



M U S T A N G

“The Kingdom of Lo – Manthang”

Introduction

The Kingdom of Lo-manthang or Mustang situated at an altitude of 3770 m, is an independent kingdom within Nepal and its King having allegiance to the King of Nepal. Though the people call themselves Lobas- people from Lo, they are very much Tibetan and practice a sophisticated culture and economy. The King's palace is an imposing 4 – storey building in the center of the walled city. It is the home of the present king - Jigme Parbal Bista. The Honorary title "Bist – a high caste title in Nepali" was conferred by the King of Nepal. Though his duties are largely ceremonial, he is respected by the people and consulted about many issues by villagers throughout Lo. Despite the apparent squalour of Lo Manthang, the city is prosperous and maintains a strong sense of community.

This is a restricted area and only recently been opened to tourism. However, only 5000 tourists per year are allowed to visit this enchanting kingdom and is on a first come first serve basis. The rule applies that every trek group must be accompanied by a Government liaison officer from His Majesty's Government of Nepal and every visitor has to pay a restricted area entrance fee of US\$ 700.00 per person which is valid for 10 days from the date of entry and if clients want to visit other areas north of Lo-manthang such as the Garphu, Nyaphu and Chosar Gompas, then an additional US\$ 210.00 per person is levied.

Total Duration:	13 nights / 14 days
Transportation:	Both ways by Flight to/from starting and ending points.
Features:	Annapurna Range, Dhaulagiri Range.
Rivers:	Kali Gandaki, Mustang, Narsing Khola
Tribes:	Mostly Lobas & Tibetan Villages with Monasteries, Chortens and Caves.
Warning:	High Altitude Sickness.



Itinerary:

Day 01: Kathmandu

Arrive Kathmandu. Upon arrival, met by representatives from Sacred Summits (P) Ltd; and transferred to the Hotel.

EVE : Trip briefing.

Followed by Welcome Dinner at a Typical Nepali restaurant.

Overnight at the Hotel.

Day 02: Kathmandu

10:00 Hrs - After breakfast, meet at the lobby and proceed for the sightseeing tour of the ancient **Kathmandu city** with its many beautiful temples and shopping courtyards. As one crosses from the modern area of New Road into the Durbar Square, the one time Freak Street, one is suddenly in the midst of Kathmandu's famed medieval architecture. The major tourist attractions on this tour includes a visit to the **Hanuman Dhoka (Hanaman ate) which** takes its name from the Monkey God, Hanuman from the epic, Ramayana The palace of the Malla Kings located in the Hanuman Dhoka is of the 14th Century and it is still retained as a ceremonial palace of the present Shah dynasty. Important traditional Royal ceremonies including the coronation of the King of Nepal are still conducted at Hanaman Dhoka Palace. Near the Hanaman Dhoka is the house of the Living Goddess Kumari - **Kumari Bahal**. Two painted stone Lions stand guard at the entrance. Visitors may enter the courtyard to see the Living Goddess but are forbidden to take photographs.

Also visit **Kasthamandap**", a temple built from the wood of a single tree from Where Kathmandu city derived its name.

Continue drive to **Swayambhunath Stupa** - one of the protected monument sites of the Kathmandu Valley. It is situated on the top of the hill lying 4 kilometers west of Kathmandu. More than 2,500 years old, this ancient landmark is connected to the visit of Manjushree who created Kathmandu – a lake than – by draining its waters. The sage saw a celestial lotus in bloom on the top of this hill and sacrificed it. It is an important pilgrimage center as well as the center of art, architecture, religion and culture of Mahayana Buddhism.

The stupa of Swayambhu is a Hemispherical mound of compacted earth, and is built to specific rules, and is replete with symbols. The mound represents the four elements of earth, fire, wind and water. The 13 gilded rings of the spire symbolize the 13 steps of the ladder leading to *Nirvana*, the final salvation. The shrine is bedecked in colorful prayer flags. The pilgrim's progress to Swayambhunath's holy premises is actually through a sylvan path of 365 steps. The entrance is graced by a huge *Vajra* (Symbol of thunder bolt). Statues of Buddha adorn the four corners of the stupa. Statues of goddess Ganga and Jamuna guard the eternal flame behind it. There is a Tibetan gompa (monastery) and innumerable chaityas (small stupas). The balcony of Swayambhunath is ideal for viewing the entire valley spread out below.



There are five images of Panchadhyani Buddha around the main stupa of the Swayambhu. They are Achhyobhya in east, Ratna Sambhava in south Amitabha in the west, Amoghasiddhi in the north and Vairochana in the south-east just by the side of Achhyobhya. Two Sikhara temples known as, Pratappur and Anantpur are standing on either side of the main stupa. To the right of this temple is a monastery called Swayambnu Vahi. It is one of the oldest monasteries of the Sayambhu area. On the west of the main stupa is the monastery called Devadharma Gumba. Similarly there is a temple of Vayapura in southwest corner along with chaitya known as Mangal Vahudwara chaitya near by. It is a unique style of Chaitya found in the Kathmandu Valley.

PM: Free for packing

Overnight at the Hotel.

Day 03: Kathmandu / Pokhara

10:00 Hrs - Transfer to Kathmandu airport and fly Kathmandu / Pokhara (30 minutes). Upon arrival meet and transfer to the hotel.

Pokhara stands at 884 m above sea level, about 700 m lower than Kathmandu Valley. In Kathmandu Valley the high temples are all around you, in Pokhara it is the mountains. Only foothills separate Pokhara from the full height of the Himalayas, and the magnificent 8000 m. peaks of the Annapurna range. It is a vacationer's paradise with its crystal clear lakes and fantastic views of the Annapurna range including the Fish Tail Mountain.

Late PM : 1 hour boat ride on the famous Fewa lake followed by a visit to the Island temple dedicated to the goddess Barahi.

Overnight at the Hotel.

Day 04: Pokhara / Jomsom / Kagbeni

06:00 Hrs - Early morning transfer to the Pokhara airport and fly Pokhara / Jomsom (15 minutes). This scenic flight follows the upper Kali Gandaki River gorge and is operated early mornings only before the winds builds up.

Upon arrival in **Jomsom** (2713m./8817 ft.), met by Sherpa Team and Trek to Kagbeni - 2 Hrs. This is a short day to give enough time for acclimatization, hiring of porters and horses to make preparations for the trek ahead. Complete formalities at the Police Check Post at the North end of the village.

Dinner and Overnight camp at Kagbeni.

Day 05: Trek to Chailey Village

The trail is up the east bank of the Kali Gandaki river that climbs over many ridges as it heads north. Depending upon the rains we will use a combination of high trails and the river bank routes. From here we can see the Gompa Kang and some caves on the west bank of the river. Unlike most Gompas in Upper Mustang, Gompa Kang is of the Nyingmapa sect. Along side the East bank is the village of of Tangbe at an elevation of 2930 m. Here are the trio of black, white and red chortens that typify Upper Mustang. The Nilgiri peak which dominates the



southern skyline at Kagbeni continues to loom massively at the foot of the valley with its white washed houses, fields of barley, buckwheat, wheat and apple orchards. The Chhuksang village (2920 m) is reached after 1½ hours and lies beyond Tangbe at the confluence of the Narshang and KaliGandaki. Up the Narshing river is the Gompa and the Tetang village. 6½ hours.

Dinner and Overnight camp at Chailey Village.

Day 06: *Trek to Tanagaon (3770 m).*

The climb from the Chailey is up a steep spur to a cairn at 3130 m. From here there is view of the Gyagar village across a huge canyon. The climb continues along the side of the spectacular steep canyon to a pass at 3540 m. The trail makes a long gradual descend to some Chortens on a ridge and then further descends on a pleasant trail to Samar (3290 m) situated in a grove of poplar trees. From Samar climb to a ridge then descend into a large gorge past a Chorten painted in red, black, yellow and white.

The trails continues into another valley filled with juniper trees, crosses a stream and then climbs yet another pass and continues to Syangmochen village at 3710 m. Climb gently from Syangmoche to a pass at 3770 m and enter another east west valley.

Day 07: *Trek to Tsarang (3520m)*

The path slips through dunes and creeps through narrow passages and ghostly labyrinths, going down to Ghiling, which is a scattered over vast fields of barley in the pitiless wind. From Ghiling to Tsarang there are ruins scattered everywhere; castles, houses and temples, there are two passes to be crossed namely Nyi La Pass (3950 m) and another at 3600 m. Descend to Tsarang at 3520 m. It is a maze of fields and willow trees and houses separated by stone walls. The huge 5 storied White Dzong and Red Gompa are perched on the east end of the village. The Gompa houses a collection of statues and thankas as well as many large paintings of seated Buddhas.

Day 08: *Trek to Lo -Manthang (3780m).*

The trail descends about 100 m and crosses the Tsarang Chu and climbs steeply up a rocky trail on ridge opposite the village at 3580 m and enters the Tholung valley. Turn north and climb gently to an isolated chorten and marks the boundary between Tsarang and Lo. Still climbing, the trail crosses a stream then becomes a grand wide thoroughfare traveling across a desert like landscape, painted in every hue of grey and yellow. Finally from a ridge at 3850 m, there is a view of the walled city of Lo. A short descent leads on to the plain of aspiration at 3780 m. After crossing a stream, climb up onto the plateau of Lo-manthang. The whitewashed walls around Lomanthang is shaped like a misshapen with a short vertical arm oriented north-south and a very fat, almost square horizontal arm.

Day 09: *Sightseeing around Lo-Manthang*

The major Temples inside the walls are Champa Lakhang (God House) which houses the massive 45 ft. statue of Maitreya, the future Buddha, The red Thugchen Gompa with several large images of Sakyamuni, Avolokitesvara and Maitreya, and the The Chyodi Gompa of the Sakya sect which has several monks in residence and is the site of the annual Mani Rimdu festival in many which is referred as 'tegi' in Lomanthang. They are all supposed to have been built in



1420. 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.

The King's palace is an imposing 4 – storey building in the center of the city. It is the home of the present king - Jigme Parbal Bista. The Honorary title "Bist – a high caste title in Nepali" was conferred by the King of Nepal. Though his duties are largely ceremonial, he is respected by the people and consulted about many issues by villagers throughout Lo. Horses are available on hire to visit the neighbouring village. However, everyone is required to mount and dismount outside the city gates as only the King may ride a horse within the city walls.

Dinner and Overnight camp at Lo-Manthang

Day 10: *Sightseeing around Lo-Manthang*

A day hike up-to the ruins of Ketcher Dzong for wide panoramic views of the valleys to the North and South is a worthwhile trek. Horses are available for hire in Lo Manthang and it is possible to visit the villages in the East and West valleys (Chonup Chosar) in a single day. Starting from Lo, begin towards to the North-West, visiting the village of Tingkhar – the site of the summer palace, Kimling and Phuwa as well as the Namgyal Gompa – the monasteries of victory, is in the west. We also visit Namdol before crossing the pass to Chosar (east valley, the site of the high school. This is the main trading route to Lhasa and was used over the centuries by pilgrims, apostles, robbers and invaders. Along the trail lies numerous fort ruins.

Dinner and Overnight Camp at Lo- Manthang

Day 11: *Trek to Ghami (3440m) via Lo Gyakar Gomba.*

There is an opportunity to vary the return trek route visiting two other important villages. From Lo Manthang, the trail heads south to Tsarang. However to reach Lo-Gyakar turn east along an indistinct trail that passes that passes the irrigated fields of the city. The trail to the Lo-Gyakar is not a main trading route and the area is criss-crossed with herders trails. The climbs steadily to a pass marked by a cairn offering a last glimpse of Lo Manthang. The trail contours across the head of the valley and crosses another ridge then drops into another large desolate valley. After descending to the valley floor, the trail heads to the right, up the center of the valley to it's head. Cross the ridge at 4070 m. and traverse across the heads of two more valleys to an indistinct pass. Cross the pass to some meadows and a stream. The trail then makes a long rocky descent down a ravine to a grassy valley where Lo Gekar is situated in a grove of large trees alongside a stream.

Lo Gekar means pure virtue of Lo, is also known as Ghar Gompa – house temple as the structure is built like a house with small separate rooms. The Gompa is decorated with paintings and statues and several large prayer wheels. The real treasure of Lo Gekar are the hundreds of painted carved stones displayed on the walls in wooden frames. There is no village nearby but there are a series of quarters for monks and pilgrims near the Gompa that provides protection from the wind. From Lo Gekar climb to a ridge and across a valley and a pass at 200 m. above Lo – Geka. The route crosses some alpine meadows then drops down a



steep eroded gully to upper Tamar village. A large stream meanders through this village. The trail then descends alongside stonewalls and fields of this extensive village then climbs to a ridge. From here it is a short descent to the village of Ghami at 3440 m.

Dinner and Overnight camp at Ghami

Day 12: *Trek to Samar*

From Ghami follow the direct route to Nyi La climbing to a ridge and then contouring upwards to meet the trail from Charang. Continue to a pass and descend steeply to the Geling valley. Follow the trail that bypasses Geiling to an isolated tea house and descend gently to the three houses of Tama Gung. A steep set of switchbacks leads to a stream, then the trail climbs to a huge painted chorten. The trail rejoins the Geiling trail near the ridge just below the chorten and the remainder of the trek is on already traveled trails back to Samar.

Dinner and Overnight camp at Samar

Day 13: *Trek to Tangbe*

The route is well traveled as we head towards the village of Tangbe. This village is culturally united with four other villages namely Chele, Gyakar, Chhuksang and Tetang. The inhabitants from these villages call themselves Gurungs but closely resemble the Manangis rather than the Thakalis or Lobas.

Dinner and Overnight camp at Tangbe

Day 14: *Trek to Muktinath*

From here take the south route heading towards Kagbeni and continue eastwards towards the village of Dzong. The trail is very rarely used and thus human excretions lies rampant. However, the villages makes visiting interesting. Exit Mustang District and arrive at Muktinath (3627 m) – the holiest and most popular pilgrimage destination for Buddhist as well as Hindus. There is a miraculous flame coming out of the earth in the Muktinath temple.

Dinner and Overnight camp at Muktinath.

Day 15: *Trek to Jomsom (7 -7 1/2 Hrs)*

Continue trek to the Kali Gandaki river and down to Jomsom where we began our trek. In the evening a farewell dinner will be organized for the group by the staff.

Dinner and Overnight camp at Jomsom

Day 16: Early morning after breakfast bid farewell to the staff and board the Jomsom / Pokhara flight and connect the midday flight to Kathmandu. Upon arrival meet & transfer to Hotel.

EVE: Farewell Dinner at the famous Rum Doodle restaurant.

Overnight at the Hotel.

Day 17: Day free until final departure transfer to the airport for onward flight.



*** End of arrangements ***