Trek Mania Nepal Pvt. Ltd.

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Upper Dolpo Circuit Trek - 24 Days

The Upper Dolpo Circuit Trek is a 24-day adventure through one of Nepal's most remote and culturally rich regions. Often called the "Hidden Kingdom," Upper Dolpo remains largely untouched by tourism, offering trekkers a rare opportunity to experience pristine landscapes, ancient monasteries, and authentic Tibetan Buddhist culture. This high-altitude circuit takes you through rugged mountains, alpine valleys, turquoise lakes, and traditional Dolpo villages, providing a perfect blend of adventure, natural beauty, and cultural immersion.

Scenic High-Altitude Landscapes

Starting with scenic flights from Kathmandu to Nepalgunj and onward into Dolpo, the trek gradually leads you into remote highland valleys, where you will encounter isolated villages, sacred monasteries, and stunning natural landmarks. One of the highlights of this trek is Phoksundo Lake, renowned for its turquoise waters and dramatic surrounding cliffs. Along the trail, trekkers are treated to panoramic views of rugged Himalayan peaks, high passes, and deep gorges that define the untouched beauty of Upper Dolpo.

Cultural Immersion in Dolpo Villages

The Upper Dolpo Circuit Trek offers an unparalleled opportunity to experience local culture. Visits to ancient spiritual sites such as Shey Gompa and Yangze Gompa provide insight into centuries-old Bon-Buddhist traditions. Trekking through villages like Saldang, Dho Tarap, and Tokyu Gaon, you will witness the daily life of the Dolpo people, who live by yak herding, agriculture, and spiritual practices. These encounters provide a deeper understanding of the region's rich cultural heritage.

Adventure and Trekking Challenge

This trek is ideal for adventurous and experienced trekkers. The route crosses multiple high passes, including Kang La, Saldang La, and Jeng La, offering breathtaking Himalayan vistas. The challenging terrain, long trekking days, and high-altitude environment make this circuit a rewarding experience for those seeking both physical challenge and natural beauty.

Why Trek with Trek Mania Nepal

At Trek Mania Nepal, we provide a safe, well-organized, and immersive trekking experience. Our professional guides and support staff manage all logistics, accommodations, and local arrangements, allowing you to focus entirely on your journey. From your arrival in Kathmandu to your return, our team ensures your Upper Dolpo Circuit Trek is seamless, memorable, and culturally enriching.

Embark on the Hidden Kingdom Adventure

Experience the Hidden Kingdom of Nepal like never before. Embark on the Upper Dolpo Circuit Trek with Trek Mania Nepal and explore remote villages, sacred monasteries, high mountain passes, and pristine landscapes. This trek is not just a journey—it's a once-in-a-lifetime adventure that combines natural beauty, cultural discovery, and personal achievement.

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The Upper Dolpo Trek is one of Nepal's most remote and adventurous journeys, taking you deep into the trans-Himalayan region bordering Tibet. This 24-day trek combines natural beauty, ancient culture, and high-altitude adventure. Starting from Kathmandu, you'll fly to Nepalgunj and then to Jhupal, the gateway to Dolpo. The trail passes through Shey Phoksundo National Park, the turquoise Phoksundo Lake, the sacred Shey Gompa, and the traditional villages of Saldang, Yangze, and Dho Tarap before returning via Tarakot and Dunai.

This trek is perfect for experienced trekkers seeking a challenging and off-the-beaten-path Himalayan experience, with stunning landscapes, ancient Buddhist monasteries, and the authentic lifestyle of Dolpo's people.

Trek Difficulty of the Upper Dolpo

The Upper Dolpo Trek is a challenging and high-altitude trek that requires good fitness and previous trekking experience. You'll spend several days above 4,000 meters, cross steep passes, and camp in remote valleys with basic facilities. Acclimatization and a steady pace are essential for safety and comfort.

Culture and People in the Dolpo

The Dolpo region is influenced by ancient Tibetan Buddhism and Bon religion. You'll encounter centuries-old monasteries, prayer flags, chortens, and friendly locals who still follow traditional lifestyles. The villages are isolated, offering a glimpse into the preserved Himalayan culture.

Accommodation and Meals

This trek involves a mix of camping and basic teahouse accommodation. Trek Mania Nepal provides quality camping gear, fresh meals prepared by a professional cook, and all logistics support. Meals include Nepali, Tibetan, and continental dishes suited for high-altitude trekking.

Best Time to Trek

The best time for the Upper Dolpo Trek is spring (April to June) and autumn (September to November) when the weather is stable, skies are clear, and passes are snow-free. Monsoon and winter seasons are not recommended due to heavy snow or rain.

Permits and Regulations

Since Dolpo is a restricted area, trekkers need special permits issued by the Government of Nepal:

- Upper Dolpo Restricted Area Permit
- Shey Phoksundo National Park Entry Permit
- All permits are arranged by Trek Mania Nepal before departure.

Why Trek with Trek Mania Nepal?

- Licensed and experienced guides specialized in remote region treks
- All logistics handled by our professional camping crew
- Focus on safety, comfort, and local cultural respect
- Personalized itinerary and small group sizes
- Support for sustainable and responsible tourism in Dolpo

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PRICE INCLUDES

- Airport pick-up and drop in Kathmandu on arrival and departure.
- Domestic flights: Kathmandu – Nepalgunj – Jhupal – Nepalgunj – Kathmandu.
- Accommodation in Kathmandu and Nepalgunj (hotels on twin-sharing basis).
- Tented accommodation during the trek with basic bedding.
- All meals during the trek (breakfast, lunch, and dinner).
- Experienced English-speaking trekking guide, cook, and support staff.
- Porter(s) to carry your luggage (max 20 kg per person).
- Trekking permits: Upper Dolpo Restricted Area Permit, ACAP, TIMS, and local taxes.
- Arrival and departure transfers.
- First aid kit and emergency evacuation documents arrangement.
- Farewell dinner in Kathmandu hosted by Trek Mania Nepal.

PRICE EXCLUDES

- International airfare to/from Nepal.
- Nepal visa fee.
- Travel and medical insurance (including high-altitude evacuation).
- Meals in Kathmandu and Nepalgunj except where specified.
- Personal expenses: drinks, snacks, laundry, phone calls, or souvenirs.
- Tips for guides, porters, and drivers.
- Extra nights in Kathmandu or Nepalgunj due to flight delays or personal reasons.
- Any additional activities not mentioned in the itinerary.

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ITINERARY IN DETAIL

Day 1: Arrival in Kathmandu (1,300 m / 4,265 ft)

Upon arrival at Tribhuvan International Airport, you are warmly welcomed by a Trek Mania Nepal representative and transferred to your hotel in the heart of Kathmandu. After check-in, take time to relax or stroll through Thamel, the bustling tourist hub of Kathmandu, famous for its lively streets, traditional shops, cafés, and handicraft markets. This day allows you to adjust to the city's atmosphere, meet fellow trekkers, and prepare for the journey ahead. Overnight at hotel in Kathmandu.

Day 2: Kathmandu to Nepalgunj (Flight)

After an early breakfast, enjoy a scenic flight to Nepalgunj, a city in the lowland Terai region near the Indian border. Nepalgunj serves as the gateway to the remote regions of Dolpo and Humla. Upon arrival, take a leisurely walk around the local market area, experiencing the unique blend of cultures and observing daily life in this bustling town. Overnight at hotel in Nepalgunj.

Day 3: Nepalgunj to Jhupal (Flight) – Trek to Dunai (2,850 m / 9,350 ft)

Begin your adventure with a morning flight to Jhupal, the starting point of the Upper Dolpo trek. After meeting your trekking crew and porters, begin the trek toward Dunai, the administrative center of Dolpa district. The short 2–3 hour walk passes terraced fields, rivers, and small settlements, providing an introduction to the region's natural beauty and rural lifestyle. Overnight at tented camp in Dunai.

Day 4: Dunai to Ankhe (2,896 m / 9,501 ft)

Today's trek follows the scenic Phoksundo River through a deep gorge flanked by pine forests. Along the way, pass through small settlements inhabited by Thakuri and Magar communities, gaining insight into their traditional lifestyle. The trail offers excellent views of the surrounding cliffs and river valleys, gradually leading to Ankhe. Trek duration: 5–6 hours. Overnight at tented camp in Ankhe.

Day 5: Ankhe to Sulighat (3,180 m / 10,433 ft)

Trek along undulating ridges and riverbanks, passing through dense forests, to reach Sulighat, the gateway to Shey Phoksundo National Park. The landscape is rich with alpine flora and fauna, and the trail provides scenic glimpses of remote villages and mountain views. This day marks entry into one of Nepal's most pristine and untouched regions. Trek duration: 5–6 hours. Overnight at tented camp in Sulighat.

Day 6: Sulighat to Phoksundo Lake (3,612 m / 11,850 ft)

Hike through traditional villages and forest trails to arrive at the stunning Phoksundo Lake, renowned for its turquoise waters and dramatic cliffs. The area offers remarkable photo opportunities and peaceful surroundings, with the chance to interact with local villagers along the route. Trek duration: 5–6 hours. Overnight at tented camp near Phoksundo Lake.

Day 7: Acclimatization Day at Phoksundo Lake

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Take a rest and exploration day to acclimatize to higher altitudes. Visit Ringmo Village, a quaint settlement on the lake's edge, and the nearby 900-year-old Tshowa Bon Monastery, an important spiritual site. Enjoy serene lakeside walks, observe traditional lifestyles, and prepare your body for the demanding trekking ahead. Overnight at tented camp.

Day 8: Phoksundo to Phoksundo Khola Camp (3,507 m / 11,505 ft)

Follow a narrow trail carved into cliffs above the lake, descending through forests and open valleys to reach Phoksundo Khola Camp. The route offers spectacular vistas of the lake, rivers, and surrounding hills, providing a sense of isolation and tranquility. Trek duration: 5–6 hours. Overnight at tented camp.

Day 9: Phoksundo Khola Camp to Phoksundo Bhanjyang (3,910 m / 12,828 ft)

Begin a steady ascent to Phoksundo Bhanjyang, a high alpine valley surrounded by rugged peaks. This area is remote and largely untouched, offering breathtaking views of Dolpo's pristine wilderness. Camp is set below a high pass leading to Shey Gompa. Trek duration: 6–7 hours. Overnight at tented camp.

Day 10: Phoksundo Bhanjyang to Shey Gompa (4,500 m / 14,763 ft) via Kang La Pass

Cross Kang La Pass (5,350 m), one of the trek's highest points, providing panoramic views of Dolpo's dramatic mountains and valleys. Descend to Shey Gompa, also known as the "Crystal Monastery," a sacred Tibetan Buddhist site perched in the high Himalayas. Trek duration: 7–8 hours. Overnight at tented camp in Shey Gompa.

Day 11: Acclimatization and Exploration at Shey Gompa

Spend the day exploring the ancient Shey Monastery, meditation caves, and surrounding landscapes. Immerse yourself in Tibetan Buddhist culture while enjoying the tranquility and spiritual energy of this remote high-altitude region. Overnight at tented camp.

Day 12: Shey Gompa to Namduna Gaon (4,800 m / 15,748 ft)

Ascend over Saldang La Pass (5,200 m) and descend to Namduna Gaon, a highland village known for its Bon monastery and traditional Tibetan lifestyle. The day offers challenging trekking combined with rich cultural exposure in an isolated mountain community. Trek duration: 6–7 hours. Overnight at tented camp.

Day 13: Namduna Gaon to Saldang (3,620 m / 11,876 ft)

Trek down to Saldang Village, the largest settlement in Upper Dolpo, historically a trade hub influenced by Tibetan culture. Pass through scenic valleys and interact with locals, observing traditional practices and lifestyle. Trek duration: 5–6 hours. Overnight at tented camp.

Day 14: Saldang to Yangze Gompa (4,960 m / 16,272 ft)

Head northeast to the remote Yangze Gompa, an ancient monastery surrounded by barren hills and untouched wilderness. Few trekkers visit this area, providing a sense of isolation and serenity. Trek duration: 6–7 hours. Overnight at tented camp.

Day 15: Yangze Gompa to Sibu (4,560 m / 14,960 ft)

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Descend gradually through scattered settlements, observing local families engaged in yak herding and traditional farming. The route offers insights into daily life and customs in these remote highlands. Trek duration: 5–6 hours. Overnight at tented camp.

Day 16: Sibu to Jeng La Phedi (4,900 m / 16,075 ft)

Climb steadily along the river to reach the base of Jeng La Pass. The trail passes scenic high-altitude valleys with views of surrounding snow-capped peaks, offering a mix of challenge and natural beauty. Trek duration: 5–6 hours. Overnight at tented camp.

Day 17: Jeng La Phedi to Tokyu Gaon (4,209 m / 13,809 ft) via Jeng La Pass

Cross the high Jeng La Pass (5,110 m), enjoying spectacular vistas of the Dhaulagiri range and surrounding peaks. Descend to Tokyu Gaon, a fertile valley rich in culture, agriculture, and traditional Tibetan architecture. Trek duration: 6–7 hours. Overnight at tented camp.

Day 18: Tokyu Gaon to Dho Tarap (4,040 m / 13,254 ft)

A shorter, easy day along the river takes you to Dho Tarap, a picturesque village inhabited by Bon and Buddhist communities. Explore local life, farm terraces, and the village's unique architecture. Trek duration: 3–4 hours. Overnight at tented camp.

Day 19: Acclimatization Day at Dho Tarap

Spend a rest day exploring the monasteries, interacting with locals, and learning about their culture. Dho Tarap is a culturally rich and fascinating village that offers deep insight into Dolpo's spiritual and daily life. Overnight at tented camp.

Day 20: Dho Tarap to Tarap Khola (3,800 m / 12,467 ft)

Follow the Tarap River downstream through deep gorges and rugged cliffs, surrounded by wild landscapes, to reach Tarap Khola (Kamakharka). The route offers challenging terrain and scenic views of Upper Dolpo's untouched wilderness. Trek duration: 6–7 hours. Overnight at tented camp.

Day 21: Tarap Khola to Khanigaon

Descend through narrow valleys and remote villages, enjoying the pristine environment and wild landscapes. Trek duration: 6 hours. Overnight at tented camp.

Day 22: Khanigaon to Tarakot (2,537 m / 8,323 ft)

Pass by terraced fields and follow the Bheri River to reach Tarakot, a historic trading post with traditional architecture and cultural heritage. Trek duration: 5 hours. Overnight at tented camp.

Day 23: Tarakot to Dunai (2,850 m / 9,350 ft) – Jhupal (2,320 m / 7,611 ft)

A pleasant trek along the Bheri River brings you back to Dunai and then Jhupal, completing the Upper Dolpo Circuit. This final trekking day offers reflections on the journey through remote and diverse landscapes. Trek duration: 6 hours. Overnight at lodge in Jhupal.

Day 24: Jhupal to Nepalgunj (Flight) – Kathmandu (Flight)

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Take a morning flight from Jhupal to Nepalgunj, then a connecting flight back to Kathmandu. Upon arrival, transfer to your hotel and enjoy a farewell dinner hosted by Trek Mania Nepal, celebrating the completion of an unforgettable journey through Upper Dolpo. Overnight at hotel in Kathmandu.

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FAQ

1. What is the best season to trek Upper Dolpo?

Spring (March–May) and autumn (September–November) are the best seasons due to stable weather, clear skies, and moderate temperatures.

2. Do I need a permit to trek Upper Dolpo?

Yes, you need the Upper Dolpo Restricted Area Permit, ACAP (Annapurna Conservation Area Permit), TIMS card, and local taxes. Trek Mania Nepal assists with all permits.

3. What level of fitness is required?

Moderate to high fitness is recommended due to long trekking days, high passes (over 5,000 m), and rugged terrain. Previous trekking experience is helpful.

4. What are the main health risks or altitude concerns?

Altitude sickness is possible at high passes. Proper acclimatization, hydration, and rest days are essential. Guides monitor health closely.

5. How remote is Upper Dolpo?

Extremely remote. Some areas are several days from the nearest road. Medical facilities and communication are limited.

6. What type of accommodation is provided?

During the trek, accommodation is in basic tented camps or simple lodges/teahouses. Hotels in Kathmandu and Nepalgunj are standard 3-star.

7. Are meals included?

All meals (breakfast, lunch, and dinner) are included during the trek. Meals in Kathmandu and Nepalgunj are included only if specified.

8. Can I hire guides and porters?

Yes, packages include experienced English-speaking guides, cooks, and porters to carry luggage (maximum 20 kg per person).

9. What should I pack for this trek?

Layered clothing, trekking boots, sleeping bag, trekking poles, sunscreen, personal medication, water bottles, and a daypack. Refer to the detailed equipment list.

10. Is it safe for solo travelers?

Yes, solo travelers can join. Guides and support staff accompany all groups for safety, navigation, and assistance.

11. How long is the trek and what is the daily schedule like?

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The trek is 24 days, covering approximately 400–450 km including flights, rest days, acclimatization, and high-altitude passes. Daily trekking varies from 3–8 hours depending on terrain and altitude.

12. Will I have mobile or internet access?

Mobile coverage is limited and often unavailable in remote villages. Internet access is mostly available in Kathmandu, Nepalgunj, and a few lodges in lower regions.

13. Is travel insurance required?

Yes, travel and trekking insurance including high-altitude medical evacuation is mandatory. It should cover helicopter evacuation and emergency treatment.

14. What kind of weather should I expect?

Weather ranges from warm in lower valleys to cold and sub-zero temperatures at high passes. Snow is possible in spring or autumn. Layered clothing is essential.

15. Are there cultural or religious considerations?

Yes, Upper Dolpo is a culturally sensitive region with Bon and Buddhist monasteries. Trekkers should dress modestly, ask permission before photography, and respect local traditions.

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