

Upper Dolpo Trek - 25 Days

Beyond the soaring peaks of Dhaulagiri lies a remote world untouched by time. The Upper Dolpo Trek is a journey into one of the last remaining strongholds of authentic Tibetan culture and Trans-Himalayan wilderness on Earth. Popularized by Peter Matthiessen's classic *The Snow Leopard*, Upper Dolpo remains restricted, rugged, and deeply transformative.

Crossing into this high-altitude desert, modern distractions vanish. You follow ancient trade routes, cross high-mountain passes exceeding 5,000 meters, and visit ancient Bon Po monasteries that have weathered centuries of Himalayan winds.

Upper Dolpo Trek Route Overview

Your expedition begins with scenic domestic flights from Kathmandu to Nepalgunj, continuing onward to the mountain airstrip at Juphal. From Juphal, the trail follows the Bheri River into Shey Phoksundo National Park, passing the turquoise waters of Phoksundo Lake before crossing Kang La Pass (5,360 m) into the restricted inner sanctuary of Upper Dolpo.

Upper Dolpo Trek Highlights

- **Phoksundo Lake (3,600 m):** Stand on the shores of Nepal's deepest lake, renowned for its vivid, ever-changing turquoise color and dramatic vertical rock walls.
- **High Mountain Passes:** Conquer formidable high-altitude passes including Kang La (5,360 m), Numa La (5,310 m), and Baga La (5,170 m).
- **Shey Gompa:** Visit the sacred 11th-century monastery situated at the foot of the holy Crystal Mountain, an active pilgrimage site during the Dragon Year.

- **Living Culture:** Experience authentic Bon Po and Tibetan Buddhist traditions preserved over centuries in complete isolation from modern development.
- **Wilderness & Wildlife:** Traverse Shey Phoksundo National Park, sanctuary to the elusive snow leopard, blue sheep (bharal), and Himalayan wolf.

Expedition Note: Planning a high-altitude expedition requires exact logistics and reliable field support. [Download our Free 2026 Dolpo Gear & Expedition Prep Guide] or [Chat with an Expedition Specialist on WhatsApp] to discuss custom dates.

Why Trek With Trek Curator

Trekking in restricted high-altitude regions requires precise logistical planning and safety management. Trek Curator brings over a decade of expedition leadership to Dolpo:

- **Safety Operations:** Satellite communication units, comprehensive medical kits, and portable hyperbaric (Gamow) bags accompany every restricted-area trip.
- **Regional Guides:** Our leaders are veteran high-altitude professionals raised in Karnali Province with deep local knowledge and active wilderness first-responder certifications.
- **Complete Logistics:** We handle all restricted permits, flight connections, and mobile camping infrastructure so you can focus on the journey.

Our group operations and guide protocols strictly adhere to safety and permit regulations mandated by the [Trekking Agencies' Association of Nepal \(TAAN\)](#).

PRICE INCLUDES

- Upper Dolpo Restricted Area Permit (RAP)
- Lower Dolpo Restricted Area Permit (RAP)
- Shey Phoksundo National Park Entry Permit
- All official government taxes, local fees, and permit processing
- Round-trip domestic flights: Kathmandu – Nepalgunj – Juphal
- Private airport transfers for all arrivals and departures
- 3 nights hotel accommodation with breakfast in Kathmandu
- 1 night hotel accommodation with breakfast in Nepalgunj
- 20 nights high-altitude camping accommodation (3-season tents)
- Sleeping mats, dining tent, tables, chairs, kitchen tent, and toilet tents
- Full-board meals on trek (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner) prepared by high-altitude cook crew
- Daily hot drinks (tea/coffee) and safe boiled/purified drinking water
- Welcome and Farewell dinners in Kathmandu
- Licensed, English-speaking high-altitude guide certified in Wilderness
- First Aid
- High-altitude cook crew and assistants
- Porters/pack animals (yaks/mules) to carry up to 15 kg personal luggage per trekker
- Insurance, food, lodging, salary, equipment, and medical cover for local staff
- Safety gear: Satellite phone/Garmin InReach, portable hyperbaric bag, emergency oxygen, pulse oximeter

PRICE EXCLUDES

- International airfare to and from Kathmandu
- Nepal Entry Visa fee
- Travel and high-altitude emergency medical/evacuation insurance
- Lunch and dinner in Kathmandu and Nepalgunj
- Soft drinks, canned juices, bottled water, hot showers, Wi-Fi, and electronic device charging fees
- Alcoholic beverages and personal snacks/energy bars
- Personal trekking equipment (sleeping bag, down jacket, trekking poles)
- Tips for guide, cook crew, and porters
- Excess baggage fees on domestic flights
- Extra accommodation or expenses caused by weather delays or flight
- cancellations

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1: Arrival in Kathmandu

- Altitude: 1,400 m / 4,593 ft
- Walking / Travel Time: 45 minutes (Airport transfer)
- Distance: 6 km
- Accommodation: 3-Star / Boutique Hotel (Kathmandu)

Arrive at Tribhuvan International Airport, transfer to your hotel, and meet your expedition leader for an evening gear check and trip briefing.

Day 2: Flight to Nepalgunj

- Altitude: 150 m / 492 ft
- Walking / Travel Time: 50-minute domestic flight
- Distance: ~300 km (Flight)
- Accommodation: Hotel (Nepalgunj)

Morning spent in Kathmandu while restricted area permits are finalised. Afternoon flight to Nepalgunj in the hot southern plains.

Day 3: Fly to Juphal & Trek to Dunai

- Altitude: 2,140 m / 7,020 ft (Juphal airstrip at 2,475 m)

- Walking Hours: 3 hours
- Distance: 10 km
- Accommodation: Tented Camp / Basic Lodge

Early morning flight to Juphal. Meet porters/pack animals and trek downhill along terraced fields to the Bheri River before walking to Dunai.

Day 4: Dunai to Chhepka

- Altitude: 2,838 m / 9,311 ft
- Walking Hours: 6 hours
- Distance: 14 km
- Accommodation: Tented Camp

Enter Shey Phoksundo National Park at Sulighat. Trek through walnut, pine, and bamboo forests following the Phoksundo River.

Day 5: Chhepka to Jharana Hotel / Palam

- Altitude: 3,370 m / 11,056 ft
- Walking Hours: 5 to 6 hours
- Distance: 12 km
- Accommodation: Tented Camp

Climb through dense cedar forests. Higher up, enjoy your first distant view of Phoksundo Waterfall (Nepal's highest).

Day 6: Jharana Hotel to Ringmo / Phoksundo Lake

- Walking Hours: 4 to 5 hours
- Distance: 9.5 km
- Accommodation: Tented Camp (Lake Shore)

A short, scenic climb leading to Ringmo Village and the stunning turquoise waters of Phoksundo Lake.

Day 7: Acclimatization Day at Phoksundo Lake

- Altitude: 3,600 m / 11,811 ft
- Walking Hours: 2 to 3 hours (Optional side hike)
- Distance: ~4 km
- Accommodation: Tented Camp
- Acclimatization Key Day 1: Active rest day. Hike high to Tshowa Bon Gompa (3,800 m) on the eastern ridge, then sleep low at camp.

Explore Ringmo's 900-year-old Bon Po monastery, interact with local villagers, and let your body adapt to the elevation.

Day 8: Phoksundo Lake to Sallaghari / Forest Camp

- Altitude: 3,750 m / 12,303 ft
- Walking Hours: 6 hours
- Distance: 11 km
- Accommodation: Tented Camp

Traverse the famous cliff path high above Phoksundo Lake (immortalized in Eric Valli's Caravan), entering the restricted inner valley.

Day 9: Sallaghari to Kang La High Camp (Nagdalo Phedi)

- Altitude: 4,400 m / 14,435 ft
- Walking Hours: 5 to 6 hours
- Distance: 9 km
- Accommodation: High Altitude Tented Camp

Ascend through narrow rock canyons and scrubland to set up high camp before tomorrow's pass crossing.

Day 10: Cross Kang La Pass (5,360 m) to Shey Gompa

- Altitude: 4,160 m / 13,648 ft (Pass height: 5,360 m / 17,585 ft)
- Walking Hours: 7 to 8 hours
- Distance: 12 km
- Accommodation: Tented Camp

Steep scree climb up Kang La (Nagdalo La). Sweeping views of the Tibetan plateau, followed by a long descent down to sacred Shey Gompa.

Day 11: Acclimatization & Exploration Day at Shey Gompa

- Altitude: 4,160 m / 13,648 ft
- Walking Hours: 2 to 4 hours (Exploration)
- Distance: 5 km
- Accommodation: Tented Camp

Visit the 11th-century Crystal Monastery (Shey Gompa) and nearby retreat caves at the foot of holy Crystal Mountain.

Day 12: Shey Gompa to Namdgung via Saldang La

- Altitude: 4,300 m / 14,107 ft (Pass height: 5,010 m / 16,437 ft)
- Walking Hours: 6 to 7 hours
- Distance: 11 km
- Accommodation: Tented Camp

Cross Saldang La (Sela Pass), descending into dry red-clay landscapes to reach Namdgung Gompa perched on a cliff.

Day 13: Namdgung to Saldang

- Altitude: 3,770 m / 12,368 ft

- Walking Hours: 4 hours
- Distance: 11 km
- Accommodation: Tented Camp / Homestay

An easier walk through terraced barley fields into Saldang, the largest and most populous village in Upper Dolpo.

Day 14: Day Hike to Yangjer Gompa & Return

- Altitude: 3,850 m / 12,631 ft
- Walking Hours: 5 to 6 hours (Round trip)
- Distance: 12 km
- Accommodation: Tented Camp / Homestay

Side excursion to Yangjer Gompa, one of the wealthiest and oldest Bon Po monasteries in the Trans-Himalayas. Return to Saldang.

Day 15: Saldang to Komash Village

- Altitude: 4,060 m / 13,320 ft
- Walking Hours: 5 hours
- Distance: 11 km
- Accommodation: Tented Camp

Follow the trade route through arid, desert-like hills, looking out for herds of blue sheep (bharal).

Day 16: Komash to Shimen

- Altitude: 3,850 m / 12,631 ft
- Walking Hours: 6 hours
- Distance: 13 km
- Accommodation: Tented Camp

Traverse high pastures, crossing small streams into Shimen Valley with its ancient mani walls.

Day 17: Shimen to Tinje Villag

- Altitude: 4,110 m / 13,484 ft
- Walking Hours: 5 to 6 hours
- Distance: 12 km
- Accommodation: Tented Camp

Walk flat river basins along trade routes that historically connected local salt traders directly with Tibet.

Day 18: Tinje to Yak Kharka

- Altitude: 4,700 m / 15,419 ft
- Walking Hours: 5 hours
- Distance: 11 km
- Accommodation: High Altitude Tented Camp

Climb gradually away from populated villages into seasonal high grazing grounds used by local yak herders.

Day 19: Yak Kharka to Numa La High Camp

- Altitude: 4,800 m / 15,748 ft
- Walking Hours: 4 to 5 hours
- Distance: 8 km
- Accommodation: High Altitude Tented Camp

Set up base camp right at the foot of Numa La. Eat an early dinner to rest up.

Day 20: Cross Numa La Pass (5,310 m) to Pelung Tang

- Altitude: 4,465 m / 14,648 ft (Pass height: 5,310 m / 17,421 ft)
- Walking Hours: 7 to 8 hours
- Distance: 12 km
- Accommodation: Tented Camp

Steep early morning ascent up Numa La Pass. Enjoy clear views of Mount Dhaulagiri I before descending into the valley.

Day 21: Cross Baga La Pass (5,170 m) to Ringmo Trail Junction

- Altitude: 3,730 m / 12,237 ft (Pass height: 5,170 m / 16,961 ft)

- Walking Hours: 7 to 8 hours
- Distance: 13 km
- Accommodation: Tented Camp

Climb Baga La Pass, the final 5,000m barrier. A long descent brings you back down to alpine vegetation and green meadows.

Day 22: Trek to Dunai

- Altitude: 2,140 m / 7,020 ft
- Walking Hours: 6 to 7 hours
- Distance: 16 km
- Accommodation: Tented Camp / Lodge

Follow river gorges and pine forests to complete the circular wilderness loop, arriving back at Dunai.

Day 23: Dunai to Juphal

- Altitude: 2,475 m / 8,120 ft
- Walking Hours: 3 hours
- Distance: 10 km
- Accommodation: Basic Lodge

Final short leg walking up to Juphal Airstrip. Evening farewell dinner and tips for your crew and porters.

Day 24: Fly Juphal to Nepalgunj, then to Kathmandu

- Altitude: 1,400 m / 4,593 ft
- Walking / Travel Time: Two domestic flights (35 mins + 50 mins)
- Distance: ~350 km (Flights)
- Accommodation: Hotel (Kathmandu)

Early morning flight from Juphal to Nepalgunj, followed by a connecting flight to Kathmandu. Hotel transfer for hot showers and rest.

Day 25: Final Departure from Kathmandu

- Altitude: 1,400 m / 4,593 ft
- Walking / Travel Time: 45 minutes (Airport transfer)
- Distance: 6 km
- Accommodation: End of trip.

Free morning for last-minute souvenir shopping in Thamel before your private airport transfer for international departure.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. How difficult is the Upper Dolpo Trek?

The trek is rated Grade 5 (Strenuous). It requires crossing three major mountain passes over 5,000 meters (Kang La, Numa La, Baga La) and walking 6 to 8 hours daily over remote terrain with zero modern infrastructure. High physical endurance and mental resilience are required.

2. How much do Upper Dolpo permits cost?

The Restricted Area Permit (RAP) costs USD \$500 per person for the first 10 days, plus USD \$50 per person for each additional day. You will also need the Lower Dolpo Permit (\$20/week) and the Shey Phoksundo National Park entry fee (NPR 3,000 / ~USD \$23).

3. Can I trek solo in Upper Dolpo?

No. Solo independent trekking is strictly illegal under Nepalese immigration law. All trekkers must be in a group of at least two registered travelers accompanied by a licensed Nepalese guide and booked through a government-registered trekking agency.

4. What accommodation is used along the route?

Upper Dolpo is primarily a wilderness camping expedition. Trek Curator provides 3-season high-altitude tents, comfortable foam mattresses, insulating dining tents with tables and chairs, and private toilet setups maintained by our field crew.

5. Why book the Upper Dolpo Trek 2026 early?

Due to strict permit quotas, limited seats on small mountain flights between Nepalgunj and Juphal, and complex guide/crew logistics, fixed departure bookings must be confirmed 3 to 6 months in advance.

