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Dolpo Jomsom Trek - 27 Days

Dolpo Jomsom Trek is the most adventure treks of Nepal. Which connect the hidden, unexplored and remote Dolpo via Upper Dolpo to Kalidaki River gorge valley Jomsom Mustang crossing the several high passes. Our Dolpo to Jomsom Trek itinerary takes you in a remote region of Nepal located close to the Tibet border. In this trek we pass over numerous high passes, beautiful hamlets, age old ancient monasteries, mani walls, Chortens, herders camps, Dolpo Pa life style and culture, with adventure reward.

Dolpo to Jomsom Trek is about 230km from Juphal airstrip to Kagbeni in the Kali Gandaki valley of Mustang district. The first part trek, stretching through the Lower Dolpo region is followed by Hinduism hamlets, lush vegetation of Phoksundo National park and stunning Phoksundo Lake, a turquoise blue colored lake certainly changes its color after exposing sunlight over it during the day time, Bonpo follower village and community.

Second part of trek takes you in Upper Dolpo. Upper Dolpo has been referred to as the last enclave of pure Dolpo Pa culture with the barren landscape, sparsely populated settlement, land of Bon and Buddhist religion. Upper Dolpo which reserves its charisma for a three week long walking from Phoksundo Lake. Beyond the Phoksundo Lake, following gorges and stony trail encountering complicated Kang La (5363m) pass before reach to sacred and mythical land Shey Gompa. Then after following we head east following Sephu Khola passing many mani walls, several isolated fields and doksas (seasonal settlements for yak herders) we cross Shey La Pass approaches largest village of Upper Dolpo Saldang and the trail leads to the north, an oldest and beautiful monastery of Dolpo is Yangjer nearby Nisal village. Approaching further to the North-east corner, the hidden frontier village is Musi village. Beyond the Musi village, conquering the Muri La pass trail connects remote and isolated valley Panzang valley villages Simen, Phalwa and Tinje. For a really strenuous and rugged adventure seeker can further continue to the east traversing Mo La pass to Chharka Bhot and a high wild trail crossing across Jungbenla 5550m before knee-jerking trails to Kaligandaki Valley and Jomsom.

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PRICE INCLUDES

- Airport pickup and drop.
- 3 Nights Hotel Accommodations in Kathmandu.
- One-night hotel accommodation and dinner in Nepalgunj.
- Domestic airfare; Kathmandu-Nepalgunj-Dolpo and Jomsom-Pokhara- Kathmandu.
- All the government procedures.
- Trekking permits and National Park fee.
- One Guide, One cook, helpers, and mules.
- Trekking equipment -Mattresses, Member tents, and Kitchen utensils.
- Three-time meals during a trek along with Tea/coffee and snacks.
- Staff's salary, food, insurance, and clothing.
- Farewell dinner in Kathmandu.

PRICE EXCLUDES

- International flights and visa fees.
- Personal expenses and meals in Kathmandu.
- Travel insurance, Rescue, and evacuation.
- Tips and gratitude for staff.
- Donation and local entrance fee.
- Extra baggage limit on domestic flights (weight limit 15 kg)

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ITINERARY IN DETAIL

Day 1: Arrival in Kathmandu

Our representative will welcome you at Tribhuvan International Airport and will transfer to Hotel.

Day 2: Fly to Nepalgunj (150m) 1 hours

We take the 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. Gate way and hub to western Nepal.

Day 3: Fly to Juphal(2500m) and Trek to Dunai(2000m) 3 hours

After an early morning start we take a charter flight to Juphal the main airport of the Dolpa district. After landing at the narrow STOL mountain airstrip we meet the trek crew. Once the porters have loaded up and after final preparations we start walking through terraced fields to the Thuli Bheri river and then up to the town of Dunai.

Day 4: Dunai to Chhepka (2840m) 6-7 hours

From Dunai we descend to 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. It should take about 3 ½ hours walking to lunch and in the afternoon a further 3 ½ hours to Chhepka.

Day 5: Chhepka to Sumduwa (31110m) 5-6 hours

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. It should take about 4 hours walking to lunch and in the afternoon a further 2 ½ hours to Amchi Hospital.

Day 6: Sumduwa to Phoksundo Lake (3600m) 3-4 hours

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

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a short walk to the camp on the shores of the stunningly beautiful Phoksumdo Lake. It should take about 4 ½ hours walking to Phoksumdo Lake where you will have lunch.

Day 7: Rest and Acclimatization day

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

Day 8: Rigmo to Lake North Camp (3630) 3-4 hours

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.

Day 9: North Camp to Kangla BC(4676m) 5-6 hours

From the north bank we follow the plain river bank and pine forest at foothill of Mt. Kanjiruwa.Soon afte The Phoksumdo Valley now becomes quite narrow with high rock walls on both sides. We are forced to cross several tributaries and some may have to be waded. After 20 or 30 minutes we leave the main valley and head north again entering a narrow gorge. We have a long climb, often with no trace of any trail as we progress up the steep sided valley, passing occasional grazing areas and crossing several side streams. We are following in Peter Mathiesson's footsteps here and we camp at the spot he named 'Snowfields Camp' in his book.

Day 10: Kangla BC to Shey Gompa (4400m) 6-7 hours

It will take 2 to 3 hours from our camp, climbing awkwardly on loose slate scree slopes which may have a covering of snow, to reach the summit of the Kang La (5350m). This high pass is gateway to Upper Dolpo, also known locally as the Ngadra La and is adorned with cairns and prayer flags. We make a steep descent of around 45 minutes to the valley floor and follow the river easily for a further 3 hours to reach Shey Gompa, the entrance of which is marked by a red and white chorten and snaking lines of mani stones. The monastery is located beneath the strange Crystal Mountain on a small grassy area at the confluence of two rivers. Physically the gompa, surrounded by half a dozen red-painted buildings, is not very imposing, but the setting is very dramatic and there is no doubt why this place is so revered by both Buddhists and followers of the Bon religion. We set up our camp just below the gompa in a meadow containing a few herders’ huts.

Day 11: Rest & Exploration day

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.

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Day 12: Shey Gompa to Namgang Gumpa(4391m) 6-7 hours

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 gompa 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. It should take about 3 hours walking to lunch before the pass and in the afternoon a further 4 hours to Namgung.

Day 13: Namgang Gompa to Tora Sumna(3743m) 5-6 hours

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.

Day 14: Tora Sumna to Musi village(4136m) 6-7 hours

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).

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Shortly after Camp we cross the new bridge over Panzang Khola to the north bank. At Yangur village we will visit Dolpo's oldest gompa 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). It should take about 4 hours walking to lunch and in the afternoon a further 2 ½ hours to Musi village.

Day 15: Musi Village to Chanpola Goth(4195m) 5 hours

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. It should take about 3 hours to complete the long ascent to the pass and 2 hours to descent to Chanpola Goth.

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.

Day 16: Chanpola Goth to Tinje Village(4132m) 7-8 hours

From Camp it takes 1 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 gompa 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. It should take about 4 hours walking to lunch and in the afternoon a further 4 hours to Tinje.

Day 17: Tinje Village to Rapka(4550m) 6-7 hours

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

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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. It should take about 3 hours walking to lunch and in the afternoon a further 3 ½ hours to Rapka.

Day 18: Rapka to Chharka village (4284m) crossing Mo La(5015m) 7-8 hours

We leave camp early for the longest day of the trip. From camp we walk up valley after ½ hour cross Kehen Khola, in May we hopped over the river on rocks whereas if here 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. The gradual ascent to the pass took 5 hours walking and from there it is a further 3 hours walk to get to Chharka village.

On descent of the pass the trail contours high above Chharka Tulsi 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.

Day 19: Rest & 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.

Day 20: Chharka to Mulumsumna (4750m) 6-7 hours

Below Chharka village we cross Chharka Tulsi 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. After lunch we continue walking up the valley where the gorge narrows and after you reach the doksa at Norbulung. It should take about 4 ½ hours walking to lunch and in the afternoon a further 2 hours to Norbulung.From Norbulung Camp we pass through the high yak pastures of Molum Sumdo.

Day 21: Mulumsumna to Ghalden (4247m) crossing Jungbenla Pass (5550m)

From 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. It should take about 6 hours walking from camp at Norbulung to the summit of Sangda

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La and a further 1 ½ hours to descent to Sangda Phedi. 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 Ghalden.

Day 22: Ghalden to Sangda Village(3732m) 4-5 hours

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 gulley 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.

Day 23: Sangda Village to Phalek village(2810m) 6-7 hours

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 1 ½ hours 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 Pangling where we camp tonight. As there is no water source for a lunch spot we will take a pack lunch for today's walk.

Day 24: Phalek to Jomsom(2670m) 3-4 hours

Today we follow the trail down through the main valley by crossing Kali Gandaki river and walk along the road to Jomsom. After checking into one of the lodges you can explore the town then in the evening the cooks will produce a special last meal together. Later on we will hand out tips to our crew as a thank you for all their hard work throughout the trek.

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Day 25: Fly to Pokhara and Kathmandu

Day 26: Free day in Kathmandu

Day 27: Fly back Home