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## Mustang Trek & Cultural Adventure

September 13 – October 1, 2026 (19 days)

**Lying on a high and austere beautiful plateau behind the snowy Himalayan massifs** of Dhaulagiri and Annapurna, the kingdom of “Lo,” as Nepal’s Mustang region was once known, is an enclave of Tibetan culture. Known as *Lopas*, the people of Mustang maintain centuries-old traditions, and, indeed, this hidden kingdom was completely closed to foreigners until 1991. On this adventure, join Cathy Ann Taylor for a discovery of this fascinating and rugged land. Our itinerary offers scenic panoramas of some of the sacred peaks of the Central Nepal Himalaya, countless opportunities to meet local folk in their picturesque villages and farms, and explorations of ancient temples and monasteries lost in time. Cathy Ann last visited Mustang in 2024 and is eager to return. A road has built from the Tibetan border to Lo Manthang, the 500-year-old walled city and capital of the Kingdom of Mustang, which will undoubtedly have implications for the people of this land. Join us this year and see it before it changes forever. In addition, we’ll be donating funds to the Himalayan Children’s Care Home in Pokhara Nepal. Cathy Ann/Cattara has been involved in raising money for this non-profit since 2010. The home is dedicated to preserving the rich cultural heritage of the remote Mustang area, where the Tibetan culture and traditions are on the brink of extinction. Himalayan Children’s Care Home is a non-profit organization that aims to provide health services, education, food, and shelter to the children of Mustang, many who have lost their parents due to the harsh conditions in the region. The home was founded in 1996 and currently houses 87 children with ages ranging from 4-18. Please see their website at: [www.hchmustang.org](http://www.hchmustang.org). Cathy Ann’s longtime friend Stan Armington, who has lived in Nepal for many years, is passionate about this project and has been involved in raising funds.

## TRIP DETAILS

Moderate to Strenuous ▶ 11 days moderate to strenuous trekking at medium to high elevation (maximum 14,186'); 4 short drives & cultural immersion, 6 nights camping, 3 nights lodges, 9 nights hotels

## ITINERARY

(You will need to leave the U.S. on September 11 or 12, depending on which route you take, to arrive in Kathmandu on September 13. We recommend arriving a day early to recover from jetlag)

### Day 1, Sept. 13 ▶ Arrive in Kathmandu, Nepal (4,385')

Welcome to Kathmandu! A Cattara representative will meet you outside the customs and immigration area at the airport and escort you to the Marriott Hotel. Besides the gorgeous lobby and pool area, the hotel also has fantastic restaurants, a bar, and several shops. Late in the afternoon or early evening, there will be a briefing on the trek arrangements and important information about your stay in Nepal. This evening you'll enjoy a welcome dinner with the group.

D...Marriott Hotel

### Day 2, Sept. 14 ▶ Kathmandu – Pokhara

In the late morning, we take a scenic flight to Pokhara (2,700'), passing over the deep valleys and rivers of central Nepal and taking in views of the Ganesh, Dhaulagiri, and Annapurna Himals. After checking into our lovely hotel, we'll enjoy a poolside lunch. This evening, you'll enjoy a tour of the hostel and cultural show with the group and all the kids at Lama Pasang's Children's Care Home.

B,L,D...Temple Tree Resort

### Day 3, Sept. 15 ▶ Jomsom – Kagbeni (9,315')

From Pokhara we take a very early 17-minute flight up the spectacular Kali Gandaki Gorge lying between the peaks of Dhaulagiri (26,788') and Annapurna (26,538') to Jomsom (9,053'), the administrative center of the Mustang district. Upon arrival, we meet our trekking staff and begin hiking along the banks of the Kali Gandaki River to Kagbeni (9,315'), a medieval-looking village that is the "gateway" to Mustang. We are now in the rain shadow of the Himalaya, and it's easy to see how closely this area geographically resembles Tibet. The peak of Nilgiri (23,166') dominates the southern skyline. (~7-8 miles hiking, 3 – 3½ hours, 900' gain.)

B,L,D...Red House Guesthouse or similar



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#### **Day 4, Sept. 16 ▶ Kagbeni – Samar (11,874')**

We travel by jeep to the village of Tangbe (10,037') and take in our first views of the uniquely colored chortens and landscapes of Upper Mustang, where beautiful red, yellow, and brown sandstone pillars rise from a barren, desert-like terrain. We'll continue driving to Chhuksang (9,774'), at the confluence of the Kali Gandaki and Narshing Khola rivers. From here we continue by jeep to the village of Chele (10,168'), from where we'll have a magnificent view of the southern valley of the Kali Gandaki. Continuing west from Chele, we cross a suspension bridge on foot from where we'll see the village of Ghyakar (11,683') and its surrounding fields. The hike continues on a long, gradual, trail and winds up the side of a deep canyon. After crossing a ridge, we enter a large side valley, gradually descending to our lodge at Samar (11,874'). Once a trading post for horse caravans, Samar is an oasis surrounded by groves of poplar trees amid the arid landscape. Overnight at the beautiful Annapurna Lodge. (Jeep ride: 2½ hours, ~5 miles hiking, 4-5 hours, 1540' gain.)

B,L,D... Annapurna Lodge or similar

#### **Day 5, Sept. 17 ▶ Samar – Ghami (11,513')**

After breakfast, we take our jeeps on the main road to Shyangmochen in order to visit an ancient cave, Chungsi, that houses the Rhangchung Chorten (meaning "the chorten that built itself or appeared by a miracle"), hidden away in a deep canyon. We'll make a short hike down to the cave. The cave, decorated with khatas (ceremonial scarves), numerous chortens, and other ritual items, is believed to have been visited by Padmasambhava, the Indian saint who brought Buddhism to Tibet. After visiting the cave, we hike back to our jeeps and drive north to the scenic village of Geling (11,710') with its poplar trees and vast, fertile fields. The main monastery overlooks the whitewashed houses that dot the valley. We'll visit the Geling school, enjoy lunch, and then drive to the top of Karki La Pass (13,186'). We hike down to the large village of Ghami (11,513') to spend the night at a historical lodge. (Jeep ride: 2 hours, ~3.5 miles hiking, 2 hours.)

B,L,D...Royal Mustang Lodge

#### **Day 6, Sept. 18 ▶ Ghami – Drakmar (12,530')**

After breakfast, we bid farewell to the village of Ghemi. We'll cross the Drakmar Chu River over a suspension bridge and walk above the most impressive and longest stretch of Mani wall (boulders with carved Buddhist prayer inscriptions) in Upper Mustang. Leaving the main trail, we ascend to the secluded village of Drakmar (12,529'), set under magnificent red sandstone cliffs dotted with numerous cave openings. We may possibly see blue sheep from this camp! (~2.5 miles hiking, 2-3 hours, 1,035' gain.)

B,L,D...Camp



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**Day 7, Sept. 19 ▶ Drakmar – Tsarang (11,700')**

A morning steep hike through amazing rock formations brings us to a beautiful ridge at 13,180' with magnificent views of the Annapurna range. We descend gradually to the ancient town of Tsarang (11,677'), with its picturesque entry portal. Nearby is a five-story dzong (fortress-monastery), formerly the home of the kings of Mustang, and the vast red Dorje Dhen Gomba, which we will visit before enjoying a hot lunch and checking into our beautiful inn. (~5 miles hiking, 3-4 hours, 1,000' gain, 1 hour exploration.)

B,L,D...Maya's Heritage Inn

**Day 8, Sept. 20 ▶ Tsarang – Ghar Gomba (12,956')**

After a leisurely breakfast we climb gradually up the valley through the village of Marang from where we get our first view of the famous Ghar Gomba, also known as Lo Gekar, meaning "true virtue of Lo." This is the oldest monastery (Nyingma sect) established in the 8th century by Padmasambhava, in an effort to pacify the "demons" that were hindering the construction of the Samye monastery in Tibet, which is often considered to be the first monastery in the Tibetan region. The gomba was restored with the funding of the American Himalayan Foundation. We'll camp above the gomba and make time for a visit & enjoy a meditation led by Lama Tashi. (~4.7 miles hiking, 3-4 hours, 1275' gain.)

B,L,D...Camp

**Day 9, Sept. 21 ▶ Lo Manthang (12,595')**

After crossing the valley, we climb gradually for about 2 ½ hours until we reach the Chogo La pass (14,186'), the highest pass on the entire trek. After a long gradual descent, we finally get our first view of the walled city of Lo Manthang in the distance, set among the fields and poplar trees. A steady descent brings us to our gorgeous hotel just outside the walled town. (~8 miles hiking, 4½ – 5 hours, 1,500' gain.)

B,L,D...Royal Mustang Resort

**Day 10, Sept. 22 ▶ Lo Manthang**

We take a day off from hiking to explore Lo Manthang, one of the last walled cities in Asia. We'll start with visits to its two major 15th century monasteries: Thubchen Gompa and Champa Lhakhang. Because of their remoteness, these monasteries have remained unaffected by modern times and entering them is like walking into another world, one heavy with incense and flickering yak butter lamps. When the chanting of monks or the moan of the long Tibetan horns is added to this, it's possible to lose oneself in reverie for a long period of time! Thubchen Gompa, located near the center of town, contains fine Buddhist murals in its massive assembly hall that is supported by 35 tall, wooden columns. Sakyamuni, the main deity of Thubchen, is depicted with other deities such as Avalokiteshwara and Padmasambhava. The three-storied Champa Lhakhang, whose walls are painted with intricate mandalas, opens to a central courtyard supported by carved wooden pillars and contains a fifty-foot-tall image of Maitreya, the future Buddha. It sits on a pedestal that occupies the entire ground floor and is the largest clay statue in Nepal. A team of conservation architects has restored both monasteries with funding provided by the American Himalayan Foundation. We also

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visit the Choedhe monastic school. Although the monarchy of Mustang officially ended in 2008 by order of the Government of Nepal, the former official Raja Jigme Dorje Palbar Bista was recognized by Mustang residents as the king until he passed away in December 2016. He traced his lineage back to Ame Pal, who founded the kingdom of Lo in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

(Note—The PBS documentaries *Journey of Transformation* and *The Lost Treasures of Tibet* are about Mustang and the restoration projects of this fragile area.)

B,L,D...Royal Mustang Resort

### **Day 11, Sept 23 ▶ Lo Manthang**

A day to explore further in Mustang with a visit to Cathy Ann's friend Lama Tashi's village of Chhosar. We will transfer by jeep and spend the day touring the village. Return to Lo Manthang for the night. (~5.65 miles hiking, 2 hours, 700' gain.)

B,L,D...Royal Mustang Resort



### **Day 12, Sept. 24 ▶ Return trek – Yara (11,742')**

We leave Lo Manthang today, climbing up the pass overlooking Lo Manthang and continuing a while before walking down toward the Kali Gandaki Gorge. The dry and dusty trail is steep and winding, with a clear view straight down to the rooftops of the village below. The final section of the trail drops sharply to the village of Dhi (11,119'), set by the banks of the Kali Gandaki River. Like most of the settlements along this river, Dhi is marked by a patchwork of fertile fields and trees. After a well-deserved break here, we'll hike up to the village of Yara to camp. Just before reaching Yara, we will see an incredible series of gigantic 300-foot-high wind-scoured cliffs resembling giant organ pipes. The cliffs are dotted with numerous cave openings and offer one of Upper Mustang's most spectacular sights. (~10.4 miles hiking, 7-8 hours, 2,100' gain.)

B,L,D...Camp

### **Day 13, Sept. 25 ▶ Yara – Luri Gompa**

Today we enjoy a side hike to the ancient Luri Gompa cave monastery (13,317'), one of the few remaining cave monasteries in the world. Luri remains one of the only monasteries in the region belonging to the Kagyu sect of Tibetan Buddhism and consists of a series of interconnected chapels covering various levels, all carved out of the cliff. The inner room contains a large chorten painted with deities. Kashmiri-style paintings of exquisite flowers, deities, and various figures of Indian origin cover the dome-shaped roof and the west wall. We return to camp at the end of the hike. (~7.3 miles hiking, 5-6 hours, 1,479' gain.)

B,L,D...Camp

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**Day 14, Sept. 26 ▶ Tangge (10,980')**

From Yara, we head south to Dhechyang Khola, our trail winding steeply uphill before opening to magnificent views of the landscape below. We'll then continue downhill into the village of Tangge, a hamlet whose homes form a fort nestled below cliffs eroded into massive columns. The view of the settlement with its groups of chortens and mani walls of various sizes and shapes is stunning! Our camp is set in a walled compound to protect us from the dry winds of Mustang. (~10.72 miles hiking, 8 hours, 3,100' gain.)

B,L,D...Camp

**Day 15, Sept. 27 ▶ Pha (13,400')**

On our way out of Tangge, we'll take an atmospheric walk-through town past narrow rows of houses, under buildings, and up alleys, and past the mani walls and chortens to join the trail leading down to the Tangge Khola, where we'll cross a suspension bridge. We'll hike above the village and then descend again to the wide rocky plain of the Yak Khola. After one more river crossing, we'll begin a long and steep ascent. Once we reach the prayer flag-adorned summit of Pha la (13,720') we make a short descent to our beautiful camp just below the other side of the pass near the only water source on this part of the trek. After a hot lunch in camp, we'll relax and enjoy stunning views of the canyon below. (~5.77 miles hiking, 5 hours, 3,114' gain.)

B,L,D...Camp

**Day 16, Sept. 28 ▶ Jomsom (9,053')**

Today, the trail winds uphill, opening to exceptional views of the whole of Mustang Valley, extending to the northern border beyond Lo Manthang. Some sections of the trail are fairly narrow, and care must be taken here, as the scenery is so dramatic you may be tempted to venture too close to the edge of the 3,000-foot gullies dropping down to the river below. Soon, the trail veers away from the rim and opens to the extraordinary southern view of the Kali Gandaki Valley below as it cuts between the Annapurnas, Nilgiris, and Dhaulagiri. To the east, an array of peaks surrounds the famous Thorang La pass (17,764'). From this viewpoint, our descent begins along a steep and rough trail with loose scree. Eventually the trail flattens out on a plateau and splits in two. The right fork leads to Chhusang, while the left one leads on to Tetang. From here we drive about 1 hour to the Jomsom, enjoying wonderful views of the Nilgiris (23,160' and 22,763' and overnight at our comfortable lodge. Tonight, we will enjoy our farewell dinner with our staff. (Jeep ride: 1 hour, ~ 10 miles hiking, 6-7 hours, 850' gain.)

B,L,D...Om's Home Lodge

**Day 17, Sept. 29 ▶ Pokhara**

Fly from Jomsom to Pokhara (weather permitting)\*. We have jeeps lined up for us to make the ~ 6-hour drive to Pokhara if the flights are canceled. Transfer to hotel. Lunch and dinner at the hotel. The afternoon is free to shop and explore Pokhara.

B,L,D...Temple Tree Resort

\*Flights in and out of Jomsom's tiny mountain airstrip are commonly delayed. We have scheduled an extra day at the end of the trek so as not to interfere with your homeward-bound flights.

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### **Day 18, Sept. 30 ▶ Kathmandu**

A 25-minute flight brings us back to Kathmandu. The afternoon is free to relax or do some last-minute shopping or sightseeing on your own. Tonight, we'll enjoy a festive farewell dinner.

B,D...Marriott Hotel

### **Day 19, Oct. 1 ▶ Fly home**

Transfer to the airport and depart Kathmandu on homeward-bound flights.

B...

You will arrive home on September 28.

### **LAND COST**

\$8,795 per person (10-12 members)

\$9,295 per person (6-9 members)

\$1095 single supplement

\$650 per person Nepal Government Permit Fee

\*Should you choose to pay with credit card there will be a service charge of 3.5%, the fee we incur from the bank.

Rates quoted are per person, based on sharing double accommodations at the Shangri La Hotel in Kathmandu, the Temple Tree Hotel in Pokhara, and in the Lodges.

### **LAND COST INCLUDES...**

- Expert leadership of Cathy Ann Taylor
- Accommodations in hotels in Kathmandu and Pokhara, and lodges in Kagbeni, Samar, Ghami, Lo Manthang, Tsarang, and Jomsom
- Two round trip flights Kathmandu-Pokhara-Kathmandu and Pokhara-Jomsom-Pokhara
- All trek arrangements, including tents, foam sleeping pads, community camping and commissary equipment, services of camp and commissary crew, including camp and cook staff.
- Meals as noted (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner)
- Airport transfers
- Sightseeing as noted in the itinerary.
- Ground transportation
- Additional guides and porters where necessary
- Trek permits

### **LAND COST DOES NOT INCLUDE...**

International airfare to Kathmandu and return; accommodations en route to Nepal (depending on airline, you may need to overnight in Hong Kong, Singapore, Korea, Delhi, the Middle East or Bangkok en route to Kathmandu); meals not noted on itinerary; special government permit fee; trip insurance (it is required that you purchase emergency evacuation insurance to visit Mustang), optional tipping to leader, guides and local staff; excess baggage charges; visas; cost of medical immunizations; and items of a personal nature (sodas, alcoholic beverages, laundry, etc.).

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## TRIP PAYMENT SCHEDULE

At time of reservation .....25% of land cost  
120 days prior to departure .....25% of land cost  
90 days prior to departure.....Balance

## CANCELLATION FEE SCHEDULE

From time of reservation  
until 90 days prior to departure .....25% of land cost  
89-60 days prior to departure.....50% of land cost  
59 days of fewer prior to departure.....100% of land cost

## EXPERT LEADERSHIP

Expert leadership is the key to every successful trip. Cattara attracts knowledgeable and gifted leaders who are passionate about guiding trips and truly enjoy sharing the experience with others. They understand the cultures and traditions they work in and are a fountain of information. In addition to making sure everything runs smoothly and safely, Cattara guides enhance your experience by being educators, companions, and the best of friends.

## TRIP LEADER



**Cathy Ann Taylor**, a high-altitude trekking & cultural guide for the last 35 years will be leading this trip. Cathy Ann has trekked all over Nepal, Tibet, India, and Bhutan, with well over 200 trips in the Himalayas (she still considers the Himalayas her “second home”)! She has also hiked extensively in the European Alps (Tour du Mont Blanc—six times, Tour of Monte Rosa, The Haute Route, Gran Paradiso, Scotland—three times, and the Dolomites—five times), the Georgian Caucasus—eight times, South America (20 trips in Peru, 7 in Patagonia), Antarctica— three times,

Kilimanjaro—one time, Morocco—four times, The Great Walk of Africa Kenya—four times, Vietnam—three times, Laos—two times, Cambodia—seven times, and Uganda & Rwanda—eight times. A devout hiker and mountain biker, she leaves no trail undiscovered, and her passion for the mountains, caring nature, and boundless energy are renowned. Her experience, knowledge, positive attitude (she can find the good in anything!), and her wonderful rapport with the local staff will enhance your experience. With the help of caring and like-minded individuals she has been able to manage the sponsorship of nineteen remote village children, all of whom are in boarding school in Nepal or in universities in India, Nepal, and the United States. She consistently gets rave reviews from members of her groups and has quite a following. Cathy Ann is active in the Breast Cancer Prevention Partners and has participated in sixteen expeditions, including Mount McKinley, Mount Cho Oyu, Mount Fuji, Mount Shasta, and Mount Rainier, which helped increase awareness of breast cancer. Cat’s special trekking program, Sacred Treks, benefits Breast Cancer Prevention Partners. Past trips include Bhutan, Mont Blanc, Peru, Everest, Ladakh, Mustang, Georgian Caucasus, Sikkim, Dolomites, Cordillera Blanca, and Annapurna Sanctuary treks (she has raised \$1.65M to date!). Cathy Ann has also been active in the American Himalayan Foundation and has helped raised \$35,000 for their STOP Girl Trafficking project. She has also raised over \$25,000 for Lama Pasang’s Himalayan Children’s Care Home which houses 87 children from Mustang, Nepal. Cathy Ann is

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also involved in fundraising for the National MS Society and has raised over \$80,000 for the organization. She has also reached the summits of Ama Dablam (22,500') and Island Peak (20,305') in Nepal and Argentina's Aconcagua (22,834'), the highest peak in South America. Cathy Ann received an honorable mention in *Hooked on the Outdoors* magazine's Outdoor Person of the Year Awards, and also received a letter of recognition for her fundraising and environmental work from former Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi.

## PHYSICAL EXPECTATIONS

This trip is strenuous and designed for those who are fit and experienced in the outdoors. We expect you to be a strong, experienced hiker and in great physical condition. On this trip, you will hike anywhere from four to eight hours a day, up and down mountain trails that are steep and rocky, and mostly at elevations above 10,000 feet. Medium to high altitude trekking can be very physically taxing and may create discomfort. You may experience symptoms of illness that you do not experience while exercising at sea level, such as shortness of breath, restlessness or sleeplessness at night, and headaches. You should be aware of the demands and risks imposed by high altitude, be in excellent underlying health, and prepare by training rigorously. We recommend you have a thorough physical exam and evaluation to uncover any general medical problem that might flare up while trekking in the remote areas of Nepal, where medical care may be many days away.

While on trek, you should drink a lot of water—this helps to avoid dehydration. Consult with your physician for advice on trekking at high altitude and any prescription medications you may need.

For physical preparation for this trek, we strongly suggest regular cardiovascular exercise for one to two hours at least 4-5 times a week. We recommend stair climbing, running, and mountain biking on hills, or elliptical or treadmill training in the gym with 10- to 15-pound day packs. This gets the heart rate going, which will be very beneficial for the type of high altitude trekking you will be undertaking.

## LIFE ON THE TRAIL

Your trekking day typically starts at 6:30 a.m., when the camp staff will bring you “bed tea” to start the day, along with a large bowl of hot water for washing. (Bring along a washcloth and you can have a full sponge bath in the privacy of your tent!) After packing your bags, you’ll enjoy a hearty breakfast of porridge, eggs, and toast or pancakes. By 8:00 or 8:30 you're off on the trail.

During the morning’s hike you’ll have time to visit local teashops for a tea & fresh apple break, stop for a view or a photo, and exchange a smile or greeting (Namaste!) with the friendly Nepali people who share the trail. A hot trailside lunch breaks up the day, giving you time to rest and refuel before heading out on the trail for the afternoon hike.

You arrive at the hotel or in camp by 4:00 p.m. and have time to wash up and get settled in your tent before enjoying tea and snacks in the dining tent. While waiting for dinner, you can write in your journal, read a book, play cards, or simply relax. The day ends with a hot, multi-course dinner, which often

includes ethnic cuisine as well as American favorites. After dinner you can gaze at the stars (incredible viewing in this part of the world) and the moonlit ridges and distant peaks, go over the events of the day, or retire to your tent to read for a while before heading off to sleep.

## TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

In addition to a passport, valid for at least six months beyond the date of completion of the trip, you will need a visa for Nepal. You can obtain it upon arrival at the airport in Kathmandu or contact the Nepalese Consulate in DC or NY to obtain the visa ahead of time. If you prefer to obtain your visa on arrival in Kathmandu, you'll need one passport photo and \$50 cash (US dollars are accepted, please have exact change) for a 30-day visa. **Go online within 14 days of arrival into Nepal** and fill out the online visa form: [nepaliport.immigration.gov.np](http://nepaliport.immigration.gov.np). A good tip is to make a photocopy of the photo page of your passport and carry it separately from your passport. If your passport is lost or stolen, a photocopy will help the local consulate speed up authorization for replacement. Also bring several spare passport photos—they're handy in case of unexpected visa or permit requirements.

If you plan to travel to Kathmandu via Thailand, Hong Kong, Korea, or the Middle East, you don't need a visa for those countries. If you plan to travel to and from Kathmandu via India, you will need to get a multiple-entry Indian visa in advance. Indian visas *cannot* be obtained upon arrival in India.

Note—most countries requiring visas require a completely blank page on which to stamp the visa, so your passport should contain at least one blank page for each country you plan to visit.

## AIR TRAVEL

International airfare is not included in the land cost of the trip. For air reservations, please contact the airlines directly, either by phone or via the Internet. Plan your arrival in Kathmandu by the early afternoon of Day 1 (September 9). We highly recommend you arrive a day early to overcome jetlag and to ensure your luggage arrives. Many travelers elect to use their “frequent flyer” miles when traveling, but please check with us before purchasing or obtaining your tickets. We need to verify your arrival and departure schedule and ensure we have enough participants to operate the trip.

**Note**—Names on air tickets and passports must match!

## MEDICAL MATTERS

No vaccinations are currently required to enter Nepal, but immunizations for typhoid, tetanus, hepatitis A, and polio are *recommended*. These regulations and recommendations change frequently, so please check with your local health department or the CDC for more information ([www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)). Nepal may require proof of COVID – 19 vaccines. In addition, the CDC sometimes recommends meningococcal meningitis vaccine for travelers to Nepal and Delhi, India, if there has been a recent outbreak. Confer with your physician for further advice. Please advise us of any pre-existing medical conditions that may affect your health on the trek (recent injuries or surgeries, chronic illnesses, etc.). Hospital facilities for serious medical emergencies may be far away and evacuation can be difficult (and expensive).

To avoid intestinal problems while on the trip, do not drink tap water or even use it to brush your teeth. In Kathmandu, drink bottled water only. While on trek, the camp staff will provide boiled

water for daily use. You must be careful when eating out in Kathmandu, too. That said, there are many wonderful restaurants, and your trip leader will recommend a few to you. She will also give you more guidelines on staying healthy while in Nepal.

We recommend you bring your own personal first-aid kit, which should include antibiotics (Cipro or azithromycin), pain killers, Pepto Bismol, a blister kit, Band-Aids, cold medicines, cough drops, and allergy medicines if you are prone to allergic reactions. The trip leader will also carry a basic kit for emergencies but will not have any prescription medications.

## MONEY MATTERS

You should bring enough money for any souvenirs you may buy, plus a few meals that are not included in the cost of the trip (e.g. various meals in Kathmandu, or meals and accommodation en route to Nepal). Depending on how much of a shopper you are, \$500-\$600 is usually enough for incidentals and souvenirs. You should bring an additional amount for optional gratuities to the trip leader and local trekking staff. At least USD \$850 is recommended for the trip leader (presenting this personally rather than collectively gives you the opportunity to give thanks individually and is greatly appreciated); at least \$450 toward a group tip for the trekking staff (can be in Nepali rupees or USD).

Bring USD or an ATM card. Bring along your credit card in case of emergencies and for use at the larger hotels and some shops. Credit cards are also becoming more widely accepted in the small tourist shops of Thamel and at the large hotels. There are many ATM machines throughout Kathmandu now; near our hotel, in Thamel (the shopping district), downtown and Durbar Marg. The local currency in Nepal is the *rupee*.

## WEATHER & CLIMATE

Because our trek is in the rain shadow of the Himalaya, we shouldn't see much rain (however, with climate change we must be prepared for changing weather conditions). It is probable we will encounter some windy and dusty conditions, especially in the afternoon. Daytime temperatures should be comfortable to warm, depending on clouds or sun, ranging between 50° and 75° F with cool nights ranging between 40° and 55° F. Temperatures are relatively moderate and skies are usually brilliantly clear. Rain or snow is always possible in the high mountains.

## INCIDENTALS

**Laundry:** Laundry service is available at the Marriott Hotel. While on trek, wash basins are available for any laundry you may want to do yourself in the afternoon at camp or the lodges, but it's usually too late for garments to dry very quickly. If we experience good weather in Lo Manthang our local staff will offer to do our laundry, and everyone can contribute 1000 rupees to a pool. Synthetic fabrics are the easiest to wash, and they dry quickly. Please make sure you bring biodegradable soap.

**Electricity:** Nepal is on the 220V system. Sockets are usually the three-pin variety, but they vary. If you are planning to use something like a hairdryer or electric shaver at the hotel, bring a converter and a selection of plug adapters (you can buy these in drugstores or travel specialty stores in the U.S.).

**Time Zones:** Nepal is Greenwich Mean Time plus five hours and 45 minutes. That means if it's 8:00 pm in Kathmandu, it's 9:15am in New York and 6:15am in California.

**Environmental Responsibility:** We ask you to **carry out whatever you carry in**, including non-biodegradable items such as batteries, flashlight bulbs, empty plastic containers, and so on. Nepal does not have the proper facilities to process this kind of waste, and your throwaways will end up in the river or tossed down a hillside.

## SHOPPING

Kathmandu is a fun place to shop—street vendors and emporiums are everywhere you look. Craft items to buy include beautiful hand-woven Tibetan carpets, traditional brass cooking vessels, semi-precious gemstones, Tibetan prayer wheels, and *thangka* paintings. The markets of Kathmandu also serve as an outlet for items from Bhutan and Tibet. You'll need to sharpen your bargaining skills to get the best deal.

## WHAT TO BRING: CLOTHING & EQUIPMENT LIST

### Packing Notes

It's best to go as light as possible and take only the essentials. Excess baggage can be a burden, not only to you but to support personnel.

**Your trekking duffel and backpack combined must not weigh more than 33 lbs. for the Jomsom flight.** This includes all the items you will need while on the trek as well as your sleeping bag. We suggest you bring an additional small duffel to store non-trek clothes and items at the hotel in Kathmandu or Pokhara.

Overweight baggage is *not* accepted on these flights even if you are willing to pay excess baggage charges.

### Luggage

- Duffel bag. A good size is about 14" x 17" x 30" (~90-95 liters)—large enough to hold your sleeping bag plus your trekking clothes and gear. It should have a full-length zipper (for easy access) and be sturdy and water-resistant.
- Daypack with a capacity of 24 – 36 liters, with a good, padded waist belt. It can double as your carryon bag. Always bring all irreplaceable items, such as a camera, medications, important documentation, and trekking boots in your carryon luggage.
- Spare roll-up duffel. This is essential if you wish to store your city clothes while on the trek and to bring home those great souvenirs! It should be lockable.

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### *Clothing Notes*

Because you will mainly be trekking at medium elevations, the weather could be hot during the day or cooler if the clouds come in. Nighttime temperatures are likely to be comfortable.

Bring comfortable clothing that will protect you from heat, wind, cold and possible wet weather. Synthetic fabrics or wool are the most effective barriers against the cold. They provide the best insulation, are light in weight, wick away perspiration, and dry quickly if wet. Cotton garments are not good in cold or wet mountain conditions.

Layering is the way to go. Your innermost layer should be a T-shirt and pants. The middle layer can be a synthetic long sleeve top. The outermost layer should be a synthetic jacket, and/or a good quality wind/rain jacket and over-pants.

We suggest women and men trek in comfortable, loose-fitting long pants.

### *Underwear*

- Regular underwear. Synthetics are easier to wash and dry. Depending on the weather, you may be able to hand-wash some on your rest days during the trek.
- Lightweight thermal underwear top and bottom. Wool and synthetic blends are suitable. You can use them to sleep at night and as layers for maximum warmth.

### *Socks*

- Athletic socks (synthetic blend for easy washing and drying) that are suitable for your walking (not hiking) shoes. You can store them in your extra duffel while on the trek.
- Light weight hiking socks (synthetic or wool/synthetic blend).
- Synthetic or silk sock liners—optional. Some people wear sock liners to help prevent blisters, and some wear the same pair of hiking socks for three days in a row and achieve the same result.

### *Shirts*

- Long-sleeved, synthetic, or wool shirts (these also protect you from the intense sun).
- Short-sleeved, synthetic T-shirts.

### *Pants*

- Full-length pants, preferably of quick-drying synthetic fabric.
- Fleece pants, ideal for camp time or layering for warmth.

### *Outerwear*

- Medium-weight vest of synthetic fabric, such as fleece or poly-fill.
- Light to medium-weight down or synthetic-fill jacket, ideal for camp time or cooler days.
- Rain/wind jacket (must fit over bulky clothing).
- Light weight rain/wind pants, preferably with full-length side zipper (must fit over your other pants).
- Light weight synthetic gloves.

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### Head Gear

- Sun hat with wide brim, preferably with a chin strap to keep it from blowing off.
- Fleece or wool hat.
- Bandanna or Buff. A generally useful item—it will keep your neck from getting sunburned, protects mouth and face from wind & dust, and can double as a hand towel in the field.

### Footwear

Please break your boots in well before the trip.

- Medium-weight, hiking boots with padded ankle, good arch support, and lug sole for traction. Your hiking boots should be waterproof, well broken in, and suitable for prolonged walking on rough dirt trails with rocks.
- Tennis shoes, teva-type sandals, or slip-on clogs to wear in camp.

### Sleeping Gear

- Medium weight sleeping bag. We recommend a rating of about 10° to 20°F, depending on whether you sleep hot or cold; everyone is different.
- We provide thick foam sleeping pads, but for added comfort, you may wish to bring your own ultra lightweight pad (most find our pads adequate.).

### Other Items

- Water bottles, 1 or 1.5 quart capacity. Make sure they are leak-proof, wide mouthed (we fill them with boiled water at night), and heavy duty. Bring 2 and mark them with your name or initials as several people may have the same bottle. **Note—CamelBaks or other bladder hydration systems are not recommended, as they often break or leak, are difficult to fill with boiled water, and are hard to keep clean.**
- Hiking sticks—highly recommended. They help relieve the impact on your knees during long downhills; they are also useful on uphill. Practice with them before the trip.
- Cord to use as a clothesline inside your tent.
- Set of casual city clothes that are dressier than your trekking clothes. You will store these in your extra duffel while you are on trek.
- Toiletry kit—biodegradable soap, toothbrush, etc.
- Roll of toilet paper (1). Toilet paper is provided at camp, but you need to carry your own on trek during the day.
- Purell hand sanitizer for quick hand washing and hygiene (a must!).
- Personal medical kit.
- Throat lozenges or hard candies; good for soothing sore or dry throats.
- Body lotion for dry skin at higher altitudes.
- Small towel of synthetic-type fabric.
- Sponge or washcloth to wash up at camp.
- Ace bandage or brace if you're prone to sore knees or ankles.
- Sunglasses (100% UVA/URB protected). For high altitudes, it's good to have glasses with a special dark lens and side shields that block reflected UV, wind, and dust.
- Spare pair of prescription glasses, prescription sunglasses, or contact lenses.

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- Sunscreen lotion and lipbalm of SPF 25 or higher.
- Small headlamp
- Stuff sacks or large ziplock bags to waterproof and sort out clothes and other items in your duffel.
- Small locks for your duffel that you will store while on trek.
- Extra passport photos. Keep them with your travel documents as you may need them throughout your journey.
- Money belt or neck pouch to store cash.

*Optional Travel Accessories*

- Camera, memory cards, extra batteries.
- Swimsuit for hotels in Kathmandu and Pokhara.
- Repair kit with needle, thread, and safety pins.
- Pair of compact binoculars.
- Swiss Army-type pocketknife.
- Powdered electrolyte mixes for your water.
- Your favorite trail snacks (very small amount due to weight restrictions).
- Reading and writing material.
- Sit-upon pad for the trail.
- Sun gloves.

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