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Inner Dolpo Trek - 25 Days

Inner Dolpo trek(Upper Dolpo Trek) is an ideal trek in Dolpo region which caters a limitless lifetime trekking adventure experience. This trek is a bit challenging but it rewards plentiful opportunities to exploring mythical and legendary, cultural and natural treasures. Inner Dolpo trek stretches through lower Dolpo and Upper Dolpo region of west Nepal with encountering high passes, hallow mountains, beautiful hamlets and secluded Buddhist and Bon monasteries.

The mysterious and beautiful ‘Hidden Land Dolpo’ situated in the west of Kali Gandaki and lap of Mt. Dhaulagiri and Kanjiruwa bordering with Tibetan plateau. Therefore, the people of Dolpo have strong cultural links with Tibet. ‘Dolpo’ the trans-Himalayan region is sparsely populated but culturally and naturally wonderland. The wide range of floral and faunal species found in Dolpo is paradise to explore for nature lovers. The spiritual heart of Upper Dolpo is Crystal Mountain. Dolpo is the land forgotten, with a mix of ancient Tibetan Buddhist religions and a hardy people who make their living through farming and through trade with both Tibet and Nepal.

Inner Dolpo trek starts after flying to Dolpo's only airstrip at Juphal, adventure begins with a trek north following Phoksundo river and to the lush green fields of Ringmo and the stunning blue Phoksumdo Lake. After a day rest & explore in this beautiful spot we continue across the Kang La(5360m) to Inner Dolpo(Upper Dolpo) and Shey Gompa. Then after we crosse the Shey La(5095m) to the Dolpo's largest village or major Dolpo settlement of Saldang. From Saldang we switch to east and crossing Jeng La to reach Dho Tarap. The last part of our trek, we descend down and tread along the Tarap Khola and impressive Tarap Khola gorge to Lasicap, and then following Thuli Bheri River along Tarakot, Byasgad, Dunai and finally back to Juphal.

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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 & Dolpo- Nepalgunj and Kathmandu.
- All the government procedure.
- Lower and Upper Dolpo trekking permits and National Park fees.
- One experienced English speaking guide, Cook, Helpers and Porters/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 fee.
- Personal expenses and meals in Kathmandu.
- Travel insurance, Rescue, and evacuation.
- Tips and gratitude for staffs.
- Donation and local entrance fee.
- Extra baggage load in domestic flights.

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ITINERARY IN DETAIL

Day 1: Arrival in Kathmandu and transfer to Hotel

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

Day 2: Kathmandu to Nepalgunj flight 1 hour (Afternoon)

The morning is free to relax or for sightseeing and shopping for any extra gear needed for the trek. In the afternoon we take a short flight from Kathmandu to the Indian-Nepal border town of Nepalgunj in the lowland Terrai region. The climate here is sub-tropical and we will be relieved to reach the relative cool of our guesthouse. We stay overnight in Nepalgunj.

Day 3: Nepalgunj to Juphal (35 minutes) trek to Dunai(2140m) 3 hours

Flights into Dolpo are always early in the morning upto 10 am. After 35 minutes descent flight we land at Juphal airstrip. At Juphal we meet our trek crew and after cup of tea or coffees, we prepare the baggage to assign our porters. Then we walk downhill to Kalagauda and following Thuli Bheri river bank to Dunai and we will have lunch and rest for a while and in the evening we visit Bon and Buddhist monastery.

Day 4: Dunai to Chhepka(2850m) 6 hours

From Dunai, we follow again Thuli Bheri down ward till Suligad, from here we follow Suligad River which is flows down from Phoksumdo Lake through a steep and highly vegetated valley. The trail undulates, sometimes beside and sometimes high above the tumbling white-water river. There are scattered villages along the route including the deserted crude stone houses and at Kageni we take our lunch. Many of these villages are only occupied during the winter months when the communities of Upper Dolpo bring their animals down from the high pastures and at the time of our trek they can be almost hidden in an overgrowth of tall grasses. After lunch we cross the Anke Khola and it can be quite hot as we make our way up the river to our campsite at Chepka (2850m).

Day 5: Chhepka to Sumduwa(3885m) 5-6 hours

We cross and re-cross the river several times as we make our way up the narrow gorge, ascending the undulating trail through forests of bamboo, and conifer and lush vegetation of Shey Phoksundo National park. At one point the trail climbs steadily for an hour or more to bring us out of the forest and into flower-strewn meadows. Eventually the valley opens up a little and the going becomes easier until we reach a bridge leading to several houses which make up the village of Renje and we stop here for lunch. Beyond here the valley narrows once more and the trail continues to climb and descend as we negotiate spurs of the steep hillside. At the confluence of the Suli Khola and Pungmo Khola we cross to the west bank and reach the village of Samduwa (3085m) where we make camp.

Day 6: Sumduwa to Phoksumdo Lake (3600m) 4-5 hours

From Samduwa we climb upwards, the river is known as the Phoksumdo Khola and runs crystal clear from the lake. We pass Palam, another deserted winter village and climb up to a ridge which separates the open fields of Ringmo from the narrow valley below. A roaring waterfall, one of the highest in Nepal, lies below us and we get our first glimpse of Phoksumdo Lake. Descending steeply through the forest we then climb steadily to reach the charming Dolpo-pa settlement of Ringmo with its collection of flat roofed stone houses, stuccoes chortens and long walls of

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prayer-carved mani stones. We pass through Rigmo village and set up camp at the bank of Phoksundo lake.

Day 7: Phoksundo Lake to North Bank(3700m) 4-5 hours

We start our trek to Shey Gompa in Inner Dolpo with a spectacular trail around the western end of the lake. The precarious path is chiseled from the steep rock walls and in places is supported on wooden trestles woven with saplings and covered with rocks. The sparkling pure turquoise waters of the lake lie directly below and it is wise to proceed with full attention to your footing. This trail was dramatically featured in Eric Valli's brilliant film 'Himalaya" about the life of the people of Dolpo who bring their yaks over difficult passes bearing salt from Tibet to trade for vital grain in the south. After this high traverse, the trail climbs to a ridge giving spectacular views over the lake, the dark green forest, and the bright fields of Ringmo with the snow peak of Kang Norbu to the south. A cairn and prayer flags mark our highpoint on the ridgeat a little above 4000 metres, beyond which we make a gradual descent to the lake's northern shore where we take lunch.

Day 8: North Bank to Kangla Basecamp (4600m) 5-6 hours

From the north bank we follow the plain river bank and pine forest at foothill of Mt. Kanjiruwa. Soon after 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 9: Kangla Basecamp to Shey Gumba (4370m) 6-7 hours via Kang La pass (5350m)

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 10: Rest day at Shey Gompa

We have a day to explore the environs and to catch up on laundry and other camp chores. In the afternoon we side trip to visit the amazing Kagyupa monastery of Tsa Kang which is perched on a narrow ledge high on a cliff face. To get there we have to climb part way on the trail which pilgrims follow to make the 'Kora' or circuit of the Crystal Mountain. And we get back to Shey Gompa again.

Day 11: Shey Gompa to Tora*/* Samling Gompa (4120) 6-7 hours

Our trail heads north from Shey Gompa, cutting up the hillside on the east side of the Tartan Khola and skirting around at the head of a tributary valley to a high grazing area near the Den La. Following a broad stock trail across

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the open hillside, we drop down to Tora where the people from Bhijer graze their yaks in the summer. Depending on how long it has taken to get here, we could set up camp at Tora (4500m) or drop down to Samling Monastery (4120m).

Day 12: Shey Gompa to Namgang Gompa(4414m) 7-8 hours

Continuing our journey through Inner Dolpo we now head east up another narrow valley and climb to the summit of the Shey La (5100m). On reaching the top of the pass the view north to Tibet and east towards Mustang, suddenly opens out and we have some notion of the vastness and arid nature of the Tibetan Plateau. Turning to the north we now make a long descent to the pastures at Namgung (4415m) consisting of a few stone houses and a relatively new gompa.

Day 13: Namgang Gompa to Saldang Village(4070m) 3-4 hours

A shorter day today, beginning with a brilliant traverse high above the Namgung Khola and then a steep descent to the large Dolpopa village of Saldang. Saldang is close to the Tibetan border and the some of the salt trade Yak caravans are routed through here. This trading of Tibetan salt for rice from the southern lowlands is a vital, age-old practice which still prevails in Inner Dolpo. Saldang is really a collection of five separate villages and is the biggest settlement in Inner Dolpo. We set up camp in time for lunch and have the afternoon free to explore. Altitude at camp is 4070 metres.

Day 14: Saldang Village to Sibu(4150m) 6-7 hours

Leaving Saldang we turn south following the Nagaon Khola through terraced fields of barley the staple crop of the Dolpopa. We pass through the scattered village of Namdo which boasts two monasteries, one beside the river and another high on a cliff top. Our riverside camp tonight is near the smaller settlement of Sibu (4150m).

Day 15: Sibu to Jeng La BC(4850m) 7-8 hours

The day begins gently as we follow the river. After 2 hours of trekking we turn away from the main river and climb steeply to a yak grazing area located at 4850 metres, below the Jeng La. This is our overnight camping place.

Day 16: Jeng La BC to Tokyu (4160m) cross Jeng La (51100) 6-7 hours

It is a steep climb to the summit of the pass at 5110 metres which is reached after approximately 2 hours. From the top we have a spectacular view southwards to Dhaulagiri. Beyond the pass, we descend into the extensive Tarap Valley, eventually reaching a stream and following this to Tokyu Village, where we camp. Altitude here is 4160 metres.

Day 17: Tokyu to Dho Tarap(4020m) 2-3 hours

In contrast to the majority of our trekking so far the trail down the Tarap Valley is well used and is well maintained providing relatively easy trekking through a broad fertile valley. There is much cultural interest during today's short descent beside the Tarap Chu and opportunities to visit several gompas before reaching Dho Tarap, a cluster of stone houses below the Ribo Bhumpa Gompa with its unusual chorten within the arch of a larger chorten. The women of Dho Tarap wear very striking headpieces of beaten silver (known as a 'tikpu') and also usually have large amounts of turquoise, amber and zee stone hanging from their necks and ears. The men of Dolpo often wear red

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woolen braid in their hair in the manner of the Khampas of Eastern Tibet. As in the Kali Kandaki Valley on the other side of Dhaulagiri there can be a fierce anabatic wind here from late morning to sunset and the construction and arrangement of the houses reflects this. We'll walk on to Yak Kharka beyond the village, where it is less windy, to set up camp. Altitude at camp is 4020 metres.

Day 18: Dho Tarap to Pivo Cave(3647m) 6-7 hours

Descending gradually beside the river we cross to the west bank and continue below imposing cliffs, before crossing a ridge marked with two ancient chortens. Dropping down to the pastures of the Shishul Khola, home to large herds of the blue sheep (or bharal), which George Schaller came to study in 1973. Beyond, we cross and re-cross the Tarap Chu on a variety of bridges old and new to reach the grazing area of Shim Ora (3647m) where we make camp.

Day 19: Pivo Cave to Khani Gaon (2620m) 6-7 hours

An interesting day of trekking through gorges of the Tarap Chu on a well engineered trail including flights of stone steps mostly on the west bank of the river. After approximately 4 hours of descent we break for lunch. After lunch the descent continues for a further 2 - 3 hours to Kanigaon where there is a police check post. We make camp just outside the village, below the check post in a stand of juniper beside the river. We are now at an elevation of just 2620 metres and it is noticeably warmer.

Day 20: Khani to Tarakot –Visit Gumbatara optional 6-7 hours

Leaving Kanigaon we come to a confluence of the Tarap Chu with the Barbung Khola and shortly after, cross this latter river on a high suspension bridge. The trail continues generally high above the river with some ups and downs until a final descend to Tarakot where we camp just below the village. This is a short day of trekking (approximately 2 -3 hours) and after lunch, there is the option to make the 1-hour (400 metre) climb up to the commanding, fortified settlement of Gumba Tara, where there is a monastery. In this lower valley there are 13 settlements which are collectively known as Tichurong.

Day 21: Tarakot to Dunai (2090m) 6 hours

We complete our trekking circuit today following the Barbung Khola (which becomes the Bheri River) to Dunai 2090m). This is another short day and provides us with a free afternoon. Dunai has a couple of small lodges and those who are ready for a beer should be able to find one. Our penultimate night’s camp.

Day 22: Dunai to Juphal (2090m) 6 hours

Continuing alongside the Bheri River on a lovely trail with some excellent stands of large conifers, there is a sting in the tail as we make a final climb through terraced farmland to reach the airstrip at Jhupal (2480m). We set up camp beside the airstrip and, this being our final camp of the trip; we will want to celebrate with our crew on the completion of one of Nepal’s finest treks.

Day 23: Fly from Juphal to Nepalgunj and Kathmandu

The early morning flight takes us out of the cool, fresh mountains of Dolpo and into the hot and humid Terrai region at Nepalgunj. This time, however, it is a short stop and we soon connect with our flight to Kathmandu, where we check into our hotel. Time now for a clean up and a look in the mirror (if you dare). This evening we have to get used

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to some fine dining and the hustle and bustle of Kathmandu's busy streets.

Day 24: Free day in Kathmandu

This is a contingency day in case of problems with the weather-dependent flight out of Jhupal. If we have flown on schedule this will be a day to relax and enjoy the delights of Kathmandu.

Day 25: Departure day

Our representative transfers to Kathmandu Airport.