



1266 66th Street, Suite 4
Emeryville, California

T: +1 510 594 6000
1 888 MTSOBEK (687 6235)
F: +1 510 594 6001
info@mtsobek.com
www.mtsobek.com



© Sergio Fitch-Watkins (MTS guide)

TRIP DETAILS

15 days ~ Nepal

*10 days strenuous hiking
on varied terrain at
medium elevation
(maximum 12,956')*

*10 nights camping,
4 nights hotels*

2008 DATES

Apr 14–Apr 28

Sep 22–Oct 6

LAND COST

*\$2,545 per person
(9-14 members)*

*\$2,845 per person
(5-8 members)*

\$700 per person

Nepal Government Permit Fee

\$265 internal airfare

\$450 single supplement

MUSTANG: THE HIDDEN KINGDOM

Journey to Lo Manthang

TRIP LEVEL
STRENUOUS

HIGHLIGHTS

- *Step into the past and explore a kingdom long isolated from the outside world*
- *Discover a last vestige of pure Tibetan culture and religion*
- *Enjoy a rare opportunity to see a region accessible to outsiders by special permit only*
- *Fantastic, unusual views (from the north!) of Dhaulagiri and Annapurna*

Revised July 16, 2007



MUSTANG: THE HIDDEN KINGDOM

Journey to Lo Manthang

Hidden behind the Himalayan giants of Dhaulagiri and Annapurna, the kingdom of “Lo,” as Nepal's Mustang region was once known, occupies the southern fringes of the Tibetan plateau, a high and desolate country where variegated rocks, shadows of passing clouds, and a few cultivated fields provide interesting color and contrast. Long isolated from the outside world, this region is one of the few places in the world that until only recently was inaccessible to outsiders. This isolation has helped maintain a way of life almost unchanged for centuries. Culturally and historically very close to Tibet, Mustang was an independent feudal kingdom with strong monastic traditions, and thrived on its control of trading routes connecting Tibet with Nepal and the Indian plains.

When Nepal opened its borders to tourists, trekkers, and mountaineers in the early 1950s, political events to the north caused Mustang to remain isolated. The revolution in Tibet caused trade routes to be closed, and Mustang, along with other remote spots along the northern Himalaya, became an area of conflict between the Tibetan resistance movement (predominantly the Khampas of Eastern Tibet) and the Chinese military. This came to an abrupt halt in the late 1970s when the Chinese persuaded Nepal to stop allowing this activity and the U.S. government withdrew its active support for the Tibetan resistance movement. In February 1992, the democratic government of Nepal, in agreement with the wishes of the people of Mustang, opened the area to a limited number of tourists, and the revenues from special trekking fees finance some development projects.

Join us on our journey to this once “forbidden” kingdom. Our trek begins with a flight to Jomsom (8,898'). Heading higher, we climb a series of canyons, ridges, and passes, and discover caves replete with magnificent religious statues and ruins of old forts before entering the ancient capital city of Lo Manthang, untouched since the 14th century. As you make your way through this secluded land, you'll pass brightly painted *chortens* (Buddhist shrines) and tiny villages guarded by enormous monasteries. Vistas include unusual and arresting views of the snow-covered Himalaya to the south, and desolate high plateaus, deep canyons, and an ocean of windswept hills the colors of a desert sunset to the north.

We spend two full days in Lo Manthang, absorbing a great sense of timelessness and appreciation for an ancient culture while visiting monasteries rich in art and history.



ITINERARY

☞ This trip begins with a rendezvous at the Kathmandu airport on Day 1. You should plan on arriving by 2:00 p.m. Most flights from the U.S. require three days of travel and overnight en route (you arrive in Kathmandu on the third day). More specific details will be sent to you in your pre-trip packet of information.

DAY 1 ~ Arrive in Kathmandu, Nepal

Arrive in Kathmandu by 2:00 p.m. on Day 1. A Mountain Travel Sobek representative will meet you outside the customs and immigration area at the airport. He or she will answer questions, brief you on the immediate arrangements, and escort you to your hotel. The trip leader will hold a short briefing in the hotel around 4:00 p.m. regarding trek arrangements and a general orientation to Kathmandu.

Malla Hotel

DAY 2 ~ Kathmandu – Pokhara

Kathmandu is one of three former medieval city-states in the Valley, along with Bhaktapur and Patan. Morning tour of Bhaktapur, which has preserved its ancient character and does a wonderful job of displaying medieval Nepalese town life. A highlight is Durbar Square, with its many temples, remains of an ancient palace, and intricate Sun Dhoka (“Golden Gate”), a gilded copper gate crafted in 1753.

In the late afternoon, we fly to Pokhara (3,000'), a lively town set beside Phewa Lake with fantastic views of the Annapurna Range.

B...Hotel Shangri-La Village

DAY 3 ~ Jomsom – Kagbeni (9,217')

We take an early morning mountain flight (weather permitting) from Pokhara up the Kali Gandaki Gorge between the peaks of Dhaulagiri (26,788') and Annapurna (26,538') to land at the small airstrip at Jomsom (8,898'), the administrative center of Mustang district in full view of Nilgiri (22,431'). After we disembark, we collect our gear, and the Sirdar will organize the porters, Sherpa guides, and pack animals for the trek. We begin hiking along the bank of the Kali Gandaki River, passing through Eklebhatti (9,046') to the medieval-looking village of Kagbeni (9,217'), formerly the northernmost area that foreigners could visit. The arid climate, mud-walled houses, and Tibetan dress and language are indications of how closely this area is linked with Tibet. (3-4 hours hiking.)

B,L,D...Camp

DAY 4 ~ Chele (9,938')

At the end of Kagbeni village we go through administrative matters at the police check post. After that we pass the sign saying “restricted area” and enter the forbidden kingdom of Mustang. High water often dictates a high trail on the east bank of the Kali Gandaki to Tangbe (9,610'), where we have our first views of the uniquely colored chortens and architecture found in Mustang. We continue to Chhuksang (9,578'), which is at the confluence of the Kali Gandaki and Narshing Khola. Heading north we cross the Kali Gandaki and a short climb brings us to our campsite at the large Tibetan village of Chele. (6-7 hours hiking.)

B,L,D...Camp

DAY 5 ~ Geling (11,808')

From Chele we climb up to Samar (10,791') on a good trail that is not unlike the hike winding up and around from the bottom of the Grand Canyon. Samar is a trading post-type oasis (a major stopping place for horse caravans) in poplar trees amid the arid landscape of Mustang. We have an early lunch or carry packed lunches, then a four-hour

afternoon hike with three high ridges to ascend, the highest one at 12,464 feet. We pass some teahouses at Shyangmochen (11,972'), then continue to Geling. From Samar an optional and rigorous side trip to an ancient cave that houses the Rangbyung chorten (meaning “the chorten that built itself or appeared by a miracle”) is an option, rejoining the main trail at Shyangmochen. This is possibly the hardest day of the trek. (8-9 hours hiking.)

B,L,D...Camp

DAY 6 ~ Charang (11,546')

Cross the 12,956-foot Nyi La pass (the highest point on this trek) and descend to the village of Ghemi (11,283'). After lunch we cross the Dhakmar Chu River on a suspension bridge, pass one of the most impressive and longest mani wall in Nepal, climb another high ridge of 11,808 feet, and enter the ancient town of Charang. Note the five-story *dzong* (fortress), formerly the home of the kings of Mustang, and the vast red Dorje Dhen Gompa as we pass through the picturesque entry portal. We will visit the monastery and fortress later in the evening. (7-8 hours hiking.)

B,L,D...Camp

DAY 7 ~ Lo Manthang (12,398')

From Charang we descend to cross the Charang Chu River and climb to a ridge. We then hike through a desert-like landscape to climb again to a ridge at 12,628 feet from where we get our first view of Lo Manthang, the fabled walled “capital” of Mustang. We descend for a while and then a short climb brings us to camp. (4-5 hours hiking.)

In *Trekker's Guide to the Himalaya and Karakoram*, the late Hugh Swift wrote “the most striking element of Mustang...is its landscape: sandstone pillars rise near old moraines, and time and again trails angle up and down over barren, eroded ridges and high terraces. Mustang’s pastel shadings, hues of red, yellow, sienna, tan, and grey, undergo dramatic changes in lighting throughout the day.”

B,L,D...Camp

DAY 8 ~ Lo Manthang

A day to explore Lo Manthang, including visits to two important monasteries built in the early 15th century. Thugchen Gompa has very fine Buddhist murals on the walls of its massive assembly hall, which is supported by huge wooden columns. Champa Lhakhang contains a fifty-foot-tall image of Maitreya, the future Buddha, making it the largest clay statue in Nepal. Both monasteries are restored now by a team of Conservation Architects and Wall Painting Restorers with the help of the American Himalayan Foundation, who funded the project. We also visit the Choedhe monastic school and the imposing four-story Raja’s palace (if he is in residence). The current Raja can trace his ancestry back to the first king of the late 14th century, which suggests Lo Manthang dates back to that period.

Note—The PBS series *Nova* has made a documentary called *The Lost Treasures of Tibet*. The movie serves to make people aware of Mustang and the restoration projects of this fragile area.

B,L,D...Camp

DAY 9 ~ Return trek – Ghemi (11,283')

Leaving Lo Manthang, we take a high loop southwest and have lunch outside Ghar Gompa (also known as Lo Gekar). Ghar Gompa is the oldest active monastery in Nepal, dating back to the 8th century. It is also being

Mountain Travel Sobek is a proud longtime supporter of the American Himalayan Foundation. One of the foundation’s major initiatives is the restoration of ancient monasteries in Mustang and training local artisans to continue the work themselves. Nuns and monks receive a traditional education to ensure the monasteries continue to maintain the old ways. AHF also provides a safe and nourishing environment for children in Mustang while their parents work in the fields.

restored with the funding of the American Himalayan Foundation and well worth a visit. From here we climb to a ridge and descend through a spectacular series of red rock formations at Dhakmar (12,300'). We continue to Ghemi to camp, one hour beyond Dhakmar. (7-8 hours hiking.)

B,L,D...Camp

DAY 10 ~ Samar (10,791')

We re-cross the Nyi La pass and descend steeply, bypassing Geling, to Tama Gaon. Rejoining the main trail here we continue to Shyangmochen for lunch and over three passes to Samar. (6-7 hours hiking.)

B,L,D...Camp

DAY 11 ~ Kagbeni (9,217')

Retracing our steps we follow the trail to Chele and cross the Kali Gandaki River. Return to Kagbeni, passing through the villages of Chhuksang and Tangbe. (6-7 hours hiking.)

B,L,D...Camp

DAY 12 ~ Jomsom (8,898')

We trek back south through a wide, windswept valley on the left bank of the Kali Gandaki River to Jomsom. (3-4 hours hiking.)

B,L,D...Camp

DAY 13 ~ Return to Kathmandu

Fly from Jomsom to Kathmandu (weather permitting)*. Transfer to hotel.

B...Malla Hotel

*Today will be spent either in Jomsom or Kathmandu, depending on our luck with the Jomsom flight. Flights in and out of this tiny mountain airstrip are commonly delayed and we have no way of predicting the length of the delay; it's something we just have to live with. With luck we'll get out the first day. All camp meals at Jomsom are included while waiting. We cannot over emphasize the unreliability of these flights. We have no control over their operation or schedules, and while we devote an enormous amount of time, money, and energy into securing reservations, you should be ready for disappointments, delays and cancellations of Jomsom flights. We have scheduled an extra day at the end of the trek so as not to interfere with your homeward-bound flights.

DAY 14 ~ Kathmandu

If the Jomsom flight is not delayed, we'll have a morning tour of the Hindu shrines at Pashupatinath on the Bagmati River and the large Buddhist stupa at Bodhnath, center of the Tibetan Buddhist culture in Kathmandu. The afternoon is free to relax or do some last minute shopping or sightseeing on your own. Farewell dinner with the group at a local restaurant.

B,D...Malla Hotel

DAY 15 ~ Fly home

Transfer to airport. Leave Kathmandu on homeward-bound flights.

B...

LAND COST

\$2,545 per person (9-14 members)

\$2,845 per person (5-8 members)

\$700 per person Nepal Government Permit Fee (must be paid in cash directly to government officials in Kathmandu)

\$265 per person internal airfare (Kathmandu/Jomsom/Kathmandu—subject to change. Mountain Travel Sobek will book and issue these tickets for you.)

Rates quoted are per person, based on sharing double accommodations.

Single Supplement—\$450 for “requested” singles; \$225 for “forced” singles. If you prefer single accommodations, you must pay the Single Supplement Fee. If you’re traveling alone and wish to share accommodations, we’ll try our best to find you a roommate. If that’s not possible, we will only charge you half of the single supplement.

Tier Pricing

Adventure travel works best with a small group of people. In order to operate these small groups, our trips are priced according to the number of full-price passengers on the trip. (Mountain Travel Sobek staff, trip doctors, and other discounted travelers are excluded from the count for this purpose.) We initially invoice you at the highest tier level price (the smallest group size we can operate). If the price drops due to an increase in group size, you will be refunded the difference.

What’s Included

- ◆ expert leadership
- ◆ accommodations in hotel in Kathmandu
- ◆ all trek arrangements, including high-quality two-person mountain tents, full-length comfortable foam sleeping pads, all commissary gear and eating/drinking utensils, services of camp and commissary crew
- ◆ meals as noted (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner)
- ◆ airport transfers
- ◆ sightseeing as noted in the itinerary
- ◆ ground transportation
- ◆ guides and porters
- ◆ trek permits (other than into Mustang)
- ◆ basic medical and evacuation insurance

What’s Not

International airfare; flights within Nepal (see separate cost above); hotel accommodations and meals* en route; meals not noted in itinerary; special government permit fee (see above); insurance other than basic medical and evacuation insurance as noted above (we strongly recommend you purchase the supplementary trip insurance offered by Mountain Travel Sobek, which includes trip cancellation insurance); optional tipping to leader and Sherpa staff; excess baggage charges; airport taxes; and items of a personal nature (sodas, alcoholic beverages, laundry, etc.).

**Depending on your choice of air carrier, you will need to overnight in Bangkok or Delhi en route to Kathmandu. The cost of hotel accommodations and meals en route is not included in the Land Cost of the trip. We will be happy to make hotel reservations for you.*

Air Travel

Airfare is not included in the land cost of our trips. For air reservations, we recommend you contact the airlines directly, either by phone or the Internet. In addition, many travelers elect to use their “frequent flyer” miles when traveling with us. **But please check with our staff 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.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

Life on the Trail

The trekking day typically starts at 6:30 a.m. with the appearance of smiling Sherpas at the door of your tent bearing a mug of steaming tea. This is soon followed by a large bowl of hot water for washing. Then it’s time to pack your bags and sit down to a hearty breakfast of porridge, eggs, and toast. By 7:30 or 8:00 you’re off on the trail.

For about three hours you’ll walk through villages, forests, and up and down hills and valleys. There’s plenty of time to stop for a view or a photo, and exchange a smile or greeting (*Namaste!*) with the friendly people who share the trail. A trailside lunch breaks up the day, giving you time to rest and refuel with a substantial hot meal prepared by the staff. After about an hour of eating, napping, and relaxing, it’s time for the afternoon hike.

You arrive 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. The next two hours before dinner are free to write in your journal, read a few pages in a novel, play cards, engage in conversation, or simply relax. The day closes with a hot, multi-course dinner which often includes ethnic cuisine as well as American favorites (favorites include the yak cheese pizzas and *momos*—Tibetan pot-stickers). After dinner you can gaze at the stars and the moonlit peaks, recount the events of the day, or retire to your tent to read for awhile or doze off to sleep.

Expert Leadership

Expert leadership is the key to an exciting, unforgettable experience. Our trips feature gifted leaders for whom leading trips is a true vocation. Besides showing you wonders you’d never find on your own, they make sure everything runs smoothly and safely without a hitch. They are knowledgeable about all aspects of your trip, and take great pleasure in sharing their insights with you. More than just guides, they positively elevate your experience by being teachers, companions, and the best of friends. You’ll be in good hands with them every step of the way. Leader assignments will be confirmed in the Final Bulletin sent to you three weeks prior to departure.

Activity Level

Mountain Travel Sobek trips are designed for flexible, energetic people who like to be active and have a spirit of adventure and a positive attitude. We rate this trip as strenuous in nature. ***We expect participants to be strong, experienced hikers in good physical condition.*** You should be in good health and enjoy hiking, even up steep hills (there is very little level walking in Nepal). Every participant should be equipped with a willingness to undergo the potential hardships of outdoor living, long days on the trail, and should be able to accept and even relish the unpredictable nature of travel in remote areas.

Because of the exploratory nature of this trek, you should be prepared for changes in the itinerary. No technical climbing or other special abilities are required. You will be hiking five to eight hours a day, up and down mountain trails that are steep and rocky, and mostly at elevations above 10,000 feet (we will spend five days at altitudes above

10,000 feet). Exercise at high altitude compounds the physiologic stress. In addition, high altitude may create discomfort and symptoms of illness that you do not experience while exercising at lower elevations, such as shortness of breath, restlessness or sleeplessness at night, and headaches. You need to be in excellent health and top physical condition to enjoy such an experience, with adequate cardiovascular endurance, muscular strength, and excellent balance. Although most gear and camp supplies will be carried by porters or pack animals (leaving you free to carry only a light daypack), hiking at high altitudes is very strenuous. A good physical conditioning program should be undertaken to get in shape for the trek.

This level of fitness requires regular aerobic exercise for at least one hour 4-5 times a week. This may include aerobic fitness classes, power walking, jogging, cycling on hills, swimming, and cross-country skiing. Additionally, you must be able to sustain exercise for prolonged periods. Finally, you must have some experience with exercise at altitude.

We recommend that you start a moderate training program *several months* before departure, then slowly build up to a more strenuous level. Since training is highly sport-specific, include some hiking or running in your program. Consult your physician if you have questions concerning your underlying health. We can help answer questions for you or your physician concerning required levels of fitness and health conditions at altitude. If you have concerns about your capacity to do this trip, we can suggest appropriate alternatives.

THE NEXT STEP

Ready to go? Signing up is easy!

Just call us at 1-888-MTSOBK (687-6235) and reserve your spot! You can also book a reservation online at our website (www.mtsobek.com). If you prefer to use a travel agent, he or she can book your trip at no extra cost and provide other helpful assistance.

Then Leave the Rest to Us

Before you go, we provide you with extensive pre-departure information, including clothing recommendations, suggested reading lists, up-to-date health advice prepared by our consulting physician (an expert in wilderness medicine), and other details from procuring visas to advice on local customs.

Why Mountain Travel Sobek is Your First Choice for Adventure

Mountain Travel Sobek is the pioneer in active adventure travel. No other adventure travel company can lay claim to that title. We were the first to take Americans trekking in Nepal, raft the wild rivers of Africa, and open up many previously inaccessible corners of the world to curious travelers. We set the standard for adventure travel and have a strong reputation for excellence that we do everything we can to maintain. Since we are the leading adventure company, we have a lot to live up to, so we make sure we provide safe, quality trips and the best customer service to our passengers.

On trek you'll be accompanied by an expert, knowledgeable guide who will share and explain all the details of what you see every day on the trail and make the whole experience come alive for you. An expert crew takes care of all the trek details, preparing excellent food and seeing to it that you stay healthy. And since Mountain Travel Sobek is part owner of Malla Treks, our Nepalese ground operator, you can also be assured of a good support system—a crew who makes sure your trip goes smoothly by handling all logistics in country.

References

Don't take our word for how great our trips are. We'll be happy to provide you with references of satisfied past travelers.

Questions?

Feel free to call us at 1-888-MTSOBEK (687-6235) if you still have any questions or concerns. We're here to help you. You can also check out our website at www.mtsobek.com.

Note on Itinerary

Although we will do our best to adhere to the itinerary schedule as listed, it is subject to change. Please read the Limitation of Liability and Booking Conditions in the four-page Participant Information Form. You can find all this information on our website at www.mtsobek.com/faq and the form itself at www.mtsobek.com/pdf/participant_info.pdf.

Terms & Conditions

Once you have made a deposit for a trip, you agree to be bound by all our terms and conditions including the Limitation of Liability Clause. The full Terms and Conditions can be found at www.mtsobek.com/faq/#liability or call 1-888-MTSOBEK (687-6235) for a copy. These are partial conditions. Your participation is contingent on your signature on the full list of terms specified in the four-page Participant Information Form (www.mtsobek.com/pdf/participant_info.pdf). Any dispute concerning, relating or referring to the Terms and Conditions, to any literature concerning this trip, or the trip itself, shall be resolved exclusively by binding arbitration in San Francisco, California, according to the then existing commercial rules of the American Arbitration Association. Such proceedings will be governed by substantive California law (but not procedural law) without regard to the California Arbitration Act.

©2007, *Mountain Travel Sobek*

CST 2014882-10

Registration as a seller of travel does not constitute approval by the State of California.