

Mustang – The Forbidden Kingdom

19 DAYS

13 Days MODERATE Trekking

Maximum Altitude 4200 Metres

A Fascinating Journey Through Nepal's Ancient & Forbidden Kingdom

- ◆ FOLLOW AN ANCIENT TRADING ROUTE TOWARDS THE TIBETAN PLATEAU
- ◆ TREK THROUGH THE KALI GANDAKI VALLEY, THE DEEPEST GORGE IN THE WORLD
- ◆ TRADITIONAL TIBETAN CULTURE & THE WALLED CITY OF LO MANTHANG
- ◆ SPRING DEPARTURE VISITS THE ANNUAL TIJI FESTIVAL

For dates and prices see our website at www.classicjourneys.co.uk
and follow the link to the [Classic Journeys Mustang Trek](#)

Introduction

Mustang is a remote semi-independent Tibetan Kingdom north of the Annapurna and Dhaulagiri Mountains and is one of the last bastions of undisturbed Tibetan culture in the world. Only opened to westerners in 1992, our trek takes us to the capital Lo Manthang and the fascinating Upper Mustang. Well-known, intrepid explorers such as Professor David Snellgrove and the Italian scholar Guiseppe Tucci visited Mustang in the 1950's and it has largely been their tales of a Tibetan-like arid region that has fuelled interest in the area.

Mustang has an average height of 4000 metres and is located to the north of the mountain giants of Dhaulagiri and Annapurna, being north of the main Himalayan range and is geographically part of the highlands of Tibet. It is a vast high valley, arid and dry, characterised by eroded canyons, colourful stratified rock formations and has a barren, desert like appearance.

Lo was once part of Tibet and was an important means of crossing the Himalaya from Tibet to Nepal, and many of the old salt caravans passed through Mustang. It became an independent kingdom in its own right, under the rule of Ame Pal, the founder king of Lo in 1380. The present royal family can trace its history 25 generations back to Ame Pal, and the city of Lo Manthang, which we will visit, was the centre of their power. In more recent time in the 1960's Mustang became the centre for Tibetan guerrilla fighters who carried out small operations against the occupying Chinese. The CIA assisted them and the Tibetan Khampas were secretly trained in America. With Nixon's visit to China in the 1970's, the CIA's support was withdrawn and the Nepalese managed to disband these resistance fighters.

We begin our trek with a spectacular flight to Jomsom in the upper Kali Gandaki Valley, passing between the great mountain massifs of Annapurna & Dhaulagiri. From here we head north, following an ancient trading route, crossing windswept passes up to 4000 metres to the walled capital city of Lo Manthang. Most of the trek keeps to arid, high deserts inhabited mostly by people of Tibetan origin. The men are either traders or farmers while the women mostly tend the fields. We have several days at Lo Manthang and have time to explore the city and visit villages north of Lo Manthang. We trek through a landscape of indescribable beauty, surrounded by snow-capped peaks and bathed in hues of orange and red rocks. We pass eroded cliffs, red-walled monasteries and remote villages little changed by the twentieth century to enter a land inhabited by the infamous snow leopard, the endangered Bharal (blue sheep), and the mythical Yeti (abominable snowman). We have timed our spring departure to coincide with the annual Tiji festival, one of the most impressive festivals still held in the Himalaya.

"Mustang is one of the few places in the Himalayan region that has been able to retain its traditional Tibetan culture unmolested... authentic Tibetan culture now survives only in exile and a few places like Mustang, which have had long historical and cultural ties with Tibet."
His Holiness the Dalai Lama

Our price includes the special Mustang Permit Fee.

Recognising the special nature of the old, tiny kingdom, the Nepalese have imposed a surcharge for anyone wishing to trek past Kagbeni, the border of Upper Mustang. We also have to be accompanied by a government representative (liaison officer) on every trip. This special entry permit and government liaison officer's fees and expenses increase the cost of this special trek. With legal trekking groups only being allowed in for the first time in March 1992, and on average only 700 people each year visiting Mustang, this cost is outweighed by the fact that you would be part of a small privileged minority to visit this remote outpost of Nepal.

Spring Tiji Festival: Our Spring trek has been timed to coincide with the annual Tibetan-Buddhist Festival in the capital, Lo Manthang, this event has only been witnessed by a small number of Westerners and is described in great detail in Michel Peissel's book, "Mustang, a Lost Tibetan Kingdom". Classic Journeys is one of a few British companies offering a trek to Mustang at the time of the Tiji festival. This will certainly provide a great deal of interest and many photographic opportunities.

Itinerary

Day 1 – Depart UK

Depart UK on flight to Kathmandu.

Day 2 - Kathmandu (1527 metres)

Arrive Kathmandu. Flying into Kathmandu along the northern border of Nepal on a clear day is in itself an unforgettable experience, with the entire Nepalese Himalaya sprawling out below you. After customs, you will pass out of the restricted area and into the passenger pick-up area outside the building. You will see a Classic Journeys signboard and your trek leader will be waiting to welcome you to Nepal. After transferring to your Hotel, you will be given a chance to catch your breath and then be given a briefing. We complete the application for your Mustang trekking permit and your passport and air ticket will be collected and used by us to obtain this permit and to reconfirm your onward travel. Overnight hotel.

Days 3 - Pokhara (885 metres)

Morning transfer to the airport for the 35-minute flight to Pokhara, the rural capital of western Nepal. On arrival we will transfer to the hotel, situated near Phewa Tal Lake. The rest of the day is free to explore this small town. Pokhara is an area of great natural beauty with the Himalayan Mountains looming over the horizon. The Pokhara Valley has three large lakes, the largest being Phewa Tal. Bicycles are available for hire and boats are available on Phewa Tal Lake. There are many trails that will take you out of the town and into the quiet hillsides, returning to lakeside to discover the best cafes and restaurants. The wonderful Annapurna mountain panorama forms a wonderful backdrop for photography, particularly splendid at sunset. Overnight Hotel. (B)

Day 4 - Fly to Jomsom (2750 metres) – Kagbeni (2900 metres)

Early morning flight to Jomsom. The flight starts with a climb up out of the Pokhara Valley, cresting over the hill town of Ghorapani only a few hundred meters below into the Kali Gandaki Valley. We slowly ascend as we fly up the World's deepest river gorge with the Himalayan giants Nilgiri (7061m) and Dhaulagiri (8167m) to either side. If the weather is clear the high peaks will appear almost close enough to reach out and touch. The flight is a total of 20-25 minutes, culminating in an exciting landing at the airstrip in Jomsom (2750m). We will be met at the tiny airstrip by our Sherpa crew and have time to sort out our gear and explore this fascinating area. It is important to make a steady start and adjust to the altitude slowly, which will prove very beneficial in our programme of acclimatisation. We set off for the pretty village of Kagbeni (2900 metres) this is an easy 3 hours of walking along the right bank of the Kali Gandaki.

Just out of Jomsom we cross a small hanging bridge and then walk along the banks of the Kali Gandaki. The trail is quite barren with craggy rocks and sand and is mostly flat, which makes it very easy going. This very easy, enjoyable start is at the same time picturesque, with views of big peaks all around such as Dhaulagiri (8180m), Tukucho (6930m) and in the west the awesome mountain of Nilgiri (6950m). Over to the south and southwest can be seen the entire Annapurna Massif. Upon reaching Kagbeni there is a taste of scenes to come in Upper Mustang, what with its narrow alleyways and tunnels, irrigation canals, green fields of wheat and barley and a large red Gumpa. There are about 80 families living at Kagbeni, most of them traders who are the link in the chain between modern Nepal and the Tibetan-type people of Mustang.

We will cross a wooden bridge and enter the old part of Kagbeni, with its winding streets, Gumpa, and town entrance gate. Legend says that one should think good thoughts when going through the gate, leaving all bad will outside the town. The Gumpa (monastery) has a new wing that was added on quite recently, however the older section is open for viewing if you can locate the keeper of the key (often not an easy task). This is well worth the visit as it has many fresco style wall paintings depicting the life and teachings of the Buddha and is quite similar to many of the older Gumpas we will see further north in upper Mustang.

There will be plenty of time to climb up into the barley fields above the town to get a glimpse into Mustang or perhaps of the snow-capped peaks of the Annapurna range. At the police check post, north end of the village, there is a sign saying *'Restricted area, tourists please do not go beyond this point'*. Here we will complete our paperwork formalities for us to enter this forbidden region of Nepal. This is a short trekking day but good for altitude acclimatisation. (3 hours walking). Overnight camp. (BLD)

Day 5 – Chele (2980 metres)

Having shown our passes at the police check-post, we continue into Mustang proper. It is possible to trek right up the river valley, but the best way is to use a combination of the high trail and the riverbank pathways. The trail then widens significantly revealing an endless stretch of sand, however, the path is kept interesting by the passing of several mule trains bearing goods from Mustang and probably Tibet as well. On the west bank of the river you can see Gompa Kang and some caves. Unlike most monasteries in Upper Mustang, Gompa Kang is of the Nyingmapa sect. We stop for lunch at the village of Tangbe (after 4 hours of walking), which is situated alongside the east bank trail above the river. Here are the first black, white and red chortens that typify Upper Mustang. The little town is a labyrinth of narrow alleys among whitewashed houses, fields of buckwheat barley, wheat and apple orchards. Nilgiri Peak continues to dominate the southern skyline.

From Tangbe the trail climbs to a high point around 3100 metres. From here the route ahead unfolds, a stunning view towards great red canyon walls where the river enters a narrow defile. The village of Chele, can be seen perched high above the river on the west bank. The trail descends gradually out of to near river level. The rest of the walk is relatively mild into Chuksang. Chuksang is actually two halves separated by Narsing Khola coming out of the mountains to the east. About 45min walk up Narsing is the town of Tetang that is visible as a walled town on a hill of terraces. Chuksang is a truly beautiful place set deep in the Kali Gandaki canyon with red, orange and silver/grey cliffs all around. Notice the now inaccessible cliff dwellings in the large red rock face opposite Chuksang. These are also quite common throughout Mustang. They were carved out and lived in by Buddhist hermits, often much or most of their lives were spent in meditation and prayer in these cliff side dwellings. The trail heads out of Chuksang along the Kali Gandaki River but quickly divides to either down in the riverbed (low water route) or hugs the east bank (high water route). We will usually take the lower route off across the now very wide Kali Gandaki riverbed (this is a fabulous chance to look for "shaligrams", ammonite fossils considered holy by locals). The trail passes below another fort and village with red and white striped buildings on the east side. On the west side are great towering cliffs of amazing eroded pipes, chimneys and gullies in glowing yellow, gold, orange and red colours. After a short walk along the riverbed, there is a solid bridge across the Kali Gandaki at the point where it tunnels its way under a vast block of red sandstone. From here it is a short sharp climb to Chele. (6 hours walking) Overnight camp. (BLD)

Day 6 - Gheling (3660 metres)

There is a distinct change here, not only in the topography, but there is a world of difference also in the culture, lifestyle and people. Settlements are more scattered, smaller and more basic. The people of Lo or Mustang do practice agriculture, but because of lack of rain and fertile soil, cultivation is in sheltered plots of land making the landscape a pattern of brown, with scattered patterns of shaded greens. Immediately on leaving Chele, the path climbs steeply up to a plateau region through a small tunnel-like gully. Climbing more gradually, the village of Ghyakar appears to the west as the path rounds a corner. A tremendous canyon opens out between the trail and the village, surrounded by patchwork fields of rich red buckwheat and brilliant green. The trail winds upward hugging the north wall of the canyon and in places is literally carved into the cliff-side.

As we continue upward, the village of Ghyakar comes into view across the canyon. Ghyakar is a small village with numerous terraced fields that spread down the canyon; abruptly stopping at the edge of a large cliff-face, which drops off into the canyon. We approach the end of our climb and our first mountain pass at 3320 metres. From the pass it is a short descent to Samar, a pleasant settlement in a grove of willows with good running water in irrigation channels. This is a major stopping place for horse and mule caravans. The village has a commanding view of the valley below it.

Leaving Samar we descend steeply into a small canyon before climbing back up the other side to the Bag La pass (3745m). In Mustang and other Buddhist regions of the Himalaya, a large pile of stones, topped by numerous prayer flags, marks most passes. Buddhist believe that the act of carrying stones up to these passes and building a pile by the path will be rewarded with spiritual merit, Centuries of this practice have left significant piles of stones. From the pass we descend and ascend again before arriving in the very small town of Yemdo (3800m). We continue from Yemdo gently down and on up to Yemdo La (4000m) where we are rewarded with another even better view over all of Mustang.

We descend down a relatively steep trail to Syangmochen (3600m) with its two-three houses. The section of trail between Samar and Syangmochen is surprisingly wet and forested. Juniper trees (woefully missing most of their branches, which have been removed for firewood), dot the lower slopes while the higher slopes are virtually fully forested, as they are inaccessible to local woodcutters.

We will pass through numerous small canyons that are home to an amazingly diverse number of plant species, usually found much farther to the south. Look for the Himalayan pine, fir, small elm bushes (hackberry), and numerous types of roses. If we have time we can take a short but rigorous side trail just before Syangmochen to visit Rangbyung, a cave with numerous Buddha statues.

The trail climbs gently from Syangmochen to a pass at 3700 metres and enters another huge east-west valley. There is a trail junction here. The left trail is the direct route to the Nyi La bypassing Gheling. We take the right fork and descend to Gheling with its extensive fields of barley at 3600 metres. As in all the settlements of Mustang, most houses are constructed out of mud and stones with roofs cast out of twigs, straw and a mixture of mud and pebbles, usually painted in bright white or ochre colours. On the north side of town are the active Monastery and Gompa, as well as the remains of one of the oldest Gompas in Mustang. Although its age is unknown, this Gompa houses some very old Tibetan artefacts as well as numerous oddities. These include a 500+ year old prayer book, a 1000+ year old suite of armour from an ancient king of Tibet, numerous weapons from the Khampa resistance, and the centuries old mummified hand of a local thief who stole from the Gompa. (6 to 7 hours walking). Overnight camp. (BLD)

Day 7 – Charang (3820 metres)

From Gheling the trail climbs gently through fields, up the centre of the valley, passing below the settlement of Tama Gun and an imposing Chorten. There is an awesome view southward of the ruins of the Gheling nunnery with a backdrop of the snowy steep faces Nilgiri and Tilicho towering above. We rejoin the direct trail and start an unrelenting climb across the head of the valley to the Nyi La Pass (3950m). This pass marks the official entrance into Upper Mustang.

From here are spectacular views of the Annapurna and Dhaulagiri ranges to the south as well as the impressive Tibetan plateau to the north. The descent from the Nyi La is nice and gentle and takes us down to Ghami. Ghami is the first town under the rule of the King of Mustang and is a small village sheltered by overhanging cliffs and next to a clear stream. As with all of the significant towns in Upper Mustang, there is a royal house from where a relative of the King watches over the town. During the day you will pass many chortens along the way. Always keep to the left, as it is bad 'Karma' to go the wrong way round. The trail climbs onto a gently sloping plateau and passes beside a very long Mani wall about half an hour from Ghami. From the end of the wall the trail heads north to cross the ridgeline and begins a one-hour traverse Charang. (5 to 6 hours walking). Overnight camp. (BLD)

Day 8 - Lo Manthang (3820 metres)

After crossing a small Khola we head north and start ascending, eventually reaching the top of the cliffs after 1 hour. From here we continue to head north over rolling hills edged with 6096 metre mountains to the west, arriving at Lo Ghekar. Lo Ghekar is a small town with lovely grassy meadows usually inhabited by local yaks. It is also home to the oldest Gompa in Nepal.

The trail continues out of Lo Ghekar to the north with a short descent to a wooden bridge and then a steep ascent up the other side. The entire Mustang Valley is visible from here and we will be rewarded with numerous fabulous views across Mustang as the day progresses. After around 2 hours we begin our last long uphill before Lo Manthang. At 4200 metres this is the highest point on our trek! From here the trail winds its way slowly down to a pass at 4095 metres where we get our first views of Lo Manthang far off across the 'Plain of Aspiration' below us. The trail descends moderately steeply to the base of the hills and then sets out across the plain towards Lo Manthang. We will camp not far from the main entrance gate outside the walls of the city. (6 to 7 hours walking). Overnight camp. (BLD)

Days 9, 10 & 11 - Lo Manthang

Lo Manthang-This is the capital city of the kingdom of Mustang. The town sits in a broad valley filled with fields, horses, and yaks and contains about 150 houses, plus many cells for lamas. There are four major temples within the city and there is a caretaker and key, which are available at certain times. These really are very impressive, with huge clay statues of various Buddhas. The king's palace is an imposing 4 storey building in the centre of the city and is presently occupied by the current king and queen.

We have timed our spring visit trek to coincide with the annual Tiji Festival in the capital city. This is said to be one of the last great traditional festivals in the Himalaya and will be an amazing experience. Michel Peissel was the first westerner to witness the Tiji festival in 1964 during a visit to Mustang by special permission of the Government of Nepal.

He was also only the third westerner to ever visit Mustang. He arrived in Lo Manthang in time to witness only the last day of the festival and later wrote: "The scenes I witnessed were so extraordinary and so unexpected that I dared not believe my eyes and even today I have some trouble in believing in the reality of what I saw that day." The Tiji festival is a three-day ritual known as "The chasing of the Demons" that centres on the Tiji myth. The myth tells of a deity named Dorje Jono who must battle against his demon father to save the Kingdom of Mustang from destruction. The demon father wreaked havoc on Mustang by bringing a shortage of water (a highly precious resource in this very dry land) and causing many resulting disasters from famine to animal loss. Dorje Jono eventually beats the demon and banishes him from the land. Tiji is a celebration and reaffirmation of this myth and throughout the festival the various scenes of the myth will be enacted. It is of course timed to coincide with the end of the dry winter/spring season and will usher in the wetter monsoon season (the growing season for Mustang). Tiji comes from the word "ten che" meaning 'the hope of Buddha Dharma prevailing in all worlds' and is effectively a spring renewal festival.

This colourful festival includes horse racing across the 'Plain of Aspirations' outside the walls of the city, masked dances telling the stories of Tibetan Buddhism, typical of Buddhist religious festivals and even a huge tug-of-war contest. The King and Queen and other members of the Royal Family will attend the festival. The King is an active horseman and keeps a stable of the best horses in Mustang. Although his duties are largely ceremonial, he is respected by the people and consulted about many issues by villagers throughout the kingdom. We will be sure to request an audience with him.

The city is an absolutely fascinating place, with narrow streets and houses built adjoining the city wall. The town has four of the largest and oldest Gompas in Nepal, dating back to the 14-15th centuries. These are spectacular structures featuring traditional Buddhist paintings, woodcarvings, and massive Buddha sculptures. Despite the apparent squalor of Lo Manthang, the city is prosperous and maintains a strong sense of community. Though the people call themselves Lobas, people from Lo, they are very much Tibetan and practice a sophisticated culture and economy. Before trade with Tibet was disrupted, all of the salt and wool trade on the Kali Gandaki passed through Lo Manthang, and this brought a sizable amount of money to the city. Wealth is now primarily measured in land, horses and social standing.

After visiting the temples in the city you may consider renting a horse to visit some of the other villages in the area. There are two valleys above Lo Manthang. In the western valley is the site of the King's summer palace at Tingkar, as well as the monastery of Namgyal, the monastery of victory, situated in a spectacular setting on top of a desolate ridge. The western valley contains Chosar, the site of the high school and two other monasteries. This is the main trading route to Tibet and described by Tucci as "used over the centuries by pilgrims and apostles, robbers and invaders". Overnight camp. (BLD)

Day 12 – Dhakmar (3820 metres)

Beginning our return trek out of Mustang we retrace our route crossing the Marang La (4230m) and Mui La (4170m) to Dakmar where we camp. Dakmar is a split town, with 4-5 houses set in a stand of poplar trees in the lower village and 8-10 houses in the upper village about 20 min further along the trail. The Dakmar area is beautiful with large tracts of terraced fields set against blood red cliffs with numerous ancient cave dwellings. These once housed monks who wished to devote their lives to prayer. (5 to 6 hours walking). Overnight camp. (BLD)

Day 13 – Samar (3660 metres)

Crossing the Nyi La (4010m) we trek out to Samar. En route, we have good views southwards to the Annapurna Massif. Overnight camp. (BLD)

Day 14 – Kagbeni (2810 metres)

Trekking steeply down to Chele, we cross the upper Kali Gandaki on a metal bridge, then meander through Chukksang and Tangbe to finally reach Kagbeni. Overnight camp. (BLD)

Day 15 – Kagbeni. Optional excursion to Muktinath (3600 metres)

Relax in Kagbeni or visit the Hindu Temple at Muktinath. From Kagbeni the trail climbs to Jharkot, which dominates a ridge on the eastern side of the valley and continues to Muktinath. Muktinath, located in a poplar grove, is a sacred shrine and pilgrimage site for Hindus and Buddhists. The Mahabharata, the ancient Hindu epic written about 300 BC, mentions Muktinath as Shaligrama because of its ammonite fossils called shaligrams. Brahma, the creator, made an offering here by lighting a fire on water. You can see this miracle (burning natural gas) in a small Buddhist shrine below the main Hindu temple. Springs are piped into 108 waterspouts in the shape of boars' heads near the temple dedicated to Vishnu, the focal point for Hindus.

Muktinath is set in a true desert of brown rolling hills. The local ladies are canny traders, so be aware that these persuasive sales people can soon talk you into buying a few necklaces or woven belts before you know it. (BLD)

Day 16 - Jomsom

Heading west from Muktinath, through the village of Jharkot, the route is now part of the more frequented Annapurna Circuit trek, following the rock strewn valley floor to Jomsom. (3 hours walking). Overnight camp. (BLD)

Day 17 - Fly to Pokhara and on to Kathmandu

The flight goes via Pokhara to Kathmandu, transfer to our hotel. Overnight Hotel. (B)

Day 18 - Kathmandu

A day for sightseeing and shopping. Three major towns are located in the valley, Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur, each having a great artistic and architectural tradition. Kathmandu is the capital and the largest city in the country. Patan, the second largest is separated from Kathmandu by a river. Bhaktapur, the third largest, is towards the eastern end of the valley and its relative isolation is reflected in its slower pace and more distinctly mediaeval atmosphere. In the Valley the landscape is dramatically sculpted by the contours of the paddy fields. The towns and villages are alive with the colours of farm produce, ranging from pyramids of golden grain to the vivid reds of chilli peppers laid out on mats to dry in the sun. In the streets and towns there is a constant bustle of activity, especially in the bazaars and markets where the farmers sell their vegetables and fruit.

We organise a half day guided sightseeing visiting the main Buddhist and Hindu sights of the Kathmandu Valley. Overnight Hotel. (B)

Day 19 – Depart Kathmandu

Transfer to the airport for your flight departure. (B)

B = breakfast, L = lunch, D = dinner

The day-to-day schedule should be taken only as a general guide. A variety of factors, including adverse weather conditions, difficulty with transportation and politics can lead to enforced changes. Because of this it is not possible to guarantee that any of our holidays will run exactly according to the planned itinerary. The trip leader will make any changes, which are necessary.

NEPAL EXTENSIONS

There are many interesting destinations, which offer an enjoyable variation to your holiday. The programmes can be tailored to suit individual requirements and we will be happy to suggest destinations and itineraries to compliment your own ideas. It is also possible to extend this holiday and have extra time in Pokhara and/or Kathmandu. Here are a few suggestions.

Chitwan National Park: We offer options for a safari in Chitwan National Park, one of the finest wildlife reserves in Asia. For accommodation we can book any of the properties offering a wide choice of prices and options.

Bardia National Park in West Nepal or **Koshi Tappu National Park** in East Nepal

White water Rafting: on the Trisuli, Bhote Kosi or Seti rivers

Everest Mountain Flight: The 1 hour flight departs Kathmandu early morning and provides spectacular views of Mt. Everest and the surrounding mountains.

Bhutan: A five-day cultural visit to include Paro, Thimpu and Punakha.

Tibet: A four or five day visit to Lhasa, the capital of Tibet

Please contact the Classic Journeys office if you plan to extend your stay in Nepal.

Please Note: If you plan to extend you stay in Nepal it is essential we are informed as soon as possible so that alternative international flight dates can be booked. There is always a high demand for flights to and from Kathmandu.

TREKKING IN NEPAL WITH CLASSIC JOURNEYS

- With over 25 years experience we believe the quality of our Nepal treks is second to none.
- We operate fully supported, environmentally sustainable group treks.
- Our itineraries are carefully planned to provide extra rest and acclimatisation days and as a reserve against bad weather.
- Our Nepalese leaders are professionally trained and are among the most experienced in Nepal. Who better to look after you than your professional local leader, who speaks the language and knows the culture, intimately?
- Our friendly trekking crews are dedicated to ensuring your holiday is the best it can be. They will accompany you along the trail, set up camp and prepare your meals (when camping).
- Porters or pack animals carry your main baggage for you.
- Sleeping bags, cotton or fleece liners, padded duvet jackets, mattresses, kit bags and basic first aid kits are provided on all of our Nepal treks.
- We provide insurance, equipment and gear for our crew and porters and aim to keep our impact on the environment to a minimum.

The International Porter Protection Group (IPPG) works to improve the conditions of the mountain porters in the tourism industry worldwide. Classic Journeys supports the International Porter Protection Group (IPPG) and are the first UK trekking company to make a commitment of donating on an annual basis. All porters on a Classic Journeys Nepal trek are provided with insurance and adequate clothing (waterproofs, warm clothing, boots, goggles). For more information about the IPPG check out their website: www.ipg.net

INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS

If you would like Classic Journeys to book your international flights, please tick the flight inclusive package box on the booking form. Please advise if you have a preferred airline you would like to travel with or if you have a preferred airport you would like to travel from. Classic Journeys will then book your international flights and advise you of the actual cost.

To discuss your international flight options, please give the Classic Journeys office a call and we will advise on up to date flight prices and timings for your chosen trip.

Baggage Allowance: For hold luggage this is normally around 20kg and you should aim to keep to this weight. For internal flights the weight limit may be 15kg. Classic Journeys is not responsible for any excess baggage charges incurred.

Land Only Clients: Land only clients who are making their own flight arrangements should meet up with the group at the hotel in Kathmandu. We can arrange airport transfers if needed and will provide hotel contact details.

If you have booked on a land only basis and are making your own flight arrangements, you must check with the Classic Journeys office that your chosen holiday has reached the minimum numbers required and is **guaranteed to operate** before paying for your air tickets. We cannot be held liable, in cases where we cancel your trip, for losses incurred relating to any flight booking you have made.

PRICING

If you choose the Land Only plus international flights package Classic Journeys will book your international flight and advise you of the cost. The price of the tour will be the Land Price plus the cost of international flights on your chosen airline. Depending on the airline flights are booked with, you will pay for these flights with your final balance, 8 weeks before the trip departure. With some airlines, flights have to be paid for on making the flight booking and we will require full payment for the air tickets in order to purchase the tickets. In this situation we advise paying for your air tickets as soon as possible to secure the lowest fare.

Airfares and taxes are subject to change and if the fare has increased before the final balance has been paid, the additional cost will be passed on and detailed on the invoice.

INCLUDED IN THE COST

- Hotel accommodation on a twin share basis (unless single has been requested) for the nights listed in the itinerary.
- All meals as specified
- Airport – Hotel Airport transfers
- All internal transport as the itinerary
- Sightseeing tours where specified.
- Special Mustang Permit Fee
- All trekking arrangements including trekking permits, National Park entrance fees, tents (2 people sharing unless single has been requested), sleeping bag and duvet jacket (if requested), basic karri mat (mattress), guides, porters & cook
- Tour leader
- Cordura kit bag
- Basic first aid kit carried by your guide

NOT INCLUDED IN THE COST

- International flights from the UK
- Airport Taxes
- Visa fees
- Medical examination (if required) & vaccination costs
- Personal expenditure, bar bills, laundry, telephone calls, etc.
- Porters, guides & other tips
- Meals not specified
- Personal clothing & equipment
- Travel insurance
- Optional trips
- Charges incurred as a result of delays beyond Classic Journeys control
- Anything not specified in the Cost Includes section

GROUP SIZE

Minimum 4, Maximum 12

This holiday will operate once the minimum group size has been reached.

GUIDE / TOUR LEADERS

On arrival you will be met and transferred to your hotel. A local guide with the support of a trekking crew will lead the trek. With four or more clients an additional tour leader will be with you for the whole of your journey. Your leader will be with you throughout the trip to guide you along the route, help organise and interpret in the villages and assist the group in any other way possible. Our leaders are fluent in English and Nepalese as well as often another language, and have walked in the area many times. They will try and give you a real insight into the local way of life and, for those interested, will happily give some basic Nepalese lessons while walking or over evening drinks. Although not specialists, they are interested in the area's mountains, flora and fauna. Please ask your guide/leader if you have any queries during your holiday e.g. rest breaks, type and quantity of food or any other specific requests, as they will do their best to adjust the trip accordingly and cater for your needs and tastes.

TREK GRADE

MODERATE TREKKING: A trek that is well within the capabilities of most people although a reasonable level of fitness is required as there will be much ascent and descent with the occasional difficult day. The days average 6 to 7 hours walking on good trails, although there are two difficult days, one where we climb to our highest altitude of 4200 metres, this is just before our overnight at Lo Manthang (3820m) and the other is, day 14, a long day of 8-10 hours. The route has been planned to allow steady acclimatisation and taken slowly, the fit should have few problems. A regular hill walking background is desirable (Lake District, Peak District, North Wales or similar) but train well and you'll be ready for these trips.

A TYPICAL DAY

The day normally starts with an early morning mug of tea (or coffee), enjoyed while still in our sleeping bags at around 6.00 am. During breakfast camp will be struck and the porters will set off. We start walking after breakfast between 7.30 and 8.30 am. Everyone is free to walk at the pace, which is comfortable for them, stopping along the way to explore villages and take photographs. We will stop at around 11.00 am for lunch. Camp is usually reached at around 3 to 4 pm. Afternoon tea and biscuits or snacks are served, and at around 6.30 to 7.00 pm. the evening meal is ready.

HEALTH & FITNESS REQUIREMENTS

The fitter you are before embarking on a trekking holiday the more enjoyment you are going to get out of it. You should be in good condition for the activity you are going to do - lots of walking. Once you decide you are going on a trek, it is wise to begin a fitness programme. The best way for you to prepare is to take a lot of walks, particularly up and down hills. Jogging, aerobics, cycling and fast swimming will also help but should be in addition to walking outdoors.

We carry a basic first aid kit but recommend that each person also carry a personal first aid kit including any prescription medication they require; a suggested contents list will be provided on booking in the country information dossier. We also provide details of the recommended vaccinations needed however you will need to talk to your doctor, practice nurse or a travel clinic for the latest advice on health recommendations.

ACCOMMODATION

In Kathmandu we typically stay at the Shanker Hotel, a 100-year-old palace, situated in the heart of Kathmandu, facing the North side of the Royal Palace and just 10 minutes walk from busy Thamel, a quiet retreat with swimming pool and gardens. The grandfather of Her Majesty of Nepal once owned this heritage hotel, and the present owners have kept its historical character and the visible grandeur of the exterior and merged the old with modern comforts and authentic decorative objects, to create our comfortable base in Kathmandu. Alternatively we may stay at the Hotel de l' Annapurna, hotel Shangri La or Yak & Yeti hotels. These hotels are centrally located, situated close to the Royal Palace amidst landscaped gardens complete with swimming pool.

Please note that sometimes the mentioned accommodation may not be available in which case we will use similar standard accommodation.

On trek we will be camping; we use spacious 2 person Vango Mk V tents (or similar), provide thick sleeping mattresses, chairs, tables, cutlery and toilet tents. You will need to bring your own sleeping bag or request to borrow one of ours. Our trekking crews set up and break camp for you.

SINGLE SUPPLEMENTS

If you are a single person booking this holiday you do not have to pay single supplements, if you are happy to share. Neither will you be asked to pay a single supplement if you end up with single occupancy because of odd numbers. If you are travelling by yourself you will be paired with another single client of the same gender. Single supplements are payable if you specifically request to have a room/tent to yourself. If you have requested single accommodation we will do our best to secure this although this may not always be possible.

FOOD

Breakfast in Kathmandu and Pokhara and all meals elsewhere included.

Most hotels and restaurants usually provide both vegetarian and non-vegetarian, continental, Nepalese and traditional cuisine. Please ask the staff if you have any specific request, especially regarding flavours and spices, as they will do their best to adjust menus accordingly and cater for your tastes.

Our cooks provide varied and delicious local and western food while on trek. There are continental menus as well as local cuisine such as dhal bhat (lentils and rice) and other nourishing meals. As much as possible, locally bought fresh vegetables are used although in some remote areas they are not available. Fresh fruit should always be peeled and avoid salads or raw vegetables. Our staff ensure good levels of hygiene for all food preparations.

WEATHER

Nepal has two seasons the dry season from October to May and the rainy, monsoon season from June to September. Daytime temperatures at lower altitudes (Kathmandu) will range between highs of 20°C (December to February) to up 30°C (May to October). The best time to visit the Annapurna region is from October to early April when the weather is good for trekking and relatively dry. Early spring (March to April) will be ideal to see the rhododendrons in flower, with temperatures between 20°C to 30°C. Late autumn (October and November) offers crisp skies and often the clearest mountain views; temperatures are similar (20°C to 30°C). Winter starts from December to February, when the mornings and evenings can be quite cold but warming up in the afternoon to become warm and sunny, the temperature ranges from 6°C to 20°C. The terrain of the Upper Kali Gandaki Valley around Tukuiche, Muktinath and up into Mustang is very dry and arid. Temperatures in late winter (February) are between -1°C to 13°C (although h -10°C is not unknown at Muktinath in November/December). By early spring temperatures are warming up to 20°C although mornings and evenings are still cold (2°C), autumn has pleasant temperatures of 5°C to 17°C. The summer months of June to August can be too hot for general travel with monsoon rains. Pokhara remains favourable all the year round neither too warm nor too cold.

EQUIPMENT & CLOTHING

You will need to provide personal equipment and clothing. Buying specialist equipment and clothing can be costly. That is why on our Nepal trekking holidays, if requested, we have synthetic 4/5 season sleeping bags and liners that you can borrow free of charge! We can also lend you a synthetic duvet jacket, again free of charge! A considerable saving for those people who don't have their own equipment. You may also want to bring along a Thermarest for added comfort although we provide a basic mattress. You do not need any specialist equipment or clothing for this trek. Basically you need similar clothing to what you would take on a winter walk in the British hills. A detailed equipment list is provided on booking. We also provide a spacious Cordura kit bag, which will be given to you before your trek and is yours to keep. We provide a comprehensive equipment list in the country information dossier, which we send you on confirmation of booking.

PASSPORT & VISA REQUIREMENTS

You will require a passport valid for at least 6 months from the date of entry into Nepal; British Nationals also require a Nepalese entry visa, which should be obtained prior to departure. We will send you a visa application form and details of how to apply for this when you book. You can apply for your visa from the embassy in London. Alternatively you can obtain your visa on arrival at Kathmandu, although this may mean joining a queue. Other nationalities should check with the Nepalese embassy to see if a visa is required.

INSURANCE

Insurance is essential and is a condition of booking with Classic Journeys that you have adequate travel insurance cover. It is very important that you obtain insurance cover against the usual risks associated with travel, from the time of booking your holiday until the time you return home. Please ensure that your insurance provides adequate protection against the two major concerns: medical/repatriation expenses while abroad and cancellation/curtailment charges in the event that you, a travelling companion or a close relative fall ill either before or during the tour. For trekking holidays your travel insurance must contain evidence of satisfactory cover for repatriation and helicopter rescue.

Classic Journeys do not provide any advice on travel insurance. Classic Journeys is an Introducer Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Ltd. who are Authorised and Regulated by the Financial Services Authority. Campbell Irvine is a specialist travel insurance broker. The comprehensive policy they issue provides 24-hour medical emergency assistance and covers altitude and all adventurous activities undertaken on our holidays. For single-trip policies, the insurance provides cover for both UK and worldwide residents at very competitive rates. In addition an annual policy is available to United Kingdom residents.

To obtain insurance cover visit the insurance section of the Classic Journeys website and follow the links to the Campbell Irvine Ltd. website. Alternatively contact the Classic Journeys office and we will send you details and an application form.

We require confirmation of your insurance, the policy number and 24-hour emergency telephone number who ever you take insurance with.

SUGGESTED READING

East of Lo Manthang: In the land of Mustang. Peter Matthiessen & Thomas Laird, Shambhala Press, Boston, 1995.

Mustang, a Lost Tibetan Kingdom. Michel Peissel, Book Faith India, Delhi, India, 1967.

Nepal: An Insight Guide: APA Publications.

Annapurna A Trekkers Guide, Kev Reynolds. Cicerone

Nepal Phrasebook: Margit Meinhold & Prakash A. Raj, Lonely Planet Publications.

Annapurna: Maurice Herzog. Describes the first conquest of an 8000 metre peak.

The Gurkhas: Byron Farwell, Penguin.

Window on to Annapurna: Joy Stephens.

Birds of Nepal: Grimmett, Inskipp & Inskipp. (Field guide available)

MAPS

Annapurna: 1:100 000, Munich 1993 (recommended)

BOOKS & MAPS AVAILABLE FROM:

Stanfords, 12 Long Acre, London, WC2E 9LP. 020 7836 1321

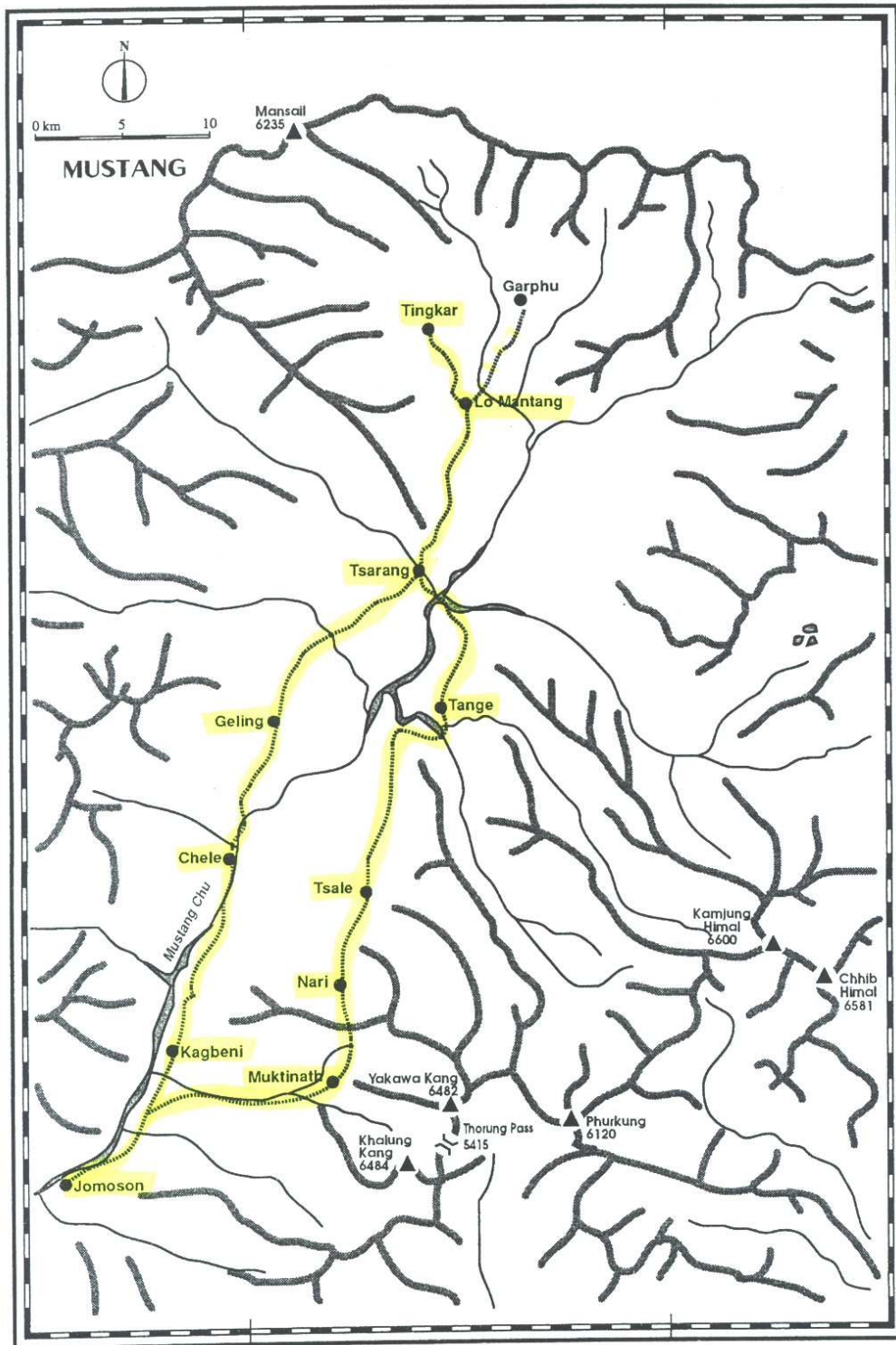
Cordee, 3A De Montfort Street, Leicester. Tel: 0116 2543579

Cicerone at Booksource, 50 Cambuslang Road, Cambuslang, Glasgow, G32 8NB.

Maps and books are readily available in Kathmandu.

Web Links: <http://www.amazon.co.uk>

***If you have any questions or would like to know more about any aspect of this trek,
please do not hesitate to contact the Classic Journeys office.***



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Classic Journeys **ADVENTURE TRAVEL**

Our Experience is Your Guarantee

Classic Journeys have a proven record of operating top quality, adventure holidays with over 25 years experience. Our ground agents and friends are the best in the business. They have an unsurpassed knowledge and ability for organising treks, expeditions, wildlife and adventure travel and all have excellent contacts, extremely important when dealing with local bureaucracy.

An important aspect of our success is our team of reliable and professional leaders, both western and local who ensure everything runs smoothly and efficiently. All our leaders are experienced, enthusiastic and have travelled widely. Working with our experienced and friendly staff, you can be sure of a high quality, personal service that many of our clients have come to expect.

Your Complete Financial Protection

Classic Journeys is a fully licensed and bonded tour operator with an Air Travel Organisers Licence (ATOL) issued by the Civil Aviation Authority (ATOL 3022). The purpose of the ATOL scheme is to provide financial protection for your holiday arrangements. An ATOL is a legal requirement for anyone selling air holidays to the public. In order to obtain this licence we have to continually satisfy the very rigorous standards and provide a bond, you can book your holiday with Classic Journeys in complete confidence that your payment is fully protected.

How To Book

Before making your booking please make sure that you have read the relevant tour itinerary. This can be downloaded from the tour page on our website, or you can request a copy to be posted to you from the Classic Journeys office. You should also read our General Information and Booking Conditions on our website. It is important that you choose a trip that is well suited to your experience and abilities. If you have any doubt or need to chat through any of our tours, please call the Classic Journeys office. Our advice is based on first hand experience and we are always happy to talk about our journeys.

Provisional Booking: It is sensible to check if places are still available on any Classic Journeys tour you are interested in before sending your booking form to us. We will be happy to hold open space for you for up to 7 days (up to 14 days if you live outside Europe) in order to give you sufficient time to send in your booking form and deposit.

Definite Bookings: To make a definite booking you must either complete and sign our standard booking form which can be printed off from our website at www.classicjourneys.co.uk and post or fax it to us, or complete the on-line booking form and transmit it to us electronically. You also need to pay us the required deposit as detailed on the booking form. If you are submitting an on-line booking form and decide you wish to pay the deposit by credit or debit card, you can, if you are concerned about security, telephone your card details to us.

Please note: We cannot confirm a booking until we receive your completed and signed booking form. Any delay in submitting your booking form may put at risk your place on your chosen trip, or flights.

If you would like further information, help with planning your holiday or details of extending your holiday, please don't hesitate to contact the Classic Journeys office.