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Lower Dolpo Trek - 15 Days

Lower Dolpo Trek at a Glance

- Duration: 14–18 Days (Kathmandu to Kathmandu)
- Maximum Altitude: Numa La Pass (5,309 m) & Baga La Pass (5,169 m)
- Trek Difficulty: Strenuous (High Altitude, Pass Crossings)
- Best Season: Spring (April–May), Autumn (Sept–Nov) & Summer/Monsoon (June–Aug - Rain Shadow)
- Permits Required: Lower Dolpo Restricted Area Permit ($20 USD/week) + Shey Phoksundo National Park Permit ($30 USD)
- Accommodation: Teahouses & Homestays (with optional camping in remote stretches)
- Starts/Ends: Juphal (via flight from Nepalgunj)
- Price Range: $1,850 – $2,650 USD per person (depending on group size and flight logistics)

Hidden behind the rain-shadow of the Dhaulagiri massif lies a land untouched by modern times. The Lower Dolpo Trek is a journey into the soul of ancient Nepal. Here, turquoise alpine lakes like Shey Phoksundo slice through stark, high-altitude deserts, and medieval villages still practice Bon Po—a shamanistic religion pre-dating Tibetan Buddhism.

Unlike crowded routes in Everest or Annapurna, trekking in Lower Dolpo offers true solitude. You will traverse deep river gorges, cross two high mountain passes over 5,000 meters, and experience the warm hospitality of ancient mountain communities. At Trek Curator, we design fully supported, safety-first Lower Dolpo expeditions tailored to adventurers seeking raw Himalayan wilderness.

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Route Overview

Your journey begins with a scenic flight from Kathmandu to Nepalgunj, followed by a mountain landing at Juphal airstrip (2,475 m). From Juphal, the trail follows the rushing waters of the Thuli Bheri River toward Dunai before heading east into the fortress valleys of Tarakot.

You will trek through dramatic river canyons up to the high, arid valley of Dho Tarap (4,090 m). Continuing across alpine terrain, the route tackles Numa La Pass (5,309 m) and Baga La Pass (5,169 m), descending to the cobalt-blue waters of Shey Phoksundo Lake (3,611 m) and Ringmo Village before completing the circuit back to Juphal.

Route Sequence: Kathmandu ➔ Nepalgunj ➔ Juphal ➔ Dunai ➔ Tarakot ➔ Dho Tarap ➔ Numa La Pass ➔ Baga La Pass ➔ Shey Phoksundo Lake / Ringmo ➔ Dunai ➔ Juphal

Lower Dolpo Trek Highlights

- Shey Phoksundo Lake: Stand on the shores of Nepal’s deepest and most breathtaking alpine lake (3,611 m).
- Ancient Bon & Buddhist Culture: Visit centuries-old monasteries like Ringmo’s Bon Monastery and Taron Gompa.
- High Mountain Passes: Conquer Numa La Pass (5,309 m) and Baga La Pass (5,169 m) for sweeping panoramas of Dhaulagiri and the Tibetan Plateau.
- Dho Tarap Valley: Walk through one of the highest human settlements on Earth, rich in Tibetan trade heritage.
- Rain-Shadow Advantage: Trek during peak summer months (June to August) when most of Nepal is covered by monsoon rains

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Why Choose Trek Curator

- Local Expert Guides: Native Dolpo and Himalayan guides with extensive training in high-altitude wilderness medicine.
- Seamless Logistics: Handled end-to-end permits, flights, emergency communications, and logistics.
- Fair Pay & Sustainability: Ethical treatment, insurance, and top-tier mountain gear for our local porters and support staff.
- Tailored Small Groups: We limit private group sizes to ensure safety, cultural integrity, and personal attention.

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PRICE INCLUDES

- All Permits & Documentation: Lower Dolpo Restricted Area Permit ($20 USD/week), Shey Phoksundo National Park Entry Permit ($30 USD), and local registration fees.
- Domestic Air & Ground Transfers: Round-trip flights for Kathmandu ⇄ Nepalgunj and Nepalgunj ⇄ Juphal, plus private airport transfers in Kathmandu and Nepalgunj.
- Accommodation: 2 nights in Kathmandu (3-star hotel with breakfast), 1 night in Nepalgunj (air-conditioned hotel), and 10 nights on trail (mix of local teahouses, homestays, and high-altitude camping tents).
- Meals & Hydration: Full board meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner) during the trek, fresh seasonal fruit after dinner, and safe water purification/filtration support.
- Guide & Support Crew: Government-licensed, English-speaking senior mountain guide, porters (1 porter per 2 trekkers, carrying up to 15kg/33lbs per client), kitchen team during camping sections, and full wages, meals, lodging, equipment, and insurance for all staff.
- Safety & Medical Gear: Daily blood-oxygen monitoring (pulse oximeter), comprehensive high-altitude first aid kit, emergency portable oxygen cylinder, and satellite communications support for rescue coordination.
- Complementary Equipment & Extras: Trek Curator duffel bag, down jacket and sleeping bag rental (on request), route map, and official trek completion certificate.

PRICE EXCLUDES

- International Travel & Visas: Flights to/from Kathmandu and Nepal tourist visa fees ($50 USD for 30 days).

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- City Meals: Lunches and dinners during hotel stays in Kathmandu and Nepalgunj.
- Travel & Evacuation Insurance: Mandatory insurance explicitly covering high-altitude trekking up to 5,500m and emergency helicopter rescue.
- Personal Trail Expenses: Charges for hot showers, Wi-Fi, battery/power bank charging at teahouses ($2–$5/day), soft drinks, bottled water, snacks, alcohol, and laundry.
- Personal Gear & Clothing: Personal clothing, high-altitude trekking boots, and trekking poles.
- Tips & Gratuities: Recommended customary tips for guides, porters, and camp crew (~$150–$200 total per trekker).
- Unforeseen Logistics: Additional nights, extra meals, or expenses resulting from weather delays (e.g., flight holds in Nepalgunj/Juphal) or emergency evacuations.

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DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1: Arrival in Kathmandu (1,400 m)

Welcome to Nepal! Upon arrival at Tribhuvan International Airport, your driver transfers you to your hotel. Meet your lead guide in the evening for a pre-trek brief and welcome dinner. Overnight in Kathmandu.

Day 2: Fly Kathmandu to Nepalgunj (150 m)

Take a 50-minute afternoon flight south to Nepalgunj near the Indian border. Transition from cool mountain valley air to warm lowlands. Overnight in Nepalgunj hotel.

Day 3: Fly Nepalgunj to Juphal (2,475 m) & Trek to Dunai (2,140 m)

Walking Time: 3 hours | Distance: 10 km

Catch an early morning flight landing at Juphal’s mountain airstrip. Meet your local porter team, organize gear, and start trekking downhill along terraced fields and pine forests toward Dunai, the administrative center of Dolpa. Overnight at a teahouse.

Day 4: Dunai to Tarakot (2,540 m)

Walking Time: 5–6 hours | Distance: 15 km

Follow the bank of the Thuli Bheri River, crossing suspension bridges and passing small fortress villages. Reach Tarakot, an ancient trade post once known for collecting border

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tolls. Overnight at Teahouse/Lodge.

Day 5: Tarakot to Laini (3,370 m)

Walking Time: 6 hours | Distance: 14 km

Ascend along the Tarap Chu River gorge. The trail climbs through steep canyon sections, traversing carved rock ledges and crossing wooden bridges over surging waterfalls. Overnight at Teahouse/Camp.

Day 6: Laini to Nawarpani (3,475 m) to Dho Tarap (4,090 m)

Walking Time: 6–7 hours | Distance: 16 km

Trek upward as the river valley opens into wide Tibetan plateau landscapes. Pass through Nawarpani and enter the wide, sunlit Dho Tarap valley, one of the world's highest human settlements. Overnight at Teahouse/Homestay.

Day 7: Rest & Exploration Day at Dho Tarap (4,090 m)

Spend a dedicated acclimatization day exploring ancient Bon and Buddhist monasteries, interacting with local villagers, and observing local trade traditions. Overnight at Teahouse/Homestay.

Day 8: Dho Tarap to Numa La Base Camp (4,440 m)

Walking Time: 5–6 hours | Distance: 12 km

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Leave Dho Tarap behind and cross high alpine meadows, ascending toward the foot of Numa La Pass. Pass through high pastures as the terrain becomes windswept alpine scree. Overnight at High Camp (Tents).

Day 9: Cross Numa La Pass (5,309 m) & Trek to Pelung Tang (4,465 m)

Walking Time: 7–8 hours | Distance: 14 km

An early start for the highest point of the trek. Hike up steep paths to the top of Numa La Pass (5,309 m). Take in views of Dhaulagiri and distant Tibetan peaks before descending to Pelung Tang. Overnight at High Camp (Tents).

Day 10: Cross Baga La Pass (5,169 m) & Trek to Ringmo Village / Shey Phoksundo Lake (3,611 m)

Walking Time: 7–8 hours | Distance: 16 km

Climb steadily up the second 5,000-meter pass: Baga La (5,169 m). Reach the prayer-flag-adorned crest before descending into pine and juniper forests surrounding the stunning blue Shey Phoksundo Lake. Overnight at Teahouse in Ringmo.

Day 11: Rest & Exploration Day at Shey Phoksundo Lake (3,611 m)

Walk along the shores of Shey Phoksundo Lake, famous for its turquoise waters framed by sheer rock cliffs. Hike up to the local Bon Monastery (Pal Tshe Ring Gompa) perched above the lake to observe centuries-old rituals. Overnight at Teahouse.

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Day 12: Ringmo to Chepka / Khanigaon (2,950 m)

Walking Time: 6–7 hours | Distance: 18 km

Begin the descent through deep forests and river gorges along the Phoksundo River stream, passing waterfalls and small hamlets down to Chepka. Overnight at Teahouse.

Day 13: Chepka to Dunai (2,140 m) to Juphal (2,475 m)

Walking Time: 6 hours | Distance: 16 km

Follow the familiar river trail back toward Dunai and complete a short climb back up to Juphal airstrip village. Celebrate the final night of the trek with your mountain team. Overnight at Lodge.

Day 14: Fly Juphal to Nepalgunj & Flight back to Kathmandu

Catch an early morning flight back to Nepalgunj, connecting to your flight to Kathmandu. Transfer to your hotel for rest and celebration. Overnight in Kathmandu.

Day 15: Final Departure from Kathmandu

Enjoy your final breakfast in Kathmandu. Depending on your flight schedule, our representative will transfer you to Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA) approximately 3 hours prior to your international departure. Safe travels home!

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Is Lower Dolpo Trek safe for foreign trekkers?

Yes, trekking in Lower Dolpo is safe when accompanied by a licensed guide who understands route navigation, high-altitude safety, and emergency protocols.

2. How hard is the Lower Dolpo Trek compared to Everest Base Camp?

Lower Dolpo is physically more demanding than Everest Base Camp due to its remote, less-developed trail infrastructure and two high pass crossings (5,309 m and 5,169 m).

3. What type of accommodation should I expect?

A mix of local teahouses, family homestays, and high-altitude mountain tent camps on pass-crossing days.

4. Can I trek Lower Dolpo in the summer monsoon season?

Yes! Lower Dolpo sits in the rain shadow of the Himalayas, making it one of Nepal's best trekking regions during July and August.

5. Why are restricted area permits required for Lower Dolpo?

The Nepalese government regulates permits to protect the region's fragile ancient culture, preserve wildlife inside Shey Phoksundo National Park, and manage border security near Tibet.

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6. What is the best local agency for booking Lower Dolpo?

Trek Curator provides licensed guides, comprehensive high-altitude safety equipment, transparent pricing, and managed permit logistics for the Lower Dolpo trek.

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