

Upper Dolpo Trek

Before you go · last checked on 10 October 2026

At a glance

Days	23 days, Kathmandu to Kathmandu
Highest point	5,360 m (Kang La)
Grade	Strenuous
Starts	Kathmandu
Ends	Kathmandu
Best season	Late spring, summer and autumn
Sleeping	Camping, with some simple lodges and homestays

Is this walk for you?

It suits you if:

- You have walked long treks at altitude before, ideally above 5,000 m.
- You are happy camping for most of three weeks, in cold nights.
- You want remote country, old monasteries and very few other people.
- You can keep several spare days for the Juphal flights.

Think twice if:

- This is your first long trek, or your first time above 4,000 m.
- You want lodges, hot showers and phone signal every night.
- You have a fixed flight home soon after the trek.
- You have a heart or lung condition. Please ask your doctor before you write to me.

The honest downsides

- Very remote: help is days away, and a rescue depends on the weather.
- Mostly camping; nights on the plateau are very cold, even in summer.
- Juphal flights are often delayed. Keep several spare days.
- The restricted area permits for Dolpo are expensive, and a camping crew adds to the cost.
- Three high passes over 5,000 m, with long, steep days.
- Snow can close the passes from November to April.

When to walk it

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Cold	Cold	Cold	Good	Best	Best	Good	Good	Best	Best	Good	Cold

May, June, September and October are the best months. In July and August it stays fairly dry behind the mountains, but the flights to Juphal and the trail to Phoksundo can be hit by the monsoon. From November the passes can close with snow, so please ask me first.

Permits and papers

Three permits are needed: the Upper Dolpo Restricted Area Permit, the Lower Dolpo Restricted Area Permit for the Tarap valley on the way out, and the Shey Phoksundo National Park permit.

Dolpo is a restricted area. The permits are issued only through a registered trekking company, and you must walk with a licensed guide. Since March 2026 one trekker alone can get them. I arrange them with you through the registered company I work with, at the official price.

The permits are made in Kathmandu before we leave. Bring your passport and passport photos. They are checked at Dunai, at the park entrance and in the villages.

- ☐ Passport, valid for at least six months, and a copy
- ☐ Your Nepal visa
- ☐ Passport photos for the permits
- ☐ Travel insurance that covers trekking at this altitude and helicopter rescue

For your budget

My guide fee for this walk is about \$ 35 a day, the same for 1 to 5 people.

A porter, if you hire one: about the same as a guide's day rate. Permits, transport, rooms and meals are paid separately, at cost.

What	Paid to	About	Note
Guide (me)	Rujan Neupane	My day rate × 23 days	One rate for 1 to 5 people
Upper Dolpo Restricted Area Permit	Department of Immigration	US\$500 for the first 10 days, then US\$50 a day	Official price, paid at cost through the registered company
Lower Dolpo Restricted Area Permit	Department of Immigration	Official price	For the Tarap valley; paid at cost through the registered company
Shey Phoksundo National Park permit	Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation	NPR 3,000	Official price, paid at cost
Flights Kathmandu – Nepalgunj – Juphal and back	The airlines	The airlines' fares	You pay the airlines, at cost
Camping crew, tents and pack animals	The cook, helpers and animal owners	Their own rates	Agreed together before the trek; paid to them, at cost
Lodges, homestays and food	Families on the trail and the camp cook	What it costs	Paid at cost; I never add anything

What to pack

Challenging Trek Packing List

CHALLENGING GRADE TREKKING PACKING LIST

General

- ☐ Duffel bag: 75L–90L heavy-duty waterproof PVC duffel
- ☐ Daypack: 30L–40L technical pack with rain cover
- ☐ Sleeping bag: 4-Season down bag (rated to -15°C to -20°C)

- ☐ Trekking poles: Heavy-duty collapsible poles with mud/snow baskets
- ☐ Headlamp: 300+ lumen headlamp with red-light mode
- ☐ Water gear: 2x 1L Nalgene wide-mouth bottles + insulated jackets
- ☐ Water purification: Chlorine dioxide tablets & Steripen UV backup

Head & Face

- ☐ Sun hat & Warm beanie: Wide-brim cap & high-loft wool beanie
- ☐ Glacier glasses: Category 3 or 4 UV400 eyewear with side shields
- ☐ Buffs: 2x Neck gaiters (1 thermal fleece, 1 lightweight)
- ☐ Sun care: High-altitude SPF 50+ sunscreen & SPF 30+ lip balm

Upper Body

- ☐ Base layers: 3x Heavyweight Merino wool long-sleeve thermals
- ☐ Mid-layer: Technical grid fleece or hybrid jacket
- ☐ Down jacket: Heavyweight 800+ fill-power insulated down parka
- ☐ Hard shell: Gore-Tex 3-layer fully waterproof jacket

Hand & Lower Body

- ☐ Gloves: 1x Liner gloves + 1x Heavy waterproof mountaineering gloves
- ☐ Base layer bottoms: 2x Thermal merino tights
- ☐ Trekking trousers: 2x Technical softshell pants
- ☐ Shell pants: Waterproof hard shell pants with side zips

Footwear & Technical

- ☐ Boots: High-ankle waterproof mountain trekking boots
- ☐ Traction: Microspikes / 12-spike crampons for glacier ice
- ☐ Camp shoes: Insulated slip-ons or lightweight camp shoes
- ☐ Socks & Gaiters: 5x Heavy merino socks, liner socks, & ankle gaiters

Backpack, Electronics & Care

- ☐ Docs & Cash: Waterproof pouch for permits, insurance, & local cash
- ☐ Electronics: 20,000+ mAh power bank & universal adapters
- ☐ Toiletries: Biodegradable wet wipes, toilet paper, & hand sanitizer
- ☐ Medical: Altitude meds (Diamox), comprehensive first aid, & blister kit

High pass extras

Added to the main list on treks that cross a high pass.

For the pass day

- ☐ Warm down jacket, worn from the start in the dark
- ☐ Thick waterproof gloves, and thin gloves under them
- ☐ Warm hat and a buff for the wind
- ☐ Thermal layer for the night before at the high camp

Snow and ice

- ☐ Microspikes, in winter and early spring
- ☐ Gaiters, when there is snow on the trail
- ☐ Trekking poles for the long descent

The early start

- ☐ Headlamp with fresh batteries, and spare batteries kept warm
- ☐ Water bottle in an insulated cover or inside your jacket (tubes freeze)
- ☐ Snacks you can eat with gloves on

Sun and wind up high

- ☐ Dark sunglasses (category 3 or 4) for snow
- ☐ Sunscreen SPF 50 and lip balm
- ☐ A scarf or buff for dust on the far side

Food and places to stay

ACCOMMODATION – Moderate

- **Classic Mountain Teahouses:** Lodging along moderate-grade routes primarily consists of traditional family-run teahouses and local lodges.
- **Room Setup:** Rooms are simple and clean, typically twin-sharing with two single beds, firm mattresses, pillows, and basic blankets.
- **Privacy & Comfort:** Rooms are private with lockable doors; earplugs are recommended as interior walls are thin.
- **Bathroom Facilities:** En-suite bathrooms are occasionally available at lower elevations, transitioning to shared squat or western-style toilets higher up.
- **Power & Hot Showers:** Device charging and hot gas/solar showers are available along the trail, usually for a small extra fee at higher altitudes.

Challenging Trekking Accommodation

Accommodation is provided in comfortable local tea houses throughout the trek. Rooms are simple but clean, usually offering twin-sharing beds with blankets.

- Twin-Sharing Rooms
- Hot Shower Where available (Need to Pay Extra)
- Blanket

Challenging Trekking Food

Nutritious meals are essential for maintaining energy at high altitude. Meals include a variety of local and international dishes such as:

- Dal Bhat
- Fried rice
- Noodles
- Pasta
- Soups
- Potatoes
- Tibetan bread
- Pancakes
- Eggs
- Tea and coffee

FOOD & DINING

- **Communal Dining Hall:** Meals are served in the central teahouse dining room, which is heated by a wood or yak-dung stove in the evenings.
- **Local Favorites:** Dal Bhat (lentil soup, rice, vegetable curry, and pickles) is the staple—it offers free refills and provides maximum energy for trekking.
- **International Options:** Menus feature a variety of options including fried rice, noodles, pasta, momos (dumplings), pancakes, and eggs.
- **Hot Beverages:** A wide selection of drinks is available daily, including black tea, ginger lemon honey tea, milk tea, coffee, and hot chocolate.
- **Dietary Needs:** Vegetarian and vegan options are widely available; avoiding meat at higher elevations is recommended for fresh food safety.