

Upper Dolpo

24 Day Trekking Adventure

The Upper Dolpo Trek is in a very isolated region which has been strictly off-limits until only recently, so the traditions and way of life have remained intact. In 1990 the first British tour operator organized a trek from east to west, from Pokhara to Jumla through Lower Dolpo.

Trek Overview

Trip Code:	UDOL24	Duration:	24 Days
Trip Level:	Moderate	Max. Altitude:	4,135m / 13,562 ft
Start Point:	Kathmandu	End Point:	Kathmandu

About The Trek

This trekking route passed many gigantic mountain ranges – Annapurna, Dhaulagiri and [Kanjiroba](#), to name but a few – and passed through Lower Dolpo, at one time a small kingdom in its own right. The trekkers of this regions are enthused greatly about the wild remoteness, the stunning mountain scenery and the fact that the local people had that innocent friendliness peculiar to people who live in excessively remote mountainous regions.

The people that live here number only a few hundred and are among the world’s highest dwellers. The villages in Upper Dolpo are 4,300 m and above. It is here specifically that people still practice the pre-Buddhist Bon Po religion. This early sect was almost entirely replaced after Buddhist doctrine began to spread across Tibet in the 9th century.

[Peter Matthiessen’s “The Snow Leopard”](#) and [David Snellgrove’s “Himalayan Pilgrimage”](#) have contributed to the mystique and attraction of Dolpo. Both writers visited the Shey Gumpa, to the north of the Phoksundo Lake, inner Dolpo. This is the goal of most trekkers but this Upper Dolpo trek will take you even further into this mysterious land.

Upper Dolpo Trek Level

Upper Dolpo Trek is a **Moderate** trek and a good level of fitness and trekking experience is advised. In a scale of 1 to 10, the Upper Dolpo Trek is **rated 8**. You will spend a number of nights sleeping at altitudes above 4,000m, 13,000 ft so you must be willing and able to rough it as most creature comforts are back in Kathmandu.

The safety of the support team and yours on every trek is our highest concern. All treks, strenuous, Demanding and Easy are all treated and planned as an expedition.

Itinerary - Overview

- Day 1 Arrival in Kathmandu
- Day 2 Sightseeing around Kathmandu and Pre-trip meeting
- Day 3 Fly to Lukla – Trek to Phakding
- Day 4 Trek to Namche Bazaar
- Day 5 Acclimatization / Exploration Day Namche Bazaar
- Day 6 Namche Bazaar to Dhole
- Day 7 Dole – Machhermo
- Day 8 Machherma – Gokyo
- Day 9 Gokyo – Gokyo Ri – Gokyo
- Day 10 Gokyo – Renjo La Pass – Lunden
- Day 11 Lumde – Thame
- Day 12 Thame – Namche Bazaar
- Day 13 Namche Bazaar – Lukla
- Day 14 Fly from Lukla to Kathmandu
- Day 15 Leisure day in Kathmandu

Itinerary - The Details

Day 1 - Arrival in Kathmandu (1,400m / 4,593 ft)

An Ammonite Adventure representative will meet you at the Airport and take you to your hotel. Depending on the time of day you arrive, you can rest or explore the suburb of Thamel. The taxi to your hotel is covered in the package but an optional tip is not.

- No Meals Included
 - Overnight in Hotel
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Day 2 - Sightseeing around Kathmandu and Pre-trip Meeting

After breakfast (at your hotel included) you will be picked up by your tour guide. You will be taken to 3 must see attractions:

Pashupatinath Temple

Pashupatinath Temple is one of the most significant Hindu temples of Lord Shiva in the world, located on the banks of the Bagmati River. Though you are not allowed to go inside the temple as it is strictly for Hindus only, you can clearly see the temple and the activities from the eastern bank of the Bagmati River. It is a square two-tiered pagoda temple built on a single-tier plinth which is famous all over the world.

Boudhanath Stupa

Boudhanath is one of the holiest Buddhist sites in Kathmandu. It was built in the 5th century with four pairs of eyes of Lord Buddha in four cardinal directions keeping an eternal watch over the people and their doings. You will find Buddhist pilgrims from Tibet going round the stupa spinning the prayer wheels.

Bhaktapur Durbar Square

Visit the Bhaktapur Durbar Square, the Royal Residential Quarter of Bhupatindra Malla, famous five-storied temple of Nyatapola in Pagoda style Batsala temple, Bhairavnath temple, Duttatraya Temple, Pujari Muth and Palace of 55 windows.

The rest of your time in Kathmandu is free for further exploration and some last-minute shopping in Thamel area for trekking essentials.

- Breakfast Included
 - Overnight in Hotel
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Day 3 - Morning flight to Nepalgunj

An Ammonite Adventure representative will take you to the Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu for the 1 hour flight to Nepalgunj (150 m / 492 ft) that will give you great views of the Himalayas towards the North. Upon arrival, you will be transferred to your hotel. In the evening you can walk around the town, which is just 3 kms from the Nepal-India border.

- 1 Hour Flight
 - Breakfast Included
 - Overnight in Hotel
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Day 4 - Morning flight to Juphal – Trek to Dunai

From Nepalgunj we take a flight to Juphal (2,400m / 7,874 ft), it is about 35 minutes flight. Twin Otter is the primary mode of transport to and from the airstrip of Nepalgunj to Juphal and Juphal to Nepalgunj. This service is fairly dependable. Sometimes, flights may be canceled due to weather conditions.

After landing in Juphal we will meet the trekking crew, pack the equipment's and walk through terraced fields to the Bheri River and the narrow canyon which after 3 hours will lead you to a relatively larger village called Dunai (2,150m / 7,053).

- 35 Minute Flight / 3 Hours Trekking
 - All Meals Included
 - Overnight in a Guesthouse
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Day 5 - Trek from Dunai to Ankhe

The trek from Dunai to Ankhe (2,660m / 8,727 ft) starts with a crossing on the new suspension bridge and turn west, following the trail past the new hospital. At the junction of the Thuli Bheri and Suli Gad rivers you turn to the north and follow the Suli Gad.

The trail is quite up and down but mostly up. You are never far from the river and can always hear its roar. You pass through an area which is overgrown with marijuana plants but also has food crops for the villagers and animals that include millet, pumpkin, potatoes, sweet corn and chilies. Many of the villages in this area are involved in the production of a lotus-like plant called 'chuk' that is used to make vinegar and medicines.

- 6 Hours Trekking
- All Meals Included
- Overnight in a Guesthouse

Day 6 - Ankhe to Renje

The trail starts becoming quite steep but once you cross the river (twice) on well made bridges, you make a steep ascent on a very narrow path, hugging the cliff face. Having descended to the river again the trail takes another steep ascent requiring frequent stops to watch the panorama of the landscapes and also for rest.

- 7 Hours Trekking
 - All Meals Included
 - Overnight in a Guesthouse
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Day 7 - Renje to Phoksundo Lake

From here the the first few hours of the trek is fairly easy but from Sumdo the trail becomes steep and quite hard work. Here, the river is left behind and you climb up to a ridge, about 3,875m / 12,713 ft from where you will have the most staggering views of a 300m / 984 ft waterfall, the highest in Nepal, and your first view of Phoksundo Lake.

You then descend through birch forests to the upper reaches of the Phoksundo Khola and on to the picturesque settlement of Ringmo with its mud plastered chortens and mani walls. The village now has solar panels helping to improve the quality of life of the villagers.

- 6.5 Hours Trekking
 - All Meals Included
 - Overnight in a Guesthouse
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Day 8 - Phoksundo Lake to Phoksundo Khola

Today you follow the trail that skirts the edge of the Phoksundo Lake. This precarious trail is suspended on a gangway of wood that is supported on pegs, driven into crevices in the rocks and signals the remoteness of the area you are about to enter.

You ascend very steeply up to 4,040m / 13,254 ft and then plunge down again to the valley bottom to enter the floodplain of the Phoksundo Khola.

- 6 Hours Trekking
 - All Meals Included
 - Overnight in a Guesthouse
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Day 9 - Phoksundo Khola to Phoksundo Bhanjyang

Today you should take sandals or footwear suitable for knee deep water as you are crossings a few streams. You continue along the level path through a glacial valley that now heads north. As this becomes narrower, there are impressive vertical cliffs and contorted rock formations.

At the junction of the Phoksundo Khola and another unnamed mountain stream there is an old wooden bridge. Here you take the barely discernible path to the north east up a side valley which has a cavernous look. There is no trail as such, so it is necessary to clamber over rocks and boulders and to ford a stream that rushes down the steep valley.

A long climb brings you to a sheep meadow where the trail veers up a steep ravine. A hard climb to the top brings you to yet another valley where you can see the Kang La, the pass will lead you to Shey Gompa.

- 7 Hours Trekking
 - All Meals Included
 - Overnight in a Guesthouse
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Day 10 - Cross the Kang La pass – trek to Shey Gompa

The somewhat indistinct track is physically demanding, especially on the loose slate rock. It will take about 2.5 to 3 hours to reach the top of the Kang La (5,151m / 16,899 ft). The views from the top are magnificent and well worth all the hard work. The height of the Kang La differs slightly depending on the map being used.

On descending steeply to the valley floor, about 45 minutes, you make a long meandering trek along the banks of the river, crossing it once. A red chorten heralds your arrival at Shey Gompa (4,126m / 13,536 ft) where a quaint wooden log bridge leads up to the Shey compound.

- 7 Hours Trekking
 - All Meals Included
 - Overnight in a Guesthouse
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Day 11 - Shey Gompa Rest and Exploration

The word Shey means crystal, therefore the Shey Monastery is also known as the Crystal Mountain. The Lama of Shey resides at a red hermitage known as Tsakang Gompa which is west of Shey. It is not really a monastery but more like a retreat.

Tsakang has been a meditation centre to many famous lamas from Tibet. Shey Gompa belongs to the Chaiba community, followers of the Padmasambhava and Kagyu sects. It was the first Kagyupa monastery and its founder was the lama Ten-szin-Ra-Pa and was built during the 11th century.

Shey is famous for its ancient Buddhist culture. In Dolpo, the ancient Tibetan way of life combines animism with the teachings of Buddha. Drutup Yeshe introduced Buddhism in the Dolpo valley. Many years ago he came to Dolpo and came across wild people, whose supreme God was a 'fierce mountain spirit'.

Crystal Mountain is to the west of Shey monastery and it is a very strange mountain. Its contorted cliffs are laced with quartz and embedded with a rich variety of marine fossils. Shey Gompa stands above the the juncture of Kangjunala and Yeju Nala. Nearby, there is a group of prayer mills turned by water wheels.

- All Meals Included
 - Overnight in a Guesthouse
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Day 12 - Cross the Saldang La pass – trek to Namduna Gaon

Today, you start by following a pleasant track among juniper, which ascends to a grey, stony canyon. This begins to zig-zag over bare rocks and coarse eroded soil until it eventually brings you to a flat spot, suitable for a brew or lunch, if the weather is fine.

The trek continues very steeply up for about 20 minutes to reach the top of Saldang La Pass (4,785m / 15,698 ft). Here you will enjoy great views towards the arid landscapes of Mustang and the distant snow peaks of Tibet. The following descent towards the north is long and tiring, but you finally come upon the welcome sight of pastures of grazing yaks, sheep and nomadic tents made from yak hair. This signals your approach to Namduna Gaon (4,400m / 14,435 ft).

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 Gompa 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 flows down to the Nam Khong valley.

- 7 Hours Trekking
 - All Meals Included
 - Overnight in a Guesthouse
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Day 13 - Namduna Gaon – Saldang

Leaving Namgung monastery, you start climbing where further on it begins a long stretch along some dusty barren mountains. Looking down into the valley bottom it is very evident that the people have made best use of the fertile valley as one sees the neat terraced fields showing bright patches of green and ripening crops.

You ascend again before descending steep slopes to the picturesque village of Saldang (3,903m / 12,805 ft), situated on a plateau high above the Nam Khong nala and the biggest village of the inner Dolpo area. Though the village lies at about the same altitude as Ringmo, it is totally different. Ringmo, a Himalayan village is situated below the tree line while Saldang belongs to the arid zone of the trans-Himalayan Tibetan plateau.

- 6 Hours Trekking
 - All Meals Included
 - Overnight in a Guesthouse
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Day 14 - Saldang – Sibü

After leaving Saldang on the way down to the river bed you pass through terraced fields, Stupas, Chortens, heaps of Mani stones and a Chaiba monastery. Namdo, the next village is also prosperous with sixty houses having nearly four hundred inhabitants. It stretches for more than 5 kms on the high slopes to the left of Nam Khong Khola.

The Namdo monastery is located near the river bed. There is also another monastery on top of a high cliff. You camp near the small Settlement of Sibü (3,942m / 12,933 ft), right on the river bank.

- 6 Hours Trekking
 - All Meals Included
 - Overnight in a Guesthouse
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Day 15 - Sibü to the foot of Jeng La

Following the line of the river valley, the trail is fairly easy going initially. After about 2 hours it is necessary to wade another stream before turning into a side valley. The ascent becomes very steep but you are rewarded with a very pleasant meadow strewn with rocks, yak and other animal droppings.

- 5 Hours Trekking
 - All Meals Included
 - Overnight in a Guesthouse
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Day 16 - Cross the Jeng La pass to Tokyu Gaon

The trail is generally well compacted making the going underfoot easy, much easier than loose shale, but it is still quite steep. It is only a 2 hour climb to reach the top of the Jeng La (4,369m / 14,333 ft). From the top of the pass, there are good views of the Dhaulagiri Massif, glittering in the morning light.

A rough track descends towards the Tarap valley. By the afternoon you find a green valley which leads you by a pleasant track down towards the Tarap Chu. Tarap is a dream valley with vast plains in high mountains extending 20 kms along the river Tarap Chu.

- 7 Hours Trekking
 - All Meals Included
 - Overnight in a Guesthouse
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Day 17 - Tokyu Gaon to Dho Tarap

Before leaving Tokyu (4,845m / 15,895 ft) a short visit can be made to the Chaiba Gumpa. The trail is broad and well-traveled, making the going easy and there is evidence of work in the fields, where the women will be bringing in the harvest – the men are away bringing down the herds of animals for the forthcoming winter.

Dho Tarap (4,090m / 13,418 ft) is inhabited mostly by Magars who have lived here for generations but also by a few Tibetans. They wear homespun clothing that is sometimes dyed maroon and they favor Tibetan style Somba (boots with upturned toes) for footgear.

Men and women often wear both religious amulets and strings of coral and turquoise. The inhabitants of this village are both Bon Po and Buddhist (Nyingmapa). In the afternoon a walk up to the Buddhist Gumpa is very worthwhile. There is a resident lama who is very happy to show off his monastery and might even let you see his private Gumpa and the Tankas he has made himself.

- 5 Hours Trekking
 - All Meals Included
 - Overnight in a Guesthouse
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Day 18 - Dho Tarap to Serkam

The trek follows the course of the Tarap Khola, generally downhill. You go through narrow gorges with the river rushing through. One may see blue sheep, marmots, yaks, sheep, goats and perhaps meet people from Dolpo taking their flocks of sheep and goats to lower pastures.

The afternoon brings more undulations in the path when it leaves the immediate course of the river. There is evidence of improvements to the trail where parts of the rock have been blasted out. You will also see the first of the modern steel suspension bridges which have been built to facilitate movement of people and animals. The track is very narrow in places at this part of the trek to Serkam (3,630m / 11,909 ft).

- 7 Hours Trekking
 - All Meals Included
 - Overnight in a Guesthouse
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Day 19 - Serkam to Khani Gaon

The trek to Khani Gaon (2,550m / 8,366 ft) continues as you walk down the gorge of the Tarap River, at times alongside it and at others high above, on a narrow trail built out from the steep slopes. The quality of the path varies from broad, smooth and firm to very narrow and crumbly. There are also flights of man made stone staircases which need to be tackled with care – some of the rocks wobble when stepped on.

- 7 Hours Trekking
 - All Meals Included
 - Overnight in a Guesthouse
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Day 20 - Khani Gaon to Tarakot

Leaving Khani Gaon by the new suspension bridge and then walk alongside the river, sometimes going very high before reaching down to the water again. Some of the trail is quite demanding and one bridge, said to have been out for six years, necessitates crossing on wet stepping-stones.

Entering the broad fertile valley of the Barbung Chu, you walk amongst the various crops of millet, sweet corn, barley, buckwheat, green beans, chilies and marijuana. Your lunch and night stop is high above the river but there is a standpipe for water. Tarakot is an old fortress town known by the local people as Dzong, meaning 'fort'.

Before the Gorkha Dynasty, Tarakot (2,281m / 7,483 ft) was the capital and had a Dzong. The famous Sandul Gompa, which lies 8 km east of Tarakot and at the junction of Barbung Khola and Tarap Chu, 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.

- 4 Hours Trekking
 - All Meals Included
 - Overnight in a Guesthouse
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Day 21 - Tarakot to Dunai

The trail is mostly down hill and fairly firm. Walking beside the Bheri river, you use the ingenious path built twenty feet above the river. All too soon you have reached the village of Dunai (2,052m / 6,732 ft). You will now have completed the circuit of mysterious land Dolpo and a celebration party is sure to happen.

- 3 Hours Trekking
 - All Meals Included
 - Overnight in a Guesthouse
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Day 22 - Dunai to Juphal

You now retrace your steps to Juphal. Initially, the way is flat but the final hour up to your destination seems steeper than you remember.

- 3 Hours Trekking
 - All Meals Included
 - Overnight in a Guesthouse
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Day 23 - Morning flight to Kathmandu via Nepalgunj

An early morning flight to Nepalgunj from Juphal starts the day off. This is a wonderful 35-minute flight over the Himalayan foothills, with fine views of giant peaks including Annapurna and Dhaulagiri to the north.

From Nepalgunj, you connect with the flight back to Kathmandu. An Ammonite Adventure representative will meet you at the hotel and take you back to your hotel.

- 35 Minute Flight
 - Breakfast Included
 - Overnight in Hotel
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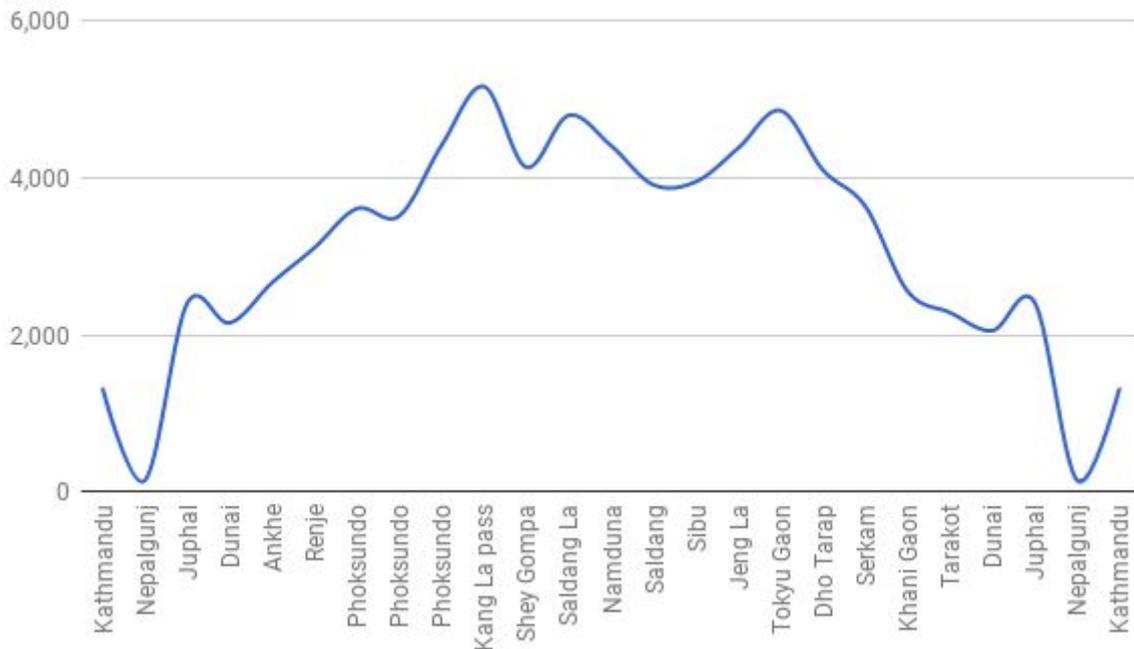
Day 24 - Leisure day in Kathmandu

Today is yours to do as you wish. If you are departing Nepal, an Ammonite Adventure representative will get you to the Airport in plenty of time.

- Breakfast Included
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Trek Altitudes

As you can see, most of the trek is above 3,000m / 9,000ft and Altitude Sickness can be a real issue for some.



Altitude Sickness

The term Altitude Sickness is used often but there are intact 3 types of Altitude Sickness. The most common is actually Acute Mountain Sickness – or AMS for short. AMS becomes a real threat when ascending at altitudes of 3,000m / 9,000ft or more.

AMS comes into effect usually because a trekker or climber ascends too quickly. As the air become thinner, there is less oxygen available. Your lungs need time to adjust in order to carry much needed oxygen to the different parts of your body.

All Ammonite Adventure treks over 9,000ft (3,000 m) include rest days – known as acclimatization days.

You can download the full Altitude Sickness Whitepaper at <https://ammoniteadventures.com/altitude-sickness/>

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