

Upper Dolpo Trek



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Upper Dolpo Trek

URL: <https://outboundtreks.com/trip/upper-dolpo-trek/>

Destination

Nepal

Activity

Trekking in Nepal

Start / End Point

Kathmandu / Kathmandu

Duration

23

Region

Western Nepal

Max. Altitude

5,350 m / 17,552 ft (Kang La Pass)

Nature Of Trek

Camping and teahouse trekking

Best Season

January, February, March, April, May, September, October, November, December

Activity Per Day

5 to 8 hours

Transportation

Kathmandu-Nepalgunj-Juphal by domestic flights and Juphal-Dunai by private 4WD vehicle

Per Person From

USD 3,240

Group Size

1 - 20

Trip Difficulty

Challenging

Accommodation

Teahouses and tented camps

Meals

Breakfast, lunch, and dinner

Overview of 23 Days Upper Dolpo Trek

The **23-day Upper Dolpo Trek** in Nepal is a high-altitude expedition in the restricted region of **western Nepal**, taking trekkers through **Shey Phoksundo National Park**, over the 5,350 m **Kang La Pass**, and into **Tibetan Buddhist** villages like **Shey Gompa** and **Dho Tarap**. Although fewer people visit Upper Dolpo, the trek is known for Himalayan views of **Dhaulagiri Range** (8,167 m), **Crystal Mountain** (5,100 m), the **Kanjirowa Range** (6,883 m), and regional peaks such as **Putha Hiunchuli** (7,246 m), **Mukot Himal** (6,058 m), and **Buddha Himal** (6,672 m).

Upper Dolpo lies in the rain-shadow zone behind the Dhaulagiri mountain range. Historically isolated from modern developments, the region preserves Tibetan culture and **Bon traditions**. According to **Nepal Tourism Board Statistics**, Shey Phoksundo National Park receives fewer than 1,000 foreign visitors annually, compared to over 50,000 in the **Annapurna region**. This low visitor volume makes sure that trails are culturally preserved.

American author **Peter Matthiessen**, at age 46 during his 1973 expedition, documented his journey to Shey Gompa in his book *"The Snow Leopard"*. He observed the isolation of the region, writing: *"Once again I feel like I have landed on another planet."*

Because Upper Dolpo is classified as a restricted border zone by the **Nepal Department of Immigration**, foreign trekkers must obtain a Restricted Area Permit and travel with a licensed guide. The trek starts at about 150 m in **Nepalgunj** and reaches 5,350 m at Kang La Pass, so good physical fitness and sufficient time to adjust to the high altitude are essential. If you need any help preparing for the trek, feel free to contact the **Out Bound Trek** team.

23 Days Upper Dolpo Trek Itinerary

Day 01: Fly from Kathmandu (1,324 m / 4,343 ft) to Nepalgunj (150 m / 492 ft)

Your Upper Dolpo adventure starts with a domestic flight from **Kathmandu** to **Nepalgunj**, the main gateway to western Nepal. Sit on the **right side of the aircraft** for the best chance to see the **Langtang**, **Manaslu**, and **Annapurna** mountain ranges before the geography changes into the plains of the **Terai**.

After landing at **Nepalgunj** at just 150 m above sea level, you will notice a huge change in climate. The city lies close to the **India-Nepal border** and is one of the warmest places in Nepal. Daytime temperatures reach 35°C to 40°C during the hotter months. You can spend the rest of the day relaxing at your hotel, checking your trekking equipment, and preparing for the early morning flight to **Juphal** on the following day.

Drive Duration

6-7 hours

Highest Altitude:

1,324 m / 4,343 ft (Kathmandu)

Flight Hours:

50-60 minutes

Meals:

Lunch and Dinner

Accommodation:

Hotel

Day 02: Fly to Juphal (2,500 m / 8,202 ft), then drive to Dunai (2,850 m / 9,350 ft)

An early morning flight takes you from **Nepalgunj** to **Juphal**, the main air gateway to the Dolpo region. The journey lasts about 25 to 30 minutes on a small twin-propeller aircraft that lands on the mountain airstrip at Juphal. Baggage limits are strict on this route, so you should keep your main duffel within 10 kg and your daypack within 5 kg. After landing, you meet your trekking crew, have lunch, and start the drive toward **Dunai**.

A 45-minute to 1.5-hour drive on a mountain road beside the Thuli Bheri River brings you to **Dunai**, the administrative center of **Dolpa District**. Dunai is the last town with stable electricity, mobile phone coverage, and basic services before you enter the remote areas of Upper Dolpo. Your guide completes the permit registration at the local checkpoint while you have time to rest and prepare for the trek that begins the next day.

Drive Distance

10 km / 6.2 miles

Drive Duration

25–30 minutes

Highest Altitude:

2,850 m / 9,350 ft (Dunai)

Meals:

Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

Accommodation:

Teahouse

Day 03: Trek from Dunai (2,850 m / 9,350 ft) to Ankhe (2,130 m / 6988 ft)

After breakfast, you leave **Dunai** and cross a suspension bridge before following the north bank of the **Thulo Bheri River**. The trail then turns north into the beautiful **Phoksundo (Suli Gad) River Valley**, where forests of pine and cedar replace the open valley. A short climb brings you to the **Kagmara Viewpoint Ridge** (2,499 m), where you can capture the **Kagmara Peak**. The trek continues through **Dhera Village** (2,810 m), which is known for its old walnut trees and seasonal grazing land.

From Dhera, you climb to **Rahagaon** (2,900 m), a **Bhotiya** village with stone houses and a small **Mastha Gompa** devoted to the ancient guardian deity of the valley. The route then descends a forest on stone steps before reaching the village of Ankhe (2,896 m).

Trek Distance:

10 km / 6.2 miles

Trek Duration

5–6 hours

Highest Altitude:

2,900 m / 9,514 ft (Rahagoan)

Meals:

Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

Accommodation:

Teahouse

Day 04: Trek from Ankhe (2,130 m / 6988 ft) to Renje (3,104 m / 10,183 ft)

After leaving **Ankhe**, you follow the **Phoksundo River** across **blue pine**, **spruce**, and **giant bamboo** forest. The trail crosses small streams on wooden bridges and continues with frequent climbs and descents through the valley. Some areas are supported by wooden beams that have helped trekkers cross this tough area for many years. Trekking poles can provide extra balance on these narrow passages.

The trail later descends to **silver birch** and wild rose bushes before reaching **Ryajik Village** (3,030 m), a settlement surrounded by fields of potatoes and buckwheat. A short walk beside the **Phoksundo River** takes you to Renje (3,104 m) for an overnight stay.

Trek Distance:

10 km / 6.2 miles

Trek Duration

5-6 hours

Highest Altitude:

3,104 m / 10,183 ft (Renje)

Meals:

Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

Accommodation:

Teahouse

Day 05: Trek from Renje (3,104 m / 10,183 ft) to Shey Phoksundo Lake (3,611 m / 11,847 ft)

Today's trek takes you deeper into Shey Phoksundo National Park as you follow the Phoksundo Khola. After crossing wooden bridges, you reach the point where the Phoksundo Khola joins the **Pungmo Khola**. From here, the trail climbs up a zigzag path to **Polam (3,400 m)**, a seasonal settlement used by the people of **Ringmo**. Near the top of the climb, you reach a viewpoint from where you can see 167 m **Suligad Waterfall**, one of the tallest waterfalls in Nepal.

Beyond the waterfall, the trail is less steep, and you can see the blue water of Shey Phoksundo Lake. Continuing on the lakeshore, you arrive at your teahouse beside the lake. From here, the journey enters the cultural center of Upper Dolpo, where the local language, architecture, and customs are connected to the traditions of the ancient **Tibetan Plateau**.

Trek Distance:

15 km / 9.3 miles

Trek Duration

6-7 hours

Highest Altitude:

3,611 m / 11,847 ft (Shey Phoksundo Lake)

Meals:

Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

Accommodation:

Teahouse

Day 06: Rest & Exploration day

Today is an important acclimatization day at **Shey Phoksundo Lake**. Instead of staying at the teahouse all day, you take a short walk to adjust your body to the higher elevation. A one-hour hike on the eastern shore leads to **Thasung Tsho Ling Gompa**, an **800-year-old Bon monastery** that stands above the lake. While visiting the monastery, remember to walk around the chortens in a **counter-clockwise** direction to respect local Bon traditions.

After visiting the monastery, you return to **Ringmo Village** to explore one of the oldest settlements of the Upper Dolpo. Depending on the season, local people may be drying **chhurpi** made from yak milk, spinning yak wool, or working in fields of barley and buckwheat. This visit gives you a better understanding of the daily life and culture that have been preserved in this Himalayan region for centuries.

The afternoon is free for rest beside the shores of **Phoksundo Lake**. You can wash a few clothes, dry your equipment in the sun, and organize your backpack before the trek continues toward the higher passes of Upper Dolpo. Drink plenty of water or herbal tea throughout the day because the dry mountain air increases fluid loss. Use sunscreen, sunglasses, and a hat, as sunlight is much stronger at this elevation.

Trek Distance:

3-5 km / 1.9-3.1 miles (optional exploration)

Trek Duration

2-3 hours

Highest Altitude:

3,611 m / 11,847 ft (Shey Phoksundo Lake)

Meals:

Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

Accommodation:

Teahouse

Day 07: Trek from Shey Phoksundo Lake (3,611 m / 11,847 ft) to Phoksundo Khola (3,507 m / 11,505 ft)

After breakfast, you leave the shores of Shey Phoksundo Lake and start one of the most impressive parts of the Upper Dolpo Trek. The trail climbs a cliff above the western side of the lake, where tall rock walls stand on one side, and the turquoise water lies far below on the other. From the highest viewpoint, you can look back at the entire lake and see Ringmo Village surrounded by cliffs and mountains.

You will then drop through forests of **blue pine, birch, and Himalayan willow** before reaching the

Phoksundo Khola. This peaceful campsite is located deep inside Shey Phoksundo National Park, where there are no permanent villages, mobile networks, or modern facilities. From this point onward, you travel into one of the least-visited parts of the Himalayas.

Trek Distance:

8 km / 5 miles

Trek Duration

4-5 hours

Highest Altitude:

3,612 m / 11,850 ft (Shey Phoksundo Lake)

Meals:

Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

Accommodation:

Camping

Day 08: Trek from Phoksundo Khola (3,507 m / 11,505 ft) to Phoksundo Bhanjyang (3,910 m / 12,829 ft)

After leaving your campsite at **Phoksundo Khola**, you follow the glacial valley toward the north. The trail crosses small channels of the **Phoksundo Khola** on wooden log bridges before reaching the meeting point of two fast-flowing mountain streams. Here, the valley narrows, and the route enters a rocky gorge. Forests disappear at higher elevations and are replaced by juniper shrubs and alpine grass.

As you continue climbing, the gorge opens into an alpine basin surrounded by cliffs and snow-covered peaks. The landforms become more remote as you approach **Phoksundo Bhanjyang**, also known as the base camp below **Kang La Pass**.

Trek Distance:

7 km / 4.3 miles

Trek Duration

4-5 hours

Highest Altitude:

3,910 m / 12,829 ft (Phoksundo Bhanjyang)

Meals:

Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

Accommodation:

Tent / Camping

Day 09: Trek from Phoksundo Bhanjyang (3,910 m / 12,829 ft) to Shey Gumpa (4,500 m / 14,764 ft)

Day 9 on the Upper Dolpo Trekking Route starts before sunrise as you leave Phoksundo Bhanjyang for the climb to **Kang La Pass**. The trail is steep, rocky, and dusty, so walk carefully and follow your guide's instructions to stay safe. When you reach the top of the pass, colorful prayer flags welcome you to one of the highest points of the trek. From here, you can see **Shey Shikkar Peak**, **Kang Chunnel**, and the dry mountain grounds that spread toward the **Tibetan Plateau**.

After crossing Kang La Pass, you descend into an alpine valley where a glacial river flows toward **Shey**

Gompa. On the way, you may notice ancient meditation caves built on the cliffs as well as herds of **yaks**, **blue sheep**, and **Chyangra** grazing on the high pastures. The red walls of **Shey Gompa** soon appear beside the valley. This **11th-century monastery** is one of the most sacred places in Dolpo and stands near the base of the **Crystal Mountain**.

Trek Distance:

10 km / 6.2 miles

Trek Duration

6–7 hours

Highest Altitude:

5,360 m / 17,585 ft (Kang La Pass)

Meals:

Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

Accommodation:

Tent / Camping

Day 10: Rest & Exploration day

Today is another important acclimatization day at **Shey Gompa**. You start the morning by exploring this monastery, which has been in Upper Dolpo for more than **800 years**. Shey Gompa belongs to the **Kagyu** tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. Inside the monastery, you can see a large golden statue of **Shakyamuni Buddha**, ancient **thangkas**, prayer scrolls, and old wall paintings that have been preserved for centuries. This monastery also became well known after writer **Peter Matthiessen** stayed here while researching his famous book *The Snow Leopard*.

Later, you can take a short walk to the base of **Crystal Mountain (Shey Shelri)**, the sacred peak behind the monastery. Local people consider this mountain one of the holiest places in Dolpo, and many pilgrims visit to complete a religious circuit around its base. The mountain contains natural **quartz veins** that gave it the name **Crystal Mountain**.

Fossils of ancient marine animals have also been found in the rocks, which show that this area was once covered by an ancient sea millions of years ago. The surrounding hills are also home to **blue sheep**, and these animals attract the rare **snow leopard** to the area.

Trek Distance:

3–5 km / 1.9–3.1 miles (optional exploration)

Trek Duration

2–3 hours

Highest Altitude:

4,500 m / 14,764 ft (Shey Gompa)

Meals:

Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

Accommodation:

Tent / Camping

Day 11: Trek from Shey Gompa (4,500 m / 14,764 ft) to Namduna (4,800 m /

15,748 ft)

After breakfast, you will leave **Shey Gompa** and follow a trail through **juniper** shrubs before descending into a mountain canyon. High rock cliffs surround the valley as the route continues toward **Saldang La Pass**, one of the major crossings on the Upper Dolpo Trek. Colorful prayer flags welcome you at the top of the pass, and from here, you can enjoy dry mountain landforms that extend toward the **Tibetan Plateau** and the **Mustang** region.

As you continue, small barley fields appear beside the trail before you arrive at **Namduna (Namgung Gaon)**. The village is situated beneath tall rocks and is home to the **Namgung Gompa**, an ancient monastery of the **Karma Kagyu** tradition. You will spend the night in this peaceful settlement today.

Trek Distance:

10 km / 6.2 miles

Trek Duration

6-7 hours

Highest Altitude:

4,800 m / 15,748 ft (Namduna)

Meals:

Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

Accommodation:

Tent / Camping

Day 12: Trek from Namduna (4,800 m / 15,748 ft) to Saldang (3,903 m / 12,805 ft)

You will leave Namduna and climb a short ridge above **Namgung Gompa**. As you continue on the high trail, you may spot **blue sheep** on the high rocks and **Himalayan griffon vultures** circling above the valley. After several hours of walking, the scenery changes as the cultivated land of Saldang appears among the dry brown mountains.

The trail descends toward the **Namga Khola** before crossing a bridge into **Saldang (3,903 m)**. This is one of the largest settlements in Upper Dolpo and consists of five connected hamlets. Around 600 people live here in traditional stone and mud-brick houses surrounded by fields of **barley** and **buckwheat**. For centuries, Saldang has been an important trading center where local villagers exchange goods with markets near the **Tibetan border**.

Trek Distance:

10 km / 6.2 miles

Trek Duration

4-5 hours

Highest Altitude:

4,800 m / 15,748 ft (Namduna)

Meals:

Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

Accommodation:

Camping

Day 13: Trek from Saldang (3,903 m / 12,805 ft) to Yangtze Gompa (4,960 m / 16,273 ft)

After leaving Saldang, you will follow the valley of the **Namga Khola** toward the north. The trail traverses open gravel plains before reaching the **Marang** and **Ki village**. These settlements are built with flat-roofed mud houses that protect families from the strong mountain winds. As you continue, you cross a branch of the **Panzang River** before heading east toward higher ground.

The route heads uphill after the river crossing as you make your way to **Yangtze Gompa (4,960 m)**. Your campsite is set near **Yangtze Gompa**, one of the most important **Bon monasteries in the region**. The monastery has preserved ancient religious texts, artwork, and local healing knowledge for many generations. This location is also one of the highest overnight stops on the **23-Day Upper Dolpo Trek**.

Trek Distance:

13 km / 8.1 miles

Trek Duration

5–6 hours

Highest Altitude:

4,960 m / 16,273 ft (Yangtze Gompa)

Meals:

Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

Accommodation:

Camping

Day 14: Trek from Yangtze Gompa (4,960 m / 16,273 ft) to Sibu (4,560 m / 14,930 ft)

You leave **Yangtze Gompa** after breakfast and descend from one of the highest camps on the trek. The trail follows a high mountain route before turning toward the **Saldang** region. As you lose elevation, walking becomes more comfortable, and the valleys of Upper Dolpo spread out in every direction. The trail then descends to the banks of the **Namga Khola**, where you continue alongside the river.

Further along the route, you pass through **Namdo**, one of the largest villages in Upper Dolpo. Stone houses, terraced fields of **buckwheat**, and the **Namdo Gompa** show the rich culture of this remote valley. After leaving the village, you continue beside the **Namga Khola** until you reach **Sibu (4,560 m)**. This small settlement is surrounded by alpine meadows where local families graze **yaks** during the warmer months.

Trek Distance:

16 km / 10 miles

Trek Duration

6–7 hours

Highest Altitude:

4,960 m / 16,272 ft (Yangtze Gompa)

Meals:

Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

Accommodation:

Camping

Day 15: Trek from Sibu (4,560 m / 14,930 ft) to Jeng La Phedi (4,900 m / 16,072 ft)

After leaving **Sibu**, you will walk the way beside **Nam Khong Khola** used by trekkers in the past to travel between Dolpo and the **Tibetan border**. You may still see groups of **yaks** carrying goods such as salt, wool, and grain. If you meet a group of yaks on the trail, move to the uphill side and wait for them to pass safely.

After walking for several hours, you reach the point where two rivers come together. From here, the trail turns away from the main valley and heads up toward **Jeng La Phedi**. As you continue walking higher, you can enjoy beautiful views of the Dhaulagiri massif and the remote beauty of the area. After an hour of climbing, you arrive at a grassy area below **Jeng La Pass**, where you will spend the night.

Trek Distance:

10 km / 6.2 miles

Trek Duration

5–6 hours

Highest Altitude:

4,900 m / 16,072 ft (Jeng La Phedi)

Meals:

Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

Accommodation:

Camping

Day 16: Trek from Jeng La Phedi (4,900 m / 16,072 ft) to Tokyu (4,240 m / 13,911 ft) via Jeng La Pass (5,090 m / 16,699 ft)

You start early from **Jeng La Phedi** and climb toward **Jeng La Pass** (5,110 m). The ascent takes about 2 to 3 hours and follows an uphill route with little vegetation. The air is very cold at this height, so you should keep warm clothing and take short breaks when needed. At the top of the pass, you can see prayer flags, stone piles, as well as far-off views of **Dhaulagiri I** (8,167 m) to the south and the brown hills of Upper Dolpo toward the north.

After spending a short time at the pass, you'll start the long downtrek toward **Tarap Valley**. The trail follows gravel paths before reaching the valley floor beside the **Tarap Khola**. You continue along the Tarap Khola until **Tokyu** (4,240 m) comes into view. This village consists of small groups of houses surrounded by fields and open grazing land. You can visit the old **Tokyu Gompa**, located above the village, if you arrive early.

Trek Distance:

14 km / 8.7 miles

Trek Duration

6–7 hours

Highest Altitude:

5,090 m / 16,699 ft (Jeng La Pass)

Meals:

Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

Accommodation:

Camping

Day 17: Trek from Tokyu (4,240 m / 13,911 ft) to Dho Tarap (4,040 m / 13,255 ft)

You leave **Tokyu** and continue beside the Tarap Khola in a wide, mostly flat valley. On the way, you traverse long **mani walls** made from carved stones with Buddhist and Bon prayers. As you move closer to **Dho Tarap**, fields of **barley**, **buckwheat**, and mustard can be seen near the trail. The packed stone and mud-brick houses of the village soon come into view.

You will reach **Dho Tarap** around midday and have the afternoon to explore this old settlement. You can visit **Shipchhok Dedhen Phuntsokling Monastery**, an old Bon monastery with 15 chortens arranged out in the meadow. You can also explore **Riwo Bumpa Gompa**, where old wall paintings show Bon and Buddhist figures together. Dho Tarap is also home to **Bhotiya and Drokpa** communities, whose traditional clothing and customs are an important part of local life.

Trek Distance:

7 km / 4.3 miles

Trek Duration

5 hours

Highest Altitude:

4,240 m / 13,911 ft (Tokyu)

Meals:

Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

Accommodation:

Camping

Day 18: Trek from Dho Tarap (4,040 m / 13,255 ft) to Serkam (3,630 m / 11,910 ft)

On the 18th day of the Upper Dolpo trek, you'll leave **Dho Tarap** and follow the **Tarap Khola** downstream. After a few hours, the open lands give way to a deep canyon where the Tarap Khola flows between rock walls. You'll follow the river and cross suspension bridges that connect both sides of the valley.

As you continue toward **Serkam**, the route heads above the river to avoid the narrow spots of the canyon. You then drop down toward **Serkam Camp** (3,630 m) beside the Tarap Khola. Near the route, you can see the remains of an old stone fort and a chorten connected to the area's past as a crossing point between the communities of Dolpo and Tibet.

Trek Distance:

15 km / 9.3 miles

Trek Duration

6-7 hours

Highest Altitude:

4,040 m / 13,255 ft (Dho Tarap)

Meals:

Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

Accommodation:

Camping

Day 19: Trek from Serkam (3,630 m / 11,910 ft) to Khanigaun (3,150 m / 10,335 ft)

You will leave Serkam and follow the Tarap Khola for the rest of your day's journey. The way is rough in places, with rocks and stone steps, and you go up and down several times. You will cross the **Sishul Khola** by a hanging bridge and then keep walking beside the river.

After going down to about 3,400 m, you start seeing more trees. The dry and bare hills you have been seeing in Upper Dolpo slowly disappear, and green hills start to appear instead. After spending days among dry hills and open land, the trees of pine, spruce, cedar, and bamboo make the place feel fresh and very different.

You'll continue walking among the trees until you reach **Khanigaun**. It is a small village next to the Tarap Khola, with green hills all around it. You can stay by the river for the night, take some time to rest, and enjoy the peaceful environment. From here, you are getting closer to the end of your Upper Dolpo journey.

Trek Distance:

14 km / 8.7 miles

Trek Duration

5-6 hours

Highest Altitude:

3,630 m / 11,910 ft (Serkam)

Meals:

Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

Accommodation:

Camping

Day 20: Trek from Khanigaun (3,150 m / 10,335 ft) to Tarakot (2,543 m / 8,343 ft)

After having breakfast, you'll leave Khanigaun and walk inside the pine and cedar forests toward **Lalberi Village**. The path goes down through the trees and crosses a few small streams on wooden bridges and flat stones. After about two hours, the trees spread out, and farm fields start to appear around Lalberi. You can see fields of barley and buckwheat in the hilly areas.

From Lalberi, you'll trek farther down toward the Thuli Bheri River until you reach **Tarakot** (2,537 m). The village is located above the meeting point of the **Tarap Khola** and the Thuli Bheri River. Tarakot is also known by the local name **Dzong**, which means "fort" in Tibetan. In the past, it was the main fortified settlement of the **Tichurong Kingdom** and an important place for traders who moved salt and grain between Tibet and the lower valleys of Dolpo.

Trek Distance:

12 km / 7.5 miles

Trek Duration

4-5 hours

Highest Altitude:

3,150 m / 10,335 ft (Khanigaun)

Meals:

Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

Accommodation:

Camping

Day 21: Trek from Tarakot (2,543 m / 8,343 ft) to Dunai (2,850 m / 9,350 ft)

You leave Tarakot after breakfast and walk down to the **Thuli Bheri River**. You'll cross small streams on wooden bridges and pass old water mills that local farmers use to grind corn and barley. Farther ahead, you walk below the terraced fields of **Lawan** and **Byasgaon**. You may see local families working in their fields or taking care of cattle on the way.

The walk becomes easier as you continue toward **Dunai**. The route stays close to the Thuli Bheri River and passes small forests and high rock walls before the houses of Dunai appear ahead. You cross the main suspension bridge over the river and enter the district headquarters of Dolpa. After many days in remote mountain villages, Dunai gives you a chance to enjoy comforts such as a hot shower, a proper bed, and a warm meal. Your guide also completes the required exit check at the local police post before you settle in for the night.

Trek Distance:

14 km / 8.7 miles

Trek Duration

5-6 hours

Highest Altitude:

2,850 m / 9,350 ft (Dunai)

Meals:

Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

Accommodation:

Camping

Day 22: Trek from Dunai (2,850 m / 9,350 ft) to Juphal (2,500 m / 8,202 ft)

Today you will leave Dunai after breakfast and follow the **Thuli Bheri River** toward Juphal. The first part of the walk is easy as the path stays close to the river and traverses small farms, suspension bridges, local tea shops, and villages such as **Roopghar** and **Kalagaon**. After a few hours, you'll cross a suspension bridge over the Thuli Bheri River and leave the river behind.

The last part of the walk takes you uphill toward Juphal. After more than 200 km on foot, reaching Juphal marks the end of your trek. You spend the final night at a local lodge near the airstrip and enjoy a farewell dinner with your guide and porters. It is a good time to thank the people who helped you cross the high passes Upper Dolpo.

Trek Distance:

9 km / 5.6 miles

Trek Duration

3-4 hours

Highest Altitude:

2,850 m / 9,350 ft (Dunai)

Meals:

Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

Accommodation:

Teahouse

Day 23: Fly to Nepalgunj (150 m / 492 ft), then to Kathmandu (1,324 m / 4,343 ft)

The final day of the Upper Dolpo Trek begins with a walk to Juphal Airstrip for your flight to Nepalgunj. The flight takes about 25 to 30 minutes and takes you back to the western valleys of Nepal. As the aircraft leaves the mountains behind, you can take one last look at the hills and peaks of Dolpo before reaching the Terai plains. After landing in Nepalgunj, the warm and humid air feels very different from the cold mountain climate you have experienced for the past three weeks.

After a short wait at Nepalgunj Airport, you board your flight to Kathmandu. The journey takes about 50 to 60 minutes and takes you east toward the capital. Once you land at **Tribhuvan International Airport**, your 23-day Upper Dolpo Trek officially comes to an end. You can then return to your hotel and take some time to rest after one of the most remote trekking journeys in Nepal.

Highest Altitude:

2,500 m / 8,202 ft (Jhupal)

Flight Hours:

1 hour 45 minutes

Meals:

Breakfast

Accommodation:

Hotel

Includes

- Private vehicle pick-up and drop-off service between Kathmandu Airport and your hotel.
- Flight and overland transportation, as mentioned in the itinerary
- All teahouse and camping accommodation during the trek (22 nights)
- Standard meal (22 breakfasts, 22 lunches, and 22 dinners)
- Seasonal fruits after dinner
- Trek Permits (Restricted Area Permit + Shey-Phoksundo National Entry Park)
- Experienced English-speaking, government-licensed trekking guide
- Porter (1 porter for two trekkers), max weight limit is 18 kg (9 kg per trekker)
- Full coverage of wages, meals, lodging, transport, insurance, and gear for guides and porters
- Trek map
- Oxygen saturation check every day
- Water purification tablets
- Trek completion certification
- Trekking briefing before departure
- First aid medical kit carried by the guide

- Sleeping bags, down jackets, and a duffel bag (one for every two trekkers)
- Farewell dinner at the end of the trek
- All government, local taxes, and official expenses

Excludes

- Hotel accommodation in Kathmandu, meals in Kathmandu
- Personal travel insurance
- International flight ticket
- Nepal tourist visa fee
- Tips for guides, porters, and staff (It is appreciated)
- Personal expenses of all forms (alcoholic drinks, bottled water, hot shower, charging devices, snacks, desserts, laundry, Wi-Fi, phone calls, etc.)

Group Discounts Available

No. of Persons	Price per Person
1 - 4	USD 3,280
5 - 10	USD 3,240
11 - 15	USD 3,140

Additional Information

How Upper Dolpo Connects to the Tibetan Plateau?

Upper Dolpo connects to the Tibetan Plateau through its geography, history, culture, and trade routes that developed over more than a thousand years. The **Dhaulagiri** and **Kanjiroba** ranges block the summer monsoon, which creates a dry high-altitude environment that matches the terrain of the **Tibetan Plateau**. For centuries, mountain passes such as **Marim La (5,488 m)** and **Pindo La** connected Upper Dolpo with western Tibet and allowed people, farm animals, salt, wool, and grain to move freely across the border.

Upper Dolpo also preserves many traditions that played a role in the history of western Tibet. Before the modern borders of Nepal were established, the region was influenced by the **Zhangzhung Kingdom**, the early center of the **Bon religion**, and later maintained close relations with the **Guge Kingdom** and the **Kingdom of Lo**. Even after Upper Dolpo became part of Nepal in the late **18th century**, local communities continued to follow Tibetan Buddhist and Bon traditions while speaking Tibetan.

Ancient Bon Religion Sites You Visit During the Trek

The ancient Bon sites you will visit during the trek are listed below:

Thasung Tsho Ling Gompa (Tshowa Gompa)

Thasung Tsho Ling Gompa (Tshowa Gompa) is an over 800-year-old Bon monastery that stands on the eastern ridge above **Phoksundo Lake** near **Ringmo Village**. Local tradition says **Lama Treton Tshewang Tshultrim** established the monastery as a sacred place to protect the wildlife from hunting. The monastery is surrounded by red and ochre chortens, mani walls, and prayer flags. Inside, you can see ancient **thangkas**, statues, and religious objects that preserve the traditions of the Bon faith.

Samling Monastery

Samling Monastery lies near the route between **Saldang**, **Yangtze Gompa**, and **Bhijer**. The monastery is a main learning center where old Bon teachings continue today. Inside, you can find handwritten manuscripts, traditional wood carvings, and wall paintings that explain Bon beliefs and the history of the region. Local monks and **Amchis**, who practice the traditional **Sowa Rigpa** medical system, continue to prepare herbal medicines and follow healing methods passed down from generation to generation.

Shipchhok Dedhen Phuntsokling Monastery

Shipchhok Dedhen Phuntsokling Monastery is an active **Bon monastery** in the **Shipchhok** area of Upper Dolpo that was founded more than 800 years ago and rebuilt during the 15th century. Its name means “**sheltered place**,” which shows its quiet location among high alpine meadows. One of its most unique attractions is a group of 15 stone chortens arranged in a wide arc across the valley.

Riwo Bumpa Gompa

Riwo Bumpa Gompa is an old monastery in **Dho Tarap Valley** that holds special importance for both **Bon** and **Buddhist** communities. Located in one of the world’s highest valleys where people live year-round, at around 4,040 m, the monastery shows a long history of religious traditions. Its ancient wall paintings display Bon and Buddhist deities side by side, a rare quality in Himalayan monasteries.

Emergency Rescue Challenges in Upper Dolpo

Emergency rescue in Upper Dolpo is more difficult than on most trekking routes in Nepal because of its remote location, high elevation, and simple infrastructure. It is important to understand these challenges before starting the Upper Dolpo Trek.

- Understand that helicopter rescues above 5,000 m are difficult because thin air reduces lift and engine performance.
- Expect that helicopter payload limitations may restrict the number of people who can be carried during an evacuation.
- Carry a satellite phone or a Garmin inReach since mobile phone networks are unavailable on most of the Upper Dolpo route.
- Know that deep valleys and narrow gorges can temporarily block satellite signals and delay emergency communication.
- Remember that rescue helicopters must cross the Dhaulagiri or Kanjiroba ranges where poor weather

may stop flights even if Upper Dolpo has clear skies.

- Do not rely on local medical facilities because villages such as Saldang and Dho Tarap have only normal health posts.
- Expect local Amchis to provide traditional Tibetan medicine, but serious altitude sickness, major injuries, and trauma require evacuation to a hospital.

Note: *Your safety is our priority. When you trek with us, our team regularly monitors your health at higher altitudes and provides support whenever needed throughout the journey.*

Why Phoksundo Lake Never Freezes Completely

Phoksundo Lake never freezes completely because of its depth, underground water movement, and strong Trans-Himalayan winds. With a depth of up to 145 m, it is the deepest lake in Nepal and holds a large volume of water that stores heat below the surface. Water reaches its highest density at about 4°C and settles toward the bottom. This natural process slows the cooling of the entire lake, so the winter season is not long enough to freeze all 145 m of water into solid ice.

Another important reason is that Phoksundo Lake has no visible surface outlet. Instead, water leaves the lake through underground channels inside an ancient landslide dam before emerging as the **167 m Suligad Waterfall**. This slow underground flow creates water movement that makes full freezing more difficult. Strong winds from the **Kanjiroba Range** create waves on the lake during winter and break thin ice before it can spread across the entire surface.

Questions Trekkers Ask About Upper Dolpo Trek

How much does an Upper Dolpo Trek cost?

The Upper Dolpo Trek costs USD 3,140–3,280 per person based on group size. For groups of 1–4 people, the cost is USD 3,280 per person; for 5–10 people, it is USD 3,240 per person; and for groups of 11–15 people, it costs USD 3,140 per person.

Do I need a guide for the Upper Dolpo Trek?

Yes, Upper Dolpo is a restricted area regulated by the Government of Nepal. Solo trekking is strictly prohibited. You must hire a licensed trekking guide and book through a registered Nepalese trekking agency.

What permits are required, and are they included in the package?

The required permits for this itinerary are the Upper Dolpo Restricted Area Permit and Shey-Phoksundo National Park entry permit. The current Upper Dolpo restricted-area fee is USD 500 per person for the first 10 days and USD 50 per person per day thereafter.

Will we be staying in teahouses or tents?

Accommodation is a mix of local lodges/teahouses and camping. Camping is required for the remote high-altitude areas beyond Phoksundo Lake.

What kind of food is served on a camping trek?

An expedition cook crew will prepare fresh, hygienic, and high-energy meals daily. Breakfast includes porridge, eggs, and pancakes; lunch and dinner include *Dal Bhat* (rice and lentils), pasta, potatoes, soups, and canned meats.

What personal gear am I responsible for bringing?

You must bring your own broken-in trekking boots, a down jacket, a four-season sleeping bag (rated to at least -15°C/5°F), thermal layers, trekking poles, sunglasses, and a headlamp.

What type of insurance do I need to buy?

You must purchase special travel insurance that covers emergency helicopter rescue and search up to 6,000 m. Standard travel insurance policies cap out at 3,000 m or 4,000 m and will not cover Upper Dolpo.

When is the best time to book this Upper Dolpo trek?

The best times are January, February, March, April, May, September, October, November, and December. Because Dolpo lies in a rain shadow, it escapes the heavy monsoon rain that covers the rest of Nepal, making it one of the best places for a summer trek.

Is there any Wi-Fi or cellular network access?

No, there is a complete cellular and internet blackout throughout almost the entire Inner Dolpo region. Your only connection to the outside world will be the satellite phone of the expedition guide.

Is the Upper Dolpo Trek safe for tourists?

Yes, the Upper Dolpo Trek is safe for tourists from a political and crime standpoint, but it carries high physical and logistical risks due to isolation, high altitudes exceeding 5,000 m, and a lack of local medical facilities.

What happens if the flights to or from Juphal are delayed?

Juphal Airport is in the mountains, where strong winds, fog, and rain can delay flights. If this happens, we will try to fly the next day. To avoid missing your international flight, it is a good idea to keep 3 to 4 extra days in your travel plan.

What are the major attractions of Upper Dolpo Trek?

The major attractions of the Upper Dolpo Trek are Shey Phoksundo Lake and National Park, Shey Gumpa, Dho Tarap, Crystal Mountain (Shey Shelri), Pre-Buddhist Bon culture, Yarsagumba and medicinal flora, and cinematic landscapes.

Address

Outbound Treks Pvt. Ltd.