof jacket and pants
6. Gloves and hat
7. Sunglasses
8. Sunscreen
9. Trekking poles
10. Sleeping bag and liner
11. Water bottle or hydration system
12. Headlamp or flashlight
13. First aid kit
14. Toiletries (toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, etc.)
15. Camera and extra batteries
16. Power bank and charging cables
17. Duffel bag or backpack
18. Waterproof cover for backpack or duffel bag

It's important to note that this is just a suggested equipment list and you may need to adjust based on your individual needs and preferences. It's also important to pack light and only bring essentials to make the trek more comfortable and manageable.

Itinerary:

Day 1: Arrival in Kathmandu [1,300m]

Upon your arrival at Tribhuwan International Airport (TIA), you will be met by our Airport Representative, and transfer to the hotel. There will be a brief pre-trip group discussion followed by a welcome dinner in the evening.

Day 2: Sightseeing and Trek Preparation

We do the sightseeing tour in the historic Durbar Square, the sacred Hindu temple of Pashupatinath, the famous 'Monkey Temple' (Swayambhunath) and Buddhist shrine (Bouddhanath), which is one of the largest stupas in Aisa are listed as the UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Day 3: Fly from Kathmandu to Nepalgunj

We transfer to the domestic airport for one and a half hour scenic flight to Nepalgunj, a tropical zone of Nepal. Here, we have a look around the town lying with the Indian border.

Day 4: Nepalgunj to Jumla 2370m 35 minutes trek to Gothi Chaur [2700m]

We take a morning flight to Jumla. We then commence our trek toward Gothi Chaur where we stay. We will cross the Tila Khola and the Chaudabise Khola, several villages. forest of maple and walnut with wildflowers. Beyond the meadow, the trail climbs to a small pass before descending again to Gothi Chaur.

Day 5: Gothi Chaur - Naphukana [3080m]5-6 hrs

Our trail follows the Tila Khola through the cultivated land of corn, potato, buckwheat, and barley until the valley narrows and then we will be entering a forest. We will be passing through the village of Chotra dotted with typical Tibetan mani walls. After a short distance, we will arrive at another village, Naphukana with a large gompa.

Day 6: Naphukana - Chaurikot [3060m] 6 hrs

From Naphukana the trail goes gradually up through a forest to Mauri Lagna pass [3820m] from where an excellent view of snowy peaks to the north and east are seen. Descending from the pass, the trail passes through a slope before dropping into a forest of pine and oaks. We then enter the Bheri Valley and will come to the village of Chaurikot.

Day 7: Chaurikot -Bheri riverside [2610m] 5 hrs

The trail goes to Balasa village from where we will be able to see Kagmara peak. The trail descends to a stream via jungle. Passing through the apple orchards of Jyakot, we will then descend to the village of Rimi before following a rocky trail down to the Bheri Riverside.

Day 8: Bheri riverside -Garpung khola [2900m] 5 hrs

The trail proceeds along the west bank of the Bheri River, passing Hurikot and arrives at the entrance of the Shey Phoksumdo National Park. We will then come to the meeting point of the Garpung and Jagdula Khola. Following the Garpung Khola, we will reach the riverside.

Day 9: Trek to Kagmara [3500m] 4.30hrs

We carry on following alongside the Garpung Khola, ascending gradually towards the Kagmara La. It will be a short trek for it is mainly done so for acclimatization.

Day 10: Trek to Kagmara phedi [4000m] 5 hrs

We will be passing through the eastern side of the river, where the valley narrows and the river becomes a series of waterfalls. Walking up to a moraine below the Kagmara La and we will fix our camp amidst the boulders. Wonderful view of the surrounding peaks will be at our doorstep.

Day 11: Kagmara phedi - Pungmo Khola Crossing Kagmara La [5115m]- 6hrs

We will start our journey early today and ascend at the side of the Kagmara Glacier to the Kagmara La. After a 900meter's descent, we will reach the meadow of the Pungmo Khola.

Day 12: Pungmo- Khola Pungmo 5.30 hrs

The trail enters birch and juniper forest which gives way to blue pine. As the trail contours the side valleys, one can enjoy the brilliant view of Kanjirolba peak then continue the journey to Pungmo village located around barley fields.

Day 13: Khola Pungmo -Phoksundo Lake 6 hrs

We walk downhill to the national park headquarters in Sumduwa before joining the trail up the Phoksundo Khola to Phoksundo Lake. We will walk up through a forest to the winter settlement of Palam and continue ascending through the open country to a ridge from which there is a good view of the lake. In the meantime, we'll have a great view of the impressive waterfall- the highest waterfall in Nepal. The trail then makes climbing gently to Ringmo village after an initial descent then after crossing a bridge below Ringmo, the trail continues northwards to the shores of Phoksumdo Lake.

Day 14: Rest for acclimatization

Today will be a rest day for acclimatization. In the background of the lake on the western side, there is a huge snowy peak known as MT Kanjirolba or Kanchen Ruwa. The trail leads through a stand of juniper trees to an old dilapidated gompa which overlooks on the lake. Buddhist paintings and statues within the temple and chapels are the evidence of the ancient Bonpo religion.

Day 15: Phoksundo Lake - Baga La phedi 5 hours

We go back over our route to Ringmo and then follow a trail eastwards, through a forest of juniper and blue pine. The trail follows alongside the river up the valley to a waterfall and ultimately to the base of the Baga La Phendi.

Day 16: Baga La phedi - cross Baga La [5090m] & trek to Numa La phedi [4800m] 6.30hrs

It's a 3-hour steady climb to the top of the Baga La, the second high pass we then gradual descend for a few whiles and ascend to the foot of the Numa La.

Day 17: Cross Numa La [5360m] and trek to Do [4100m] hrs

Climbing through dry land to Numa La, the final high pass of this trek which is marked by Mani stones and the flutter of the prayer flags from here Dhaulagiri is clearly seen. The trail now descends to a huge mani wall to the Tarap valley and the settlement of Do.

Day 18: Rest day at Do

Taking a rest in the large settlement of Tarap and has several Gompas itself interesting. Visiting Ri Bhunpa Gompa above the village and Shipchhok with a Bonpo gompa in the east surely worth exploring. You will have opportunities to have great views of the valley and surrounding snow peaks.

Day 19 : Do -Lahini [3560m] 5 hrs

We start our journey as usual. The trail is almost flat and follows the river until we cross a gorge which has large rose shrubs and other wildflowers, and after crossing the river several times, the trail opens up to a flat area into Lahini.

Day 20: Lahini -Tarakot [2600m] - 5 hrs

Today's steep, narrow and dangerous trail will be an unforgettable memory for you. Eventually, the valley widens and the route becomes easier as we approach the village of Khanigaon. We will then climb above the river before descending towards the Barbung Khola and into the fortress village of Tarakot.

Day 21: Lahini - Dunai [2100m] 5

We will follow along with the Barbung Khola downstream along the south bank to the Lawan village, before crossing to the north bank and walking for few more hours to Dunai.

Day 22: Trek to Juphal [2500m]

Finally, we trek back to Juphal following the river trail downstream. We will also be walking uphill through meadows and past a few houses to the small hotels at Kala Gaura (2090m). We will finally reach Juphal in a few hours walking. This is the ending point of our trek.

Day 23: Fly Juphal/Nepalgunj/Kathmandu

We will take a flight from Juphal to Nepalgunj. We will then take a connecting flight from Nepalgunj to Kathmandu.

Day 24: Free and easy day in KTM or Sightseeing in Bhaktapur city

Day 25: Fly back home.

Highlights:

- Shey Phoksundo National Park: This national park is home to the Phoksundo Lake, one of the main attractions of the Lower Dolpo Trek. The lake is renowned for its turquoise blue color and is the deepest lake in Nepal.
- Phoksundo Lake: This stunning lake is a must-see highlight of the trek. The lake is surrounded by snow-capped peaks and is considered one of the most beautiful natural attractions in Nepal.
- Ancient Monasteries: The Lower Dolpo region is rich in cultural and religious history. The trek takes you through several ancient monasteries and gompas, including the Shey Gompa and the Bon Gompa.
- Traditional Villages: The trek also passes through several traditional villages where you can experience the unique culture and lifestyle of the Dolpo people. These villages have preserved their traditions and way of life for centuries.
- Kang La Pass: The trek reaches a maximum altitude of 5,360 meters at the Kang La Pass, which offers stunning panoramic views of the surrounding mountains and valleys.
- Wildlife: The Shey Phoksundo National Park is home to a variety of wildlife, including snow leopards, Himalayan black bears, musk deer, and more. If you're lucky, you might spot some of these incredible creatures along the trekking route.
- Natural Beauty: The Lower Dolpo Trek is renowned for its stunning natural beauty. From the snow-capped peaks to the turquoise Phoksundo Lake, the trek offers breathtaking views at every turn.

Other Features:

- Location: Lower Dolpo Trek is located in the far-western region of Nepal, bordering Tibet.
- Difficulty: The trek is considered moderate to strenuous and requires good physical fitness.
- Duration: The trek takes around 18-20 days to complete, depending on the route and itinerary.
- Accommodation: Basic lodges and tea houses are available along the trekking route, but camping is also an option.
- Permits: Trekkers need to obtain a special permit to enter the Shey Phoksundo National Park, which is mandatory for the trek.
- Best time to go: The best time to go for the Lower Dolpo Trek is from April to November, but it can also be done in winter with proper preparation.
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