

## THE LEGENDARY KINGDOM OF MUSTANG



**The Forbidden Kingdom of Mustang** ... even the name conjures up a place of mystery and magic to enliven the imagination. The reality is even more special a Tibetan culture set in a wild and stunning landscape. Mustang lies behind the great mountains of Annapurna and Dhaulagiri and geographically forms part of the Tibetan plateau. The Kingdom was forbidden to foreigners until 1992 when the Government of Nepal allowed the first trekkers access. The Nepalese now grant special permits to trek in Mustang and the experience is a very special one.

Also known as the Kingdom of Lo, Mustang existed as an independent state as early as the 5th Century AD but was absorbed into Tibet in the 7th Century. Later it achieved a degree of independence becoming an important centre of the Lamaistic Sakvapa sect. After the disintegration of Gmthang in the early 15th Century, Gyalpo Ame Pal (1380-1450) founded a dynasty that has survived until the present day. The present king, Jigme Palbar Bista, the 25th after Gyalpo Ame Pal, was born in 1930. The present population of Mustang is about 6,000 inhabitants.

Our route will take us across the vast Kali Gandaki riverbed, up over windswept passes at 14,000 ft. and across the 'Plain of Aspirations' to the walled capital city of Lo Manthang. All this through a landscape of indescribable vastness and beauty, home to the infamous snow leopard, the endangered bharal (blue sheep), and the mythical mehti (abominable snowman). Rimmed by 20,000+ snow capped peaks and bathed in hues of orange and red rocks with sporadic fields of vibrant green, yellow and red of barley, maize, and buckwheat, Mustang is a step back to a simpler time.

This tour co-incides with the festival of the Teeji one of the most authentic of all the Himalayan festivals. This is the last festival before the road from China comes into operation in 2008.

### **Cost £2200**

Single supplement **£250**

Including return flights: London – Kathmandu

Domestic flights

All accommodation transportation Trekking guides etc.

Permits visas full board on trek

Half board in Kathmandu and Pokhara

**Group size 10-16**

**Trek difficulties:** The trek itself is relatively easy following good trails and paths throughout. However the trek is at high altitude and so some experience is preferable.

## **Itinerary**

### **Saturday May 5<sup>th</sup> 2007**

Fly from London to Kathmandu

### **Sunday May 6:**

Welcome to Kathmandu 1300m. Arrive Kathmandu airport; on arrival you will be met and having passed through immigration and customs will be driven to the hotel. Welcome dinner

### **Monday May 7: Kathmandu Sightseeing**

The following morning you will be taken on a half day sightseeing tour of the many holy temples and interesting surrounding sights of Kathmandu.

**Tuesday May 8:** Kathmandu – Pokhara 975m. Drive 6hrs. Transferred by tourist bus for about 6 -hour drives to Pokhara, a beautiful town set on the banks of the Phewa Lake.

The rest of the day at leisure

### **Wednesday May 9:**

Pokhara – Jomsom 2720m. - Kagbeni 2900m. Trek 3-4 hrs. Fly to Jomsom & sightseeing around Jomsom. The Kaligandaki valley here is called the Thakkhola, after the native Thakalis, who are distantly related to the Tibetans.

Afternoon there will be a gentle walk to Kagbeni, the checkpoint of entry to Upper Mustang.

**Thursday May 10:** From Kagbeni trek to Chele 3200m. Trek 6hrs.

The trail leads up toward the east bank of the Kaligandaki climbing over many ridges as it heads north and reaches Tangbe village. The town is a labyrinth of narrow alleys amongst white washed houses, fields of buckwheat, barley, wheat and apple orchards. The Nilgiri peak, dominates the southern skyline of Kagbeni, will be enjoyed all the way by different shapes. Beyond Tangbe we reach Chhusang village in about 1/2 hrs trek and crosses the river and continues north climbing up to a huge red chunk of conglomerate that has fallen from the cliff above, forming a tunnel through which the Kaligandaki follows. The trek now leaves the Kali Gandaki valley and climbs steeply up a rocky gully to Chaile at 3030 Mt. From here the culture changes from the Manangi culture to the Tibetan culture of Lo.

**Friday May 11:** From Chele trek to Geling 3510m. Trek 6hrs.

The climb continues along steep, treeless, waterless terrain, along the side of the spectacular steep canyon to a pass and cairn of rock at 3540 Mt. Then the trail makes a long gradual descent to some chortens on a ridge, and then descends further on a pleasant trail to Samar village. The Annapurna, still dominated by Nilgiri, is visible far to the south. Climb above Samar to a ridge, then descend into a large gorge and the trail goes into another valley field, crosses a stream and climbs up to a ridge at 3800 Mt. The route climbs over yet another pass, follows a ridge and then descends to Shyangmochen. From there gently climb to a pass at 3770m and descend to Geling Village.

**Saturday May 12:** From Geling trek to Charang 3650m. Trek 5-6hrs. GELING to CHARANG 3620m.

From Geling village the trail climbs gently up to an interesting pass NYI LA and descends below the blue, gray and red cliffs. After crossing a steel bridge of the Tangmar Chu (river) you will arrive to a MANI WALL perhaps the longest and most spectacular MANI wall in Nepal. Climbing over another pass at 3600m, the route makes a long gentle descent to Charang village. The huge five-story white

Dzong and red Gumpa are the main attractions to visit to observe collections of statues and Thankas as well as many large paintings of seated Buddha's.

**Sunday May 13:** From Charang trek to Lo Manthang 3910m. Trek 5hrs. 1st day of Tiji  
**Day One of the Tiji**

This is an opportunity to visit two other villages on your trek. The trail climbs steadily until Lo-Gekar. Lo-Gekar Gumpa is older than Samye Gumpa in Tibet and one of the oldest Gumpa of Nepal. After visiting Lo-Gekar continue trek to Lomanthang.

The trail until Lo-Manthang is fine enough with some minor climbing. Finally from a ridge there is a view of the walled city of LO. After a short descent, cross a stream then climb up into the plateau of Lo-Manthang. On arrival, we will participate in Tiji festival.

Early in the afternoon, horns resounded, announcing the two twelve-foot copper dunchens, with their elephantine blurring, followed by two double-reeled horns, all accompanied by drum and cymbals. Next, an ancient and enormous tanka three stories high was unrolled down the entire south wall of the square. The thanka portrayed Padma Sambhava or (Guru Rimpoche) who brought this ceremony to Tibet in the 8th century." At mid-afternoon, in high wind and blowing dust, eleven lamas in maroon and gold, wearing high red hats, came from the palace and took their places along the wall beneath the thanka, with Tashi Tenzing on the elevated seat just in the centre.

As the monks and lamas commence chanting, twelve more monks come from the palace in maroon and royal blue and glittering gold brocade, with cymbal-shaped hats decked with upright peacock plumes. Soon they withdraw, to be replaced by the masked dancers who" start the portrayal of the Tiji myth.

Dorje Jono repels the demon through the power of his magical dancing — he dances fifty-two separate dances, one of them in ten different bodies, each with a different head. As the dances end, Dorje Jono kills the demon, after which his people are relieved of their plague of misfortunes, water becomes plentiful once more, and the balance and harmony of existence are restored.

**Monday May 14:** Witness the second day of Tiji and sight visits around  
**Day Two of the Tiji**

On the second day of Tiji, numbers of Loba have arrived from the outlying hamlets, and the small square is thronged with wild beautiful people, with all of the women and children, at least, in traditional dress. The King of Mustang, " wears a whole crown of tiny river pearls set off by dozens of large red coralline tones interspersed with matched ornaments of turquoise.

The costumes and masks, the twelve-foot horns, the gold cups of wheat, the butter cakes, the snow peaks and wind and dust and sun, the mehti, snow leopard, snow pigeons, saligrams, the dying glacier and the desert ruins, the drunks and rajas and foreigners, the dogs and yaks. Tantra!

**Tuesday May 15: Day three of the Tiji**

On the third day, Tiji ends with the ceremonial destruction of the evil remains, represented by some long black yak hair and red torma cakes minced to a dark red gurry. The demons red remnants are set out on an old tiger skin, where-upon they are attacked by bow and arrow, slings, and the old guns. The poor devils remains are over- turned upon the ground, each time to a wild cannonade from the old muzzle-loaders and a wave of cheers and smoke.

**Wednesday May 16:**

LOMANTHANG - DHI 3410m.

From Lo-Manthang the trail walks straight till Dhi pass 4100m. and descends down to Dhi village. The trek from Lo Manthang to Muktinath is harder, but more rewarding and interesting than the west side of the valley. Dhi village is one of the best villages of whole Lomathang and it seems more prosperous and it is settled in a very suitable place.

**Thursday May 17: DHI – TANGE 3370m.**

From Dhi the trail goes through the river for around 2 hours and crosses a river from Damodar Kunda, one of the sacred lakes, there are no bridge on the river and need to deep the bare feet in the water to cross this river. After crossing the river the trail climbs up till high above a pass of 3850m. The trail goes through a grassless, treeless bare hill. After the pass the trail again drops directly to Tangbe village at an elevation of 3370m. Tangbe is a small village of around 30 houses but most of the houses are attached each other. On the rooftops one can see piles of dry woods, which also reflect the prosperity in their society

**Friday May 18: Trek from Tange - Tetang 3160m. Trek 5-6hrs.**

From Pa the trail walks mostly straight with minor climbing and descends to the village of Tetang. The trail walks through a steep ridge of hill providing some fine views of wind carved hills. Continuing the trek you can see the village of Tetang. Tetang village is formed between 2 hills; they should have found it a safe place to avoid the strong wind that hits the entire Kaligandaki valley. Tetang is the upper village of the Chuksang, which we visit on the first day entering to Mustang from Kagbeni. From Tetang village it takes one day to go to Jomsom and a day to arrive to Muktinath.

**Saturday May 19: Trek from Tetang- Muktinath 3750m. Trek 6hrs.**

TENTANG- GNYU PASS 4135 - MUKTINATH 3800m.

From Tatang village the trail climbs till the Gnyu Pass, which take around 3:30 hours. The entire route provides a fine panorama of the Himalayan range and green valley with many kinds of Himalayan flowers. From Gnyu Pass you can see the whole Muktinath area in a distance of 2 hours gentle walk.

The name Muktinath (god of salvation) is name of a Hindu's god. Muktinath is a holy place for all the devotees. Every year thousands of devotees from Nepal, India and Tibet come to visit this place for the salvation and purification of their belief. History tells that many Kings of Asia visited the place for meditation and salvation. Muktinath is decorated by Mt. Nilgiri and Mt. Tilicho to the southeast, Daulagiri to the southwest and Thorang peak and Yakawa Kang to the north. It is one of the most important religious centers of both Hindus and Buddhist.

Muktinath – (known as Chhumig Gyatsa in Buddhist) is situated above 18-km northeast of Jomsom and altitude above 3800 meters above sea level. The local name for Muktinath is Chhumig Gyatsa (hundred waters spring). Both Hindu and Buddhists have visited Muktinath for hundreds of years and this place reflects a unique blend of Hinduism and Buddhism.

**Sunday May 20:**

Trek from Muktinath –Jomosom 2720m. Trek 5hrs.

MUKTINATH – JOMSOM.

This is the last day of the trek. The trail goes through the village of Dzarkot where one can visit the Dzarkot monastery, Tibetan herbal medical center and the old fortress of Dzarkot, once served as palace. Continuing the trek toward Jomsom one will enjoy the view of the Kaligandaki valley and Kagbeni village the entry point to Mustang. We get a round trip of our trek in Ekle Bhatti visiting all the surprises

of the human effort in this corner of the World of such an isolation and solitude. Arrive to Jomsom, celebrate the last day of the trek will in Jomsom with all the trekking staffs.

**Monday May 21:**

Fly back from Jomosom-Pokhara. Fly to Pokhara, drive to your Hotel in Pokhara. The trekking staffs except the guide will trek down till Pokhara and drive to Kathmandu, which will take 4 days. Lunch at Pokhara and rest day.

**Tuesday May 22:**

Drive Back to Kathmandu

**Wednesday May 23:**

Rest day at leisure or final souvenir shopping. Join the farewell dinner in the evening most probably with cultural program.

**Thursday May 24:**

Departure transfer to airport.