

Wild Mustang Trek, Nepal

Trek the little-visited northern region of Mustang and explore ancient sky caves before taking the wild eastern route out of the kingdom.



Group departures

See overleaf for departure dates

Holiday overview

Style	Trek
Accommodation	Hotels, lodges/tea houses, camping
Grade	Vigorous / Strenuous
Duration	25 days from London to London
Trekking / Walking days	On trek: 13 days
Min/Max group size	5 / 12. Guaranteed to run for 5
Trip Leader	Nepalese Sherpa, Mustang
Land only	Joining in Kathmandu, Nepal
Max altitude	4,200m/13,799ft, Le Lo La Pass, Day 19

Private Departures & Tailor Made itineraries available



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Departures

Group departures

2021 Dates:

Tue 27 Apr - Fri 21 May

Sat 04 Sep - Tue 28 Sep

Group prices and optional supplements

Please contact us on +44 (0)1453 844400 or visit our website for our land only and flight inclusive prices and single supplement options.

Please be aware that the option of a single room is not available in the tea houses. Please see the 'Your Accommodation' section of this itinerary for further information.

No Surcharge Guarantee

The flight inclusive or land only price will be confirmed to you at the time you make your booking. There will be no surcharges after your booking has been confirmed.

Will the trip run?

This trip is guaranteed to run for 5 people and for a maximum of 12. In the rare event that we cancel a holiday, we will refund you in full and give you at least 6 weeks warning. Many trips do fill up quickly - we advise you to book early if you want to secure a place(s) on the dates of your choice.

Insurance

We offer a travel insurance scheme - please contact us for details.

Private Departures

We can also offer this trip as a private holiday. A Private Departure follows exactly the same itinerary as the group departure but at dates to suit you (subject to availability) - please contact us with your preferred dates.

Tailor Made service

We pride ourselves on the level of quality and choice we provide for our clients who want a fully tailor made holiday. A holiday will be created especially for you by one of our well-travelled experts, who will have first-hand experience of the destination/s you want to visit. They will be able to advise on the accommodation best suited to your needs, the sights you should visit (and those to avoid!) and the best walks and activities matched to your ability. In short, we will work together with you to create your perfect holiday.

If you would like to explore the idea of a Tailor Made holiday with Mountain Kingdoms then please call us on +44 (0)1453 844400 or see the Tailor Made pages of our website for further inspiration.

Your guide



Our Sherpas have been leading treks in Mustang for many years. In fact, we have been taking groups there every year since 1994 (with the exception of the years of Maoist rebellion). We have used the same group of Sherpas for our Mustang treks in all that time. They are extremely knowledgeable about the culture, history, geology, flora and fauna of the Mustang region.

Your trip highlights

- Trek to the villages, cave complexes and monasteries north of Lo Manthang near the Tibetan border and see parts of Mustang only a handful of westerners have seen
- Meet the nomads who live in the north
- Return down the eastern side of Mustang which is just as wild and remote as the north.
- Stay in some great lodges in Mustang as well as enjoying a full camping experience in the 'wild' sections of this unique trek.
- Enjoy 4* hotels in Kathmandu and Pokhara.
- Join in the flamboyant celebrations of the Tiji Festival on the April departure

At a glance itinerary

Days 1-2	Depart London, arrive Kathmandu
Day 3	Fly to Pokhara
Day 4	Fly to Jomsom, Drive to Kagbeni
Day 5-6	Trek to Chele and Samar
Days 7-8	Drive to Ghami, Tsarang and Lo Manthang
Day 9	At leisure and sightseeing in Lo Manthang
Days 10-13	Trek to visit the northern villages and caves and meet the nomads
Day 14	At leisure in Lo Manthang. (April departure attends Tiji Festival)
Days 15-19	Trek down eastern side of Mustang. Visit Luri Gumpa
Day 20	End trek at Tetang
Day 21	Drive to Jomsom
Days 22-25	Fly to Kathmandu. At leisure. Fly to London

Trip summary

The remote and mysterious region of Mustang is situated in the far north of Nepal, beyond the mountain giants of Dhaulagiri and Annapurna, and extending into the highlands of Tibet. It is a vast, high, arid valley characterised by eroded canyons and colourful stratified rock formations with a barren, desert-like appearance fringed by snow-capped peaks. Lying in the rain shadow of the Himalaya it is an ideal region to explore in the summer, outside of the normal Nepal trekking season. Called the 'Forbidden Kingdom', Mustang has long been shrouded in mystery. Protecting its authentic Tibetan culture from outside influences, it remained closed for many years to foreigners until it finally opened its doors in 1992. Trekkers were however at that time restricted to the west side of the valley.

The walled city of Lo Manthang is one of the undoubted highlights of the trek and you will have time to wander the enticing streets, explore its impressive temples and possibly visit the King's Palace. For those travelling in May there are also the flamboyant celebrations of the Tiji Festival to enjoy.

Just reaching Lo Manthang itself is a very fine objective and achievement, but the beauty of Mustang does not stop here! The northern villages are fantastic to see. There are old salt mines, nomads living in large tents made from woven yak hair, ruins of many castles the history of which is long lost, ancient cliff temples, and jaw-dropping scenery. Some of the villages are so remote that it is hardly believable that they exist, so cut off are they from their neighbours. It would take weeks to explore all the side canyons and visit all the hermit nests, but this trek takes you to some of the best.

Leaving Lo Manthang behind, your return journey takes you along the stunning eastern side of the Kali Gandaki valley, through the picturesque villages of Dhi, Tange and on towards Tetang. Trekking across high desert plateaus and passes, amidst constantly breathtaking scenery, you will see numerous cliff dwellings and hermit caves and visit the remarkable 13th century cave monastery at Luri, one of the last remaining examples of its kind. As you head further south you will also enjoy commanding views of Dhaulagiri and the Annapurna. Finally, you end your trek at Tetang and take the short jeep ride back to Jomsom. Here you can reflect on a superb cultural and scenic experience, unlike any other in Nepal.

Forword by Steve Berry, M.D. of Mountain Kingdoms

In 1994 I went for the first time to Mustang with a group of our clients. We had all sorts of adventures, including meeting Jigme Dorje (Palbar) Bista, the late king of Mustang. At that time trekking groups had to be accompanied by a liaison officer (L.O.) appointed by the government of Nepal. Our L.O. pulled some strings and we were granted an audience with King Jigme Bista in his palace. The King spoke in Tibetan which was translated into Nepalese and then again into English. The audience took quite some time and we enjoyed many cups of butter/salt tea.

The whole trip left such an indelible effect upon me that every now and again I enjoy fabulous, vivid dreams of the Kingdom of Mustang. These dreams forever lead me on to more and more remote and amazing places. I had therefore resolved to go again with a very old friend, Ned Kelly, who was equally smitten by the prospect of exploring the villages to the north of Lo Manthang. Tragically Ned died before we could fulfill our ambition. However in 2017, his widow Suzanne, myself, my wife and a group of our joint friends made that journey. It did not disappoint! The landscape is as dramatic as anything imagination can conjure, and some of the villages and ancient cliff dwellings are out of this world.

Now, I have designed this trek to make the best use of time, and its focus is the northern villages and the wild paths down the eastern side of the Kali Gandaki River. In Lo Manthang we hope to stay at the new hotel built by Jigme Bista's son (subject to availability).

The History of Mustang

Mustang is the old kingdom of Lo. The official capital of the Mustang district is Jomsom, but the real Tibetan-style district lies north of Kagbeni and is usually referred to as Upper Mustang. The real capital, Lo Manthang, where the present King lives, is a fantastic square-walled town sitting on the 'Plain of Prayers'. Naturally, most of the history is now a matter of legend rather than recorded fact, but it seems clear that Lo was once part of Ngari, part of Tibet and a rather loose collection of feudal domains. It was incorporated into the Tibetan Empire under the most famous of the Tibetan Kings, Songtseng Gampo. It was an important means of crossing the Himalaya from Tibet to Nepal and many of the old salt caravans passed through Mustang. By the 14th Century much of Ngari became part of the Malla Empire, whose capital was Sinja in western Nepal. Really, it became an independent kingdom in its own right, under the rule of Ame Pal, the founder King of Lo in 1380. The present royal family can trace its history 25 generations back to Ame Pal and the city of Lo Manthang, which you will visit, was the centre of their power. Explorers such as Professor David Snellgrove and the Italian scholar Guiseppe Tucci and Michel Peissel visited Mustang in the 1950s and it was largely their tales of a Tibetan-like arid region locked off from the outside world that fuelled interest in the area.

Special notes

Lodges in Mustang

These lodges are a pleasure to stay in! Similar to tea houses, they have Nepalese and Tibetan-style furniture and decoration and cosy dining/living rooms. They all provide excellent food. Nevertheless they are simple and authentic. More often than not bathrooms are shared. Please be aware that we cannot offer the option of single rooms in the lodges. You may be able to arrange this locally, for a small payment, depending on room availability when you arrive at each lodge. For more information see the 'Your Accommodation' section of this itinerary.

Your trip itinerary

Day 1: Depart London.

Depart London on your overnight flight to Kathmandu.

Overnight: In flight

Day 2: Arrive Kathmandu. Group transfer to hotel.

On arrival in Kathmandu you will be met and transferred to the Shangri La Hotel. This is a very comfortable hotel situated near the British Embassy, to the north of Thamel, the tourist district of Kathmandu. It has a lovely garden with a swimming pool where you can relax, and several excellent restaurants. The bustle of Thamel, with all its restaurants, shops and bars, is a 20 minute walk or 10 minute taxi ride away.

Overnight: Shangri La Hotel, Kathmandu

Day 3: Fly to Pokhara, 827m/2,713ft. Afternoon at leisure.

This morning you will take the short morning flight to Pokhara, Nepal's second city. This exciting flight passes over the terraced Himalayan foothills with views of the main range to the north. Overlooked by the stunning spire of Machapuchare, 'Fishtail Peak', the town of Pokhara is the start point for treks to the Annapurna region, Dhaulagiri, Manaslu and, of course, Mustang. On arrival you will transfer to your hotel. The rest of the day is at leisure. Pokhara's bustling lakeside with cafes, shops etc is just a short walk or taxi ride from the hotel.

Overnight: Shangri La Village Hotel or Similar, Pokhara (Meals: B)

Day 4: Fly to Jomsom, 2,743m/9,000ft. Drive to Kagbeni, 2,896m/9,500ft.

You take the 20-minute early morning flight, usually around 7.00am. You will get close-up views from your small aircraft of the Annapurna range, Dhaulagiri and nearby satellites. It is a sensational flight! On arrival you will be met at the tiny airstrip by your Sherpa crew. After some initial preparation of loads and a cup of tea, you drive the short distance to Kagbeni through dry river beds and streams on the jeep road.

Upon reaching Kagbeni, a very pretty Tibetan-style village, with its narrow alleyways and tunnels, irrigation canals, green fields of wheat and barley and a large red gompa (monastery), there is a taste of scenes to come in Upper Mustang. About 50 families live here, most of them traders who represent the link in the chain between modern Nepal and the 'Tibetan' peoples of Mustang.



At the northern end of the village there is a sign saying 'restricted area, tourists please do not go beyond this point'. Here, tomorrow, you will complete your paperwork formalities to enter this long-prohibited region of Nepal. Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP) has set up a very interesting information post here with displays of Mustang artefacts and photos. Look out for the excellent coffee shop very near the ACAP office.

Overnight: Lodge (Meals: BLD)

Day 5: Drive to Tange, 2,962m/9,600ft. Trek to Tetang and on to Chele, 3,050m/10,000ft - 4 hours.

To avoid the unpleasant experience of walking on the road you drive to Tangbe, 2,926m/9,600ft, a stunning village with the remains of an old castle, narrow alley ways, ochre coloured chortens and an archery ground and here are also the first black, white and red chortens that typify Upper Mustang.

You then take the path leading inland to the village of Tetang, again well worth exploring, before crossing the river and following the Nari Khola down to Chussang village, at the confluence of the Narshang Khola and the Khali Kandaki. Nilgiri Peak continues to dominate the southern skyline. There are three separate parts to this village and some broken castle walls on the surrounding cliffs. Across the river from Chussang are spectacular red organ-pipe eroded cliffs above the mouth of some inaccessible caves.

The five villages of this area, Chele, Gyakar, Chussang, Tangbe and Tetang are home to a culturally unified group of people, closely related to the Manangis, rather than the true Lobas.

There is a distinct change here, not only in topography, but there is also a world of difference in the culture, lifestyle and people. Settlements are more scattered, smaller and more basic. The people of Lo or Mustang do practice agriculture, but because of the lack of rain and fertile soil, cultivation is in sheltered plots of land creating a landscape of patterned brown, with scattered patterns of shaded greens.

Continuing north, this time unavoidably on the jeep road, you reach a huge red chunk of conglomerate that has fallen from the cliffs above forming a tunnel through which the river flows. A steel bridge spans the river just in front of the tunnel and north of here the Kali Gandaki becomes impassable on foot, although locals sometimes travel this route on horseback, through a steep, narrow canyon. There are many caves here high on the fluted red cliffs above. Climbing 100m/328ft to the village of Chele, you stay in a simple but characterful lodge at the upper end of the village. Most of the houses now have sheep horns above their doorways and ghost traps. Watch out also for the ferocious Tibetan mastiffs that many of the local people keep.

Overnight: Lodge (Meals: BLD)

Day 6: Trek to Samar, 3,660m/11,811ft, via Ghyakar and Kyuten - 5 hours.

Climbing from Chele after breakfast you come to a place where you can see the village of Gyakar across a huge canyon. Here there is a very impressive suspension bridge which you cross and a short climb brings you to fields of barley topped by a wood of large trees. There is no shortage of water here. Then you arrive at the entrance gateway and tunnels under houses that lead to the small square of Gyakar which boasts a single tap and a washing place. Leaving the village you go gently up through odd looking bushy plants and dog roses. It becomes drier and more arid. Continuing up you come to a big gulch and drop down to a stream and then up into a narrow defile. From the exit of the defile it is a long contour round to the village of Samar. As you walk from Gyakar look across to your right and you will see the old cliff path that used to be the main path from Chele to Samar. Some people do still use it apparently.

Samar sits in a grove of poplar trees and is a major stopping place for the mule caravans coming from Tibet.

Overnight: Lodge (Meals: BLD)

Day 7: Drive to Ghami, 3,520m/11,549ft - approximately 2 hours. Explore village.

From Samar our aim is to move to Lo Manthang by jeep. By trekking the first two days you will have already gained valuable acclimatization and now you will maximise the time available for seeing the northern villages and trekking the eastern route. At the same time it gives you the opportunity to explore the important village of Ghami and the township of Tsarang.

From Samar the jeep road takes the western most route through Bena, Chungsi, Syangboche and Geling crossing the Nyi La Pass, 4,045m/13,271ft, before dropping down to the beautiful village of Ghami. Here you check in to the Hotel Royal Mustang, one of the best lodges in Mustang, owned by the 'royal' family there. You will stay in the relatively new lodge and eat your meals in the large, ancient, family house, full of interesting things!



In the afternoon you can make a thorough exploration of this medieval village. There are two temples here, a small and very old one right out on the eastern corner of the village, and a larger gumpa very close to the massive crumbling palace. Every street and alleyway is worth delving into, but a must is to see the incredible cliff dwellings half an hours hike west out of the village. There are several clusters of caves set into the massive fluted cliffs. To your left is an eroded mountain that looks like some god of architecture designed it.

Overnight: Lodge (Meals: BLD)

Day 8: Drive to Lo Manthang, 3,770m/12,369ft, via Tsarang, 3,520m/11549ft - approximately 3 hours.

From Ghami the jeep track leads down to the river and on past the longest mani wall in Mustang, and then climbs to the Choga La Pass, 3870m/12,697ft. You continue to Tsarang, built near the Charang Khola, a tributary of the Kali Gandaki Nadi. This is the second largest settlement in Mustang and has a feeling of importance. The huge entrance chorten is very impressive. The town is dominated by the fortress/palace and the nearby Thupten Shedrup Monastery. The old palace is where at least a couple of explorers were treated as guests - Michel Peissel was one in 1964 and also Ekai Kawaguchi, the famous wandering Japanese monk who stayed here on his way to Tibet in 1899. The ancient palace is in part a small museum.

From Tsarang the road drops down into a deep canyon before climbing up the other side. Stop to soak up the panoramic views - to the south are the Annapurna peaks and the familiar peak of Nilgiri, to the east is a chain of snow-capped peaks, the largest of which is Bhrikuti, 6363m/20,877ft. The road passes the famous Sungda Chorten, and you will be amazed by yet more cliffs of differing coloured strata. Finally you cross the Lo La Pass, 3850m/12,631ft, to get your first sight of the fabled squared-walled city of Lo Manthang below.

Overnight: Royal Mustang Lodge, Lo Manthang (Meals: BLD)

Day 9: At leisure and sightseeing in Lo Manthang.

You will have a full day at leisure and for exploration around Lo Manthang. The city is an absolutely fascinating place, with narrow streets and houses built adjoining the city wall and contains about 150 houses, plus many cells for lamas. There are three major temples within the city and there is a caretaker with a key available at certain times. These temples really are very impressive, with huge clay statues of various Buddhas. There is a large amount of renovation and restoration taking place in all the temples in Lo Manthang and this is going to take years to complete. The 2015 earthquake also did a lot of damage and part of the palace, an imposing 4-storey building in the centre of the city had to be demolished. The last king was an active horseman and kept a stable of the best horses in Mustang. He also bred Lhasa Apso dogs and had several monstrous Tibetan mastiffs. His son, Jigme Bista, is rightfully the new king of Mustang although the present government of Nepal has passed a law forbidding royal titles. He is therefore the 'unofficial' king.

Overnight: Royal Mustang Lodge, Lo Manthang (Meals: BLD)

Day 10: Trek to Namgyal, 3,845m/12,615ft, Thinggar and on to Chumjung, 4,170m/13,681ft - 4 hours. Meet nomads.

Leaving Lo Manthang you drop down to cross the Chohorak Dokpa Khola river and take the path for an hour to the small village of Namgyal. The monastic school sits austere on a hill above. A huge gloomy structure it was founded in 1465 but extended in 1953. It has a small but interesting museum. Now you carry on northwards, gaining only a little height to reach Thinggar where you can see the summer palace of the late king. This too was built only in 1950.

Further up the plain and beyond the Khiwaling Khola River is the herder settlement of Kiwaling. We hope to camp beyond here at Chumjung, where you will meet some of the last families of nomads living in this region. These nomads live in large yak hair tents and they have large herds of sheep and goats. Watch out for their large Tibetan mastiffs! By definition the nomads move from place to place but we expect them to be at Chumjung at this time.

As this is a short and easy day there should be time in the afternoon to explore a little beyond camp. There are a number of interesting looking paths.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 11: Trek via Garphu, 3897m/12,785ft, to Bharcha, 3,845m, 12,615ft - 4 hours.

Moving on from Chumjung you cross a rise and drop down to the Chhungma Khola and to the small hamlet of Nyamdo where there is an ancient gumpa. The scenery is dramatic - riverside cliffs and bluffs, peppered with accessible caves and topped here and there with old walled fortresses. This was, and still is, the only way to Tibet, hence the fortifications, as Tibetans were a warlike race long before the Dalai Lamas came to power. In



fact you cross the road leading to Tibet on your way to Garphu and Ghom. Take your time as there is much to see here and it is not far to Bharcha. We recommend you visit the monastery of Garphu which has a small school attached. Visiting Thong is another option.

Leaving this fantastic collection of caves, cliffs ruins and hamlets behind you now walk southwards on a good path to the village of Bharcha. There is a very nice tea shop here that you will no doubt relax in after an unforgettable day.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 12: Trek to Samdzong, approximately 3,950m/12,959ft - 4 hours.

Another fabulous day in the Kingdom of Lo! It's a short day but with much excitement. From Bharcha you make a steep little sandy climb and then it is slowly up to the pass, the Samdzong La, 4052m/13,294ft. There follows an exciting path that weaves its way down through spectacular cliffs. At one point the path is a ramp of dry stone walling against a cliff. You come to a mani wall at the bottom of the descent. You are now on the floor of a huge new valley. High above is a wonderful cluster of cave dwellings. Theories differ for such caves being from between 2,000 to 8,000 years old. You turn left and north east and follow the path. The scenery gets more amazing the further you go. A thin stream, only 2 feet wide snakes along the floor. Occasionally there are barely recognizable huge chortens, decayed by time. There are massive cliffs with wonderful paths. At one point there is a highly decorated chorten with many prayer flags strung across the gorge. Here you will be asked to take off your hats because the residing spirit does not like them. There are a few fields before you reach the perfect Tibetan-style village of Samdzong.

In 2011 a team of Swiss archaeologists came to Samdzong and in a nearby cave discovered the remains of 27 humans, possibly dating back 1500 years. These are being kept in a rough building at the end of the village. It may be possible to find the key to visit this.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 13: Trek to Lo Manthang, 3,770m/12,369ft, via Nenyul - 6 hours.

Samdzong is struggling to survive as global warming dries up their water supply. It is heart wrenching to think that in years to come such a beautiful place could be abandoned. Also incredible to think there are other villages in Mustang even more remote than this.

On the way back, just down from Samdzong you may venture up a narrow canyon, just for fun. It should take you 3½ hours to arrive back at the tea shop at Bharcha for a well-deserved drink in the friendly company of the family who own it. It is now no more than 2½ hours to Lo Manthang. Leaving Bharcha you eventually pass around 20 new houses. The royal family gave the land to people wanting to flee from villages like Ghara, where water shortages are forcing them to leave. Reaching Nenyul you pass some highly decorated chortens before crossing the river on a footbridge. From here it is a little over an hour to Lo Manthang where you will probably stay at a lodge called the Lotus Holiday Inn.



Overnight: Lodge / Tea House (Meals: BLD)

Day 14: In Lo Manthang. Tiji Festival (April departure) or day at leisure (September departure).

Spring Departure - Tiji Festival

The spring departure is timed to coincide with the incredible annual festival of Tiji, said to be one of the most atmospheric events still held in the Himalaya. Held annually to chase away demons, it is a time of prayer and dance as monks don colourful costumes and masks and perform ritual dances watched by spectators (dressed in their best clothes and jewelry) who will have gathered from throughout the region. There are usually horse races out on the 'Plain of Prayers' and a Tibetan style Tug-of-War. It is not always obvious where and when these elements of the festival will take place so your leader will have to make enquiries. The festival is truly an experience not to be missed.

Autumn Departure - At leisure and optional walks

We suggest today you make a lovely and worthwhile half day walk to the ruined castle that can be clearly seen atop a conical hill just north of Lo Manthang. This castle is said to have existed well before Lo Manthang was founded in 1441. It follows that the first king of Mustang, Ame Pal, must have lived here, before building the palace that exists to this day inside the square walled city. It takes about an hour to reach the village of Namgyal and then a further hour will see you standing on top of the castle. A fantastic path leads back down to Mustang.

Overnight: Lodge / Tea House (Meals: BLD)

Day 15: Trek to Dhiagon, 3,420m/11,220ft - 6 hours.

Leaving Lo Manthang it is an hour uphill to the Lo La Pass, 3,940m/11,220ft. Follow the road down for 5 minutes to a small chorten. The main road goes to Tsarang but you turn off to the left. It is desolate country with a few ups and downs and contouring in and out. There is a huge escarpment to the left with layered cliffs and great views to the right, southwards, of Nilgiri Peak. There is a good chance of seeing Blue Sheep along here. The first pass, 4,100m/13,452ft, arrives after 3½ hours but the real descent is half an hour further on, 4,042m/13,261ft. Enjoy the excellent views from the pass before descending steeply down to the attractive village of Dhi, nestled at the foot of a colourful striated cliff. Relatively few tourists visit Dhi and the villagers here are most welcoming. It is worth taking a short walk out of the village to visit the old ruined monastery.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 16: Trek to Yara, 3,615m/11,860ft, and visit Luri Gumpa and cave, 4,000m/13,100ft - 7-8 hours.

From Dhigaon you cross the Mustang Khola (river) and follow the smaller Puyon Khola, strewn with ammonite fossils, and past striking sculpted cliffs before starting the climb to the village of Yara.

From Yara you will make a round trip to visit the ancient cave monastery of Luri Gumpa, passing through some of the most beautiful scenery in Mustang. It is worth taking your head-torch to help you see the incredible frescoes inside the gumpa. From Yara you continue through dramatic scenery for another couple of hours, passing the village of Ghara, to the crumbling, rugged landscape above which Luri Gumpa sits like a precariously balanced eagle's nest amongst terracotta spires. There is no written record documenting the construction of the monastery but it is believed to date back to the 13th - 14th century and is associated with the Kagyu sect of Buddhism. The small chambers of the monastery are carved into the rock, with incredible paintings adorning the smooth domed ceiling and along several wall panels. There is a complex of small cave dwellings nearby which are believed to be associated with the monastery. There should also be time to explore the distinctive village of Ghara on your return trek to Yara.



Overnight: Lodge (Meals: BLD)

Day 17: Trek to riverside, Dhegaon, 3,445m/11,335ft - 4 1/2 hours.

In 2017 Mountain Kingdoms donated \$477 to the village elders at Yara who had been trying to pump water to a new orchard. You might like to see what progress has been made.

You now climb out of the village and take the 'high route' to Dhegaon. Pass the collecting pond above Yara and turn right. The route takes you up on to the top of a massive level plain at 3,719m/12,201ft, whose edge is the fluted cliffs that are so awesome and so massive, seen yesterday. You next cross a pass, 3,710m/12,172ft, slightly lower than the high point of the plain, before dropping steeply down to a few relatively new buildings on the edge of the Dechung Khola river. A new foot suspension bridge is being built here and when finished the buildings may become a lodge. Small souvenirs were on sale here in 2017, including many fine ammonites.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 18: Trek to Tange, 3,370m/11,056ft - 5 hours.

Start the long 1¾ hour hike to the 'Slow Go' Pass, 3,911m/11,056ft. In the guidebook by Sian Pritchard-Jones and Bob Gibbons they make this sound steep and scary - it is not. An easy continuous haul brings you to the pass, a gain of 456m/1,496ft. Beyond and below the pass is a huge undulating plateau which dips down ahead. Cross this with many ups and downs, flat sections and occasional gullies. The ground is dotted with low, thorny bushes. Finally you find yourselves contouring around gigantic, mud cliffs and then down to a vast flat plateau. On the far side you come to the edge of a vertical cliff and you look down into a huge river basin. A small cairn marks the way down through a narrow passage in-between conglomerate cliffs. This descent is perhaps the best bit of the day as the village, like a green lozenge, comes into view. Tange has some of the largest decorated chortens in the whole of Mustang.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 19: Tek to Pha, 4,100m/13,452ft - 6 hours.

The day starts with a gentle climb for an hour or so, before crossing the Tage Khola (sandals may be required for the crossing here). From the far side of the river bank you climb steeply to the Le Lo La (pass) at 4,200m/13,779ft where there are sensational mountain views of the high peaks including Dhaulagiri, Nilgiri and Tilicho. If you are lucky you may also be able to spot the rare blue sheep sometimes found grazing here. The path is generally wide and good, but there are occasional airy stretches. Just below the pass on the other side are a series of springs which allow for a traditional high camping ground known as Pha where you will camp overnight.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 20: Trek to Tetang, 2,997m/13,452ft - 7 1/2 hours.

Now the sense that the huge adventure is nearing its end will begin to sink in. From Pha, with its small ponds for watering the nomads' sheep and goats, the path traverses a hillside and it becomes a very pleasant walk indeed, with views of Nilgiri and Dhaulagiri. Again parts of this path sound very scary in Bob and Sian's guidebook. Don't worry, the main path is fine. There is one small section of moderately exposed cliff path and even this is wide enough for laden horses. The final stretch back from the cliff edge is fantastic, as is the long descent to the lower regions of Mustang. You actually come down near Chussang but reaching the bottom you will turn left and 20 minutes brings you to Tetang and the Kailash Hotel which has a nice orchard for 'green camping'



Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 21: Drive to Jomsom, 2,743m/9,000ft.

You finish your trek with the walk to Chussang to meet your transport for the exhilarating drive through Kagbeni and on to Jomsom.

Now is time to celebrate your achievement with a party for your trusty Sherpas as tomorrow you fly back to 'civilisation'.

Overnight: Lodge (Meals: BLD)

Day 22: Fly to Kathmandu via Pokhara. Transfer to hotel.

Today you fly from Jomsom, through the Himalayan Mountains, down the Kali Gandaki Gorge, feeling like an insect in such grand surroundings, to land in Pokhara. From Pokhara you will fly to Kathmandu where you will be met and transferred to your hotel.

Overnight: Shangri La Hotel, Kathmandu (Meals: B)

Day 23: At leisure in Kathmandu.

Kathmandu, Asia's former hippie capital, has a wonderful mixture of crowded bazaars, Hindu and Buddhist temples, shrines and stupas, colonial and ancient architecture as well as more modern buildings. You could explore the bazaars and temple complexes of Durbar Square to best absorb the myriad impressions assailing your culture-shocked senses. You could also hire a mountain bike to explore, or take a ride out to the fascinating city of Bhaktapur, an hour or so east of Kathmandu. There are plenty of excellent places to eat in Kathmandu, cheap, noisy and cheerful in Thamel, or more luxurious in the surrounding areas of the city.



Overnight: Shangri La Hotel, Kathmandu (Meals: B)

Day 24: At leisure. Afternoon transfer to the airport. Depart Kathmandu.

You will have a little more time at leisure today in Kathmandu before an afternoon group transfer to the airport for your overnight flight back to London.

Overnight: In flight (Meals: B)

Day 25: Arrive London.

Our grading system

The Wild Mustang Trek is graded as a Vigorous/Strenuous trekking holiday, as described below.

Vigorous

Typically these trips involve 8 to 14 days (occasionally more) trekking in relatively remote landscapes. High passes up to 4,900m/16,000ft may be crossed (sometimes snow-covered) and there may also be glacier travel and peak ascents. Walking days can be between 5 and 8 hours with considerable ascents and descents. This grade also covers some European treks of shorter durations. Overnight stops on trek could be in tea houses, mountain huts or camping.

Strenuous

Our strenuous trekking holidays can involve anything from 10 to 30 days on trek and are often in remote areas, far from 'civilisation'. Rest days are interspersed but there may be up to 7 consecutive days of hard walking. Most treks reach altitudes of at least 4,900m/16,000ft and there will be a great deal of ascent and descent. The majority of our strenuous treks utilise camping, tea house or mountain lodge accommodation.

Trip altitude

Important - please be aware that this trip involves travel at altitude. Whilst all our itineraries are carefully designed to optimise acclimatisation to high altitudes, participants on this trip are likely to experience some symptoms of being at altitude. The Dossier pack we provide when you book your holiday includes comprehensive advice on safe travel at altitude. If you require further information or advice on travel at altitude prior to booking please contact the office to speak to an experienced member of our team. Alternatively we recommend www.medex.org.uk as a good source of information.

What the price includes

Mountain Kingdoms aims to offer the best value for money. We do not charge extra for meal packages or apply local charges and try to ensure that all the key elements of your holiday are included.

What's included:

- ✓ A Sherpa guide and camp crew
- ✓ Free use of a good quality down jacket and sleeping bag with liner on trek
- ✓ Free Mountain Kingdoms kit bag
- ✓ Special Mustang permit
- ✓ Good standard hotel accommodation (4 star) in Kathmandu & Pokhara, bed and breakfast, twin share basis
- ✓ Lodge accommodation on a full board basis
- ✓ All camping facilities on trek, where mentioned
- ✓ Camp staff to carry out all camp work
- ✓ Full portage on trek
- ✓ Costs of all portage and porter insurance
- ✓ All internal flights and domestic hotel/airport transfers
- ✓ Economy class return air fares from the UK & UK Departure Tax (flight inclusive only)
- ✓ Single, timed group airport transfer for international flights
- ✓ All road transport by private vehicles
- ✓ Sightseeing where specified
- ✓ Carbon offsetting with the Ecoan Tree Planting Project (for clients taking our flight inclusive option)
- ✓ Opportunity to join one of our pre-trip meets in the Cotswolds

Airport transfers

The cost of a transfer to/from the airport is included in the price of your holiday. This is a single group transfer which is arranged to coincide with the timings of the group flights. If you book your own flights which arrive/depart at different times to this, or we book flights at your request that have different timings, we will be happy to provide a quote for a separate transfer. Please contact us should you require any further information.

What's not included:

- ✗ Travel insurance
- ✗ Visa fees
- ✗ Lunch and evening meals in Kathmandu and Pokhara
- ✗ Optional trips
- ✗ Tips

Water-to-Go Reusable Bottle Campaign

We have joined the campaign to help cut down on the use of plastics and, in particular, single-use water bottles. To do this we have teamed up with the revolutionary company, Water-to-Go who have developed a multi-use drinking bottle with a reusable filter that eliminates over 99.9% of all microbiological contaminants. This makes water from virtually any source safe to drink and significantly reduces the need for travellers to buy bottles of water wherever they are in the world.

For our clients who are not given a free Mountain Kingdoms kit bag (these are required for certain treks), there is the choice of receiving either a free Water-to-Go bottle or a free Mountain Kingdoms fleece. If you are not eligible for a free bottle, you will still be able to buy a special Mountain Kingdoms Water-to-Go bottle from us at a discounted rate. For further information about our campaign visit <https://www.mountainkingdoms.com/water-to-go-reusable-bottle-campaign>.

Your accommodation

We will endeavour to secure the hotels named in the itinerary but if our first choice of hotel is not available we will book a suitable alternative of a similar standard.



Shangri La Hotel, Kathmandu

The Shangri La Hotel is a 4* hotel of character, just a stone's throw from the British Embassy and only a 20 minute walk or short taxi ride into the popular tourist area of Thamel. The hotel has a swimming pool, a lovely, landscaped garden, and a choice of restaurants and bars. Recent entertainment additions include a casino and fitness centre.



Shangri La Village Hotel or Similar, Pokhara

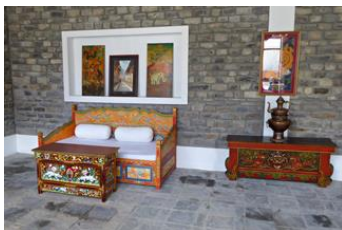
Situated close to Pokhara, the 4* Shangri La offers wonderful views of the Annapurnas both from its lush, landscaped gardens and from its guest rooms. The well designed rooms are light and airy and feature a large, sit-out balcony. The hotel has a secluded outdoor pool, poolside bar and an international restaurant.



Lodges

Following our research trip in 2017 we have chosen a selection of the best small hotels/lodges/tea houses throughout this trek. They all have cosy dining/living rooms with Tibetan style furnishings. Some have en suite simple bathrooms, some have shared facilities. They are all full of character and are fun places to stay.

For various reasons, it is not possible to guarantee single rooms in these lodges. If you are travelling without a companion and would like a single this may sometimes be possible upon payment of a small supplement on the spot (usually around \$10). Alternatively, if the lodge has an odd number of guests on the night you may be lucky and find yourself in a room on your own. However it is more likely you will share with someone (of the same sex obviously). This would most likely be someone within your group but when the lodges are busy, it could even be someone else. Be prepared for this! We do however offer the option of a single room in your hotels in Kathmandu and Pokhara for a supplement.



Royal Mustang Lodge, Lo Manthang

Built by the late king's son and family this new 4 star hotel is modelled a little on the design of the summer palace. It has en suite bathrooms, an atmospheric reception, bar and dining room. Definitely the best place in town. We cannot guarantee single rooms in advance at the Royal Mustang Lodge but your guide may be able to arrange this for you, for a small supplement, depending on availability.



Camp

On our camping treks, the following are provided: a sleeping tent, a dining tent, a toilet tent exclusively for your group to use, and a kitchen tent. There are camp chairs or stools, a kerosene / gas lamp or candles for reading in the dining tent at night, a dining table, crockery and tableware. The staff complement of cooks put up and take down tents, make the tea, cook the food, wash the dishes, and load the porters or pack animals. Your kit bag is carried for you either by porters or pack animals and you just trek with a light day sack.

Meal arrangements

Bed and breakfast in Kathmandu and Pokhara. All meals on trek.

Flight arrangements

Flight inclusive from price

Our 'Flight inclusive from' price is based on the best fare available at the time of printing. As airfares change on a constant basis, this should be used only as a guide price. Rest assured that, at the time of booking, we will endeavour to get the best possible price for the flights you need. Remember, the earlier you book the greater your chances of securing the best fare.

Flight inclusive packages booked through Mountain Kingdoms are protected through our ATOL bonding scheme.

Flight upgrades and regional Airports

Please call us on +44 (0)1453 844400 for flight options from regional UK airports, Business Class upgrades, alternative airlines and stopovers. Please also check our website for the most up to date flight inclusive 'from' prices.

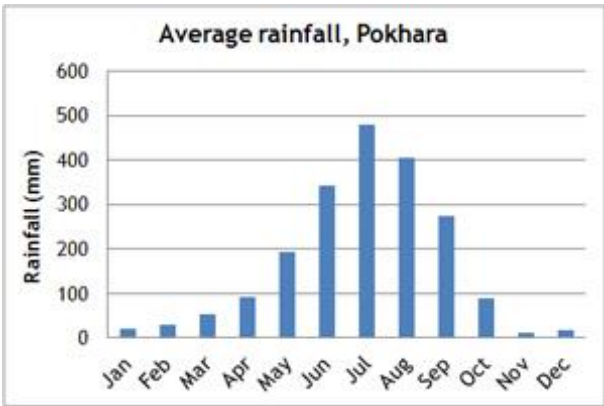
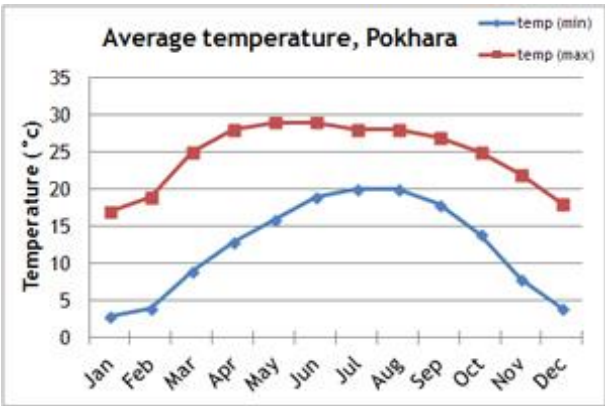
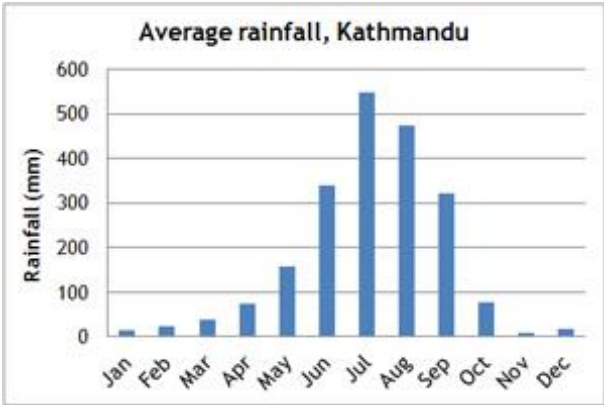
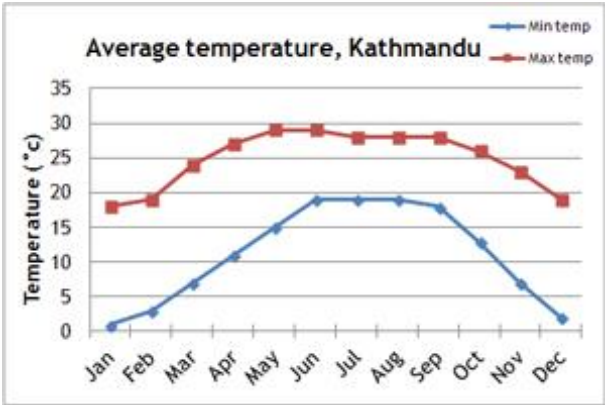
Further information

When we receive your booking, we send you a full Trip Dossier which contains details of any visas and vaccinations required, a suggested gear and clothing list and lots of useful information. If you do have queries at this initial stage do call us on 01453 844400 and we will be pleased to offer advice.

The nature of adventure travel

Every effort will be made to keep to this itinerary but we cannot guarantee that things may not change, either before you travel or while you are away. By its very nature, adventure travel involves an element of the unexpected, particularly in more remote areas. A variety of factors such as adverse weather conditions, changes to local schedules and difficulties with transportation can all contribute to the need to make changes to the itinerary, often at the very last minute. Our Operations Manager and your Trip Leader will make every effort to maintain the integrity of the original itinerary and minimise the impact of any changes, but an easy-going and flexible nature is a real asset! Please note that all timings and distances given are approximate.

Climate information



Extensions

Extending your holiday

If you would like additional inspiration on how or where to extend your holiday please call us on 01453 844400. Alternatively, you can download a range of extension information sheets on our website, at www.mountainkingdoms.com.



Extra nights in Nepal

If you would like to extend your stay in Nepal, you can add extra nights at your group tour accommodation or choose from our range of distinctive properties in Pokhara and the Kathmandu area. We can offer luxury resorts, heritage hotels, tranquil lodges and characterful cottages. Our selection includes Dwarika's hotel in Kathmandu and its sister property - Dwarika's Resort at Dhulikhel, Pavilions Himalaya at Pokhara, Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge and Shivapuri Heights Cottage. Individual extension leaflets for all these options can be downloaded from our website or requested from our office.



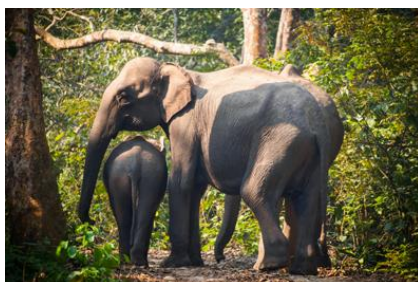
Kathmandu Valley sightseeing excursions

We can arrange half day or full day sightseeing tours taking you to the key cultural attractions of central Kathmandu or the Kathmandu Valley including the World Heritage Sites of Bhaktapur and Patan. Your tour will be led by an English-speaking guide and you will have a private vehicle and driver.



Bhutan and Tibet extensions from Nepal

Whilst in the Himalaya, why not extend your Nepal holiday with a tour of the cultural highlights of Bhutan or Tibet. We offer several extension packages that include all accommodation, meals and sightseeing or we can tailor an itinerary to suit your exact requirements. Download extension leaflets for our Bhutan and Tibet extensions from Nepal, or contact the office to discuss various options.



Wildlife extensions in Nepal - Chitwan, Bardia & Koshi Tappu

Visit Chitwan or Bardia National Parks home to a rich variety of birds and animals including elephant, rhinos, leopard and Bengal tiger. Stay in a comfortable lodge and enjoy a range of wildlife viewing activities. Alternatively visit the renowned Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve - one of the finest birdwatching and wildlife areas in all Asia.



Lumbini

Enjoy a three day extension to the birthplace of Buddha, one of the most important Buddhist pilgrimage sites in the world. Take the short flight from Kathmandu, and spend two nights in a comfortable 3* hotel, just steps from the Lumbini temple complex, with a full day to explore the fascinating UNESCO World Heritage Site in the company of your expert local guide.

Why book this holiday with Mountain Kingdoms?

- We believe this is the best, long, camping trek on offer to Mustang, taking you to some of the very remote corners of this incredible kingdom.
- The itinerary offers a true circuit, pioneered by Mountain Kingdoms, that treks up the western side of the valley to visit the historic capital Lo Manthang and then returns down the lesser known but scenically spectacular eastern side, with in addition an exciting four day loop of the northern villages.
- We will use our connections to hopefully meet the son of the late king of Mustang - assuming he is in Lo Manthang.
- As well as the full camping service needed in the wildest parts of Mustang en route we also use some of the best lodges where possible.
- We use the four star Shangri La Hotels in Kathmandu and Pokhara.
- We provide a full service camping experience on trek with first rate camping equipment.
- A good quality 4-season down sleeping bag with liner, and a down jacket, are provided free of charge, to use on trek.
- The Spring departure also includes the Tiji Festival in Lo Manthang.
- Our MD, Steve Berry and Reservations Manager, Seraphina Berry, designed and researched this trek for Mountain Kingdoms. If you have any questions please contact Steve or Seraphina on 01453 844400, they will be very happy to help.
- As part of our commitment to 'Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency', we will be carbon-offsetting all international flights booked through us by donating funds to the Ecoan Tree Planting Project in Peru.
- We are an IATA accredited agent and work directly with some of the world's major airlines. If you wish to fly with a specific airline, from a regional UK airport or on alternative dates to the main group we would be happy to arrange this for you. Please contact our Flights Manager, April, for flight options, quotes and further information.

If we've tempted you to take your next holiday with us, we advise you to check availability and you can do this via our website: www.mountainkingdoms.com or by calling the team on +44 (0)1453 844400. Bookings can be made online, by phone or by completing a booking form and returning it to us. We can also provisionally hold places if you need time to consider your options.

What our clients say



Attending the Tiji Festival in Lomanthang was a wonderful experience. The landscape north of Lomanthang and also the eastern part of Mustang are truly spectacular and definitely wild. Great mountain views of the snowcapped Dhaulagiri, Nilgiri and Tilicho. The walking is challenging in parts but a very rewarding experience.

- Mr G K-B, Australia

I know that without fail the experience will be an adventure.

-Mrs H, Stonehaven



All of Mustang is amazing, but few people get to explore the string of villages to the north of Lo Manthang, or to exit the kingdom down the east side of the Kali Gandaki river. There are some real gems of places to find; the very remote village of Samdzong all on its own in the middle of nowhere, the oases of Yara, Ghara, Tangye, and other hamlets too many to mention. There some absolutely incredible fluted cliffs, worn down into strange shapes by the hand of time, and peppered with ancient cave dwellings. If you are looking for something really wild - this is it!!

- Steve Berry, MD, Mountain Kingdoms

Mountain Kingdoms - distinctly different

Truly independent

In an age where many so-called 'independent' travel companies have in fact been bought out by multi-national giants, we remain fiercely independent with all the benefits this offers our clients.

Value for money prices with an emphasis on quality

We are not in the business of cutting our itineraries and services to the bone to offer eye-catching cheap prices. We use some of the best airlines, and typically 3 or 4 star hotels in cities. We include the majority of meals and private transport for road travel. We use excellent equipment and appoint well-trained staff and leaders. Last year, over 98% of our clients rated their Mountain Kingdoms holiday as 'excellent' or 'good'. We are members of AITO and bound by their quality charter.

Complete financial security

You can book with us confident that your holiday has full financial protection. Flight inclusive holidays are financially protected by the Civil Aviation Authority under ATOL licence number 2973 and 'Land Only' holidays are covered by a bond secured with ABTOT.

No Surcharge Guarantee

Your peace of mind is important to us so we have a No Surcharge Guarantee on all Land Only and Flight Inclusive bookings. This means that there will be no change to the price of your holiday once we have confirmed your booking, regardless of fluctuations in exchange rates or fuel prices.

Award winning Responsible Tourism

We feel strongly that all our holidays should benefit local communities, protect the environment and respect local traditions, religion and heritage. You can read more about the charities we support and our Responsible Tourism commitments and initiatives on the following page or at www.mountainkingdoms.com.

Genuine small group travel

Almost all of our holidays have a maximum group size of just 12, plus leader. This provides more contact with your leader, readier access to off-the-beaten-path areas, greater interaction with local communities and a reduced environmental impact.

Loyalty Discount

If you have previously travelled with us we recognise your loyalty with a discount on future trips.

Booking your holiday - it couldn't be easier

Once you've chosen your Mountain Kingdoms holiday you can book online, call the office or complete and post a booking form which can be found in our brochure or downloaded from our website. If you would like to hold a place on one of our trips, whilst you make up your mind, please give us a call to make a provisional booking. This is a no-obligation, no-cost booking and we will hold your place until space comes under pressure or we need your decision.

Comprehensive information

When we receive your booking we send you a full trip dossier which contains details of visas and vaccinations required, a suggested gear and clothing list and lots of useful information. In fact, everything you need to know to give you peace of mind and allow you to prepare for your trip of a lifetime.



RESPONSIBLE TOURISM STATEMENT CLIMATE EMERGENCY PLAN



For over 33 years, Mountain Kingdoms has been offering people the chance to visit amazing places on this extraordinary planet. We now offer trips to all corners of the world, but we are conscious that inevitably our holidays have a detrimental impact on the world around us, and we want to do all we can to reduce our carbon emissions. We are a signatory to Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency, along with a growing number of like-minded, reputable tour operators. For more information, please visit www.tourismdeclares.com

From 2020 onwards, we will be focusing on how we can reduce the carbon emissions that our holidays produce, and how to counterbalance this carbon by supporting carbon offset measures. Here are some of our current and future plans to minimise the impact of our business as a whole:

Carbon Offsetting

Already doing:

- ✓ We have been offsetting carbon since 2007, but will be increasing our donations to the [Ecoan tree planting project](#) in Peru this year. This is with a trusted partner where the funds go directly to a project where the community plants trees on its own land.

Will do:

- ✓ We are working on making our carbon offsetting more accurate and targeted.
- ✓ In future, we will add to that a further estimate for carbon produced by hotels, local road travel, trains and internal flights to arrive at a carbon offset sum for each trip we operate.
- ✓ Carbon offsetting will be included in our holiday prices. For our Flight Inclusive holidays it will include the international flight and any emissions produced by inland travel and accommodation. Our Land Only prices will include the cost of offsetting emissions caused by inland travel and accommodation.

Reducing Carbon Emissions

Already doing:

- ✓ We already offer the majority of our customers a free filtered water bottle which means they can instantly cut down on their single-use plastic consumption. This will be an ongoing project.
- ✓ We already predominantly use locally owned hotels, but will continue to ensure that, where possible, we use these rather than multinational chains.
- ✓ We have joined the Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency initiative to stand alongside like-minded travel companies, to work together to initiate best practices to make tourism as sustainable as possible.

Will do:

- ✓ We will re-evaluate our flights to make sure we are using the most fuel efficient airlines with the youngest fleets and, where possible, direct flights for each trip.
- ✓ We will stop offering unnecessary optional flights – for example our Everest sightseeing trip.
- ✓ We will eliminate unnecessary staff flights wherever possible.
- ✓ We will look at minimising internal flights.
- ✓ We will be asking all our worldwide agents and suppliers to look at their own carbon footprint and encourage them to reduce it.
- ✓ We will promote our more low impact trips to give customers an informed choice.

As part of our wider commitment to Responsible Tourism, we will continue to support a number of charities with whom we have had a long standing relationship over many years. These include: Shiva Charity in Nepal (Ginette Harrison School), Simien Mountains Mobile Medical Service and Porter Welfare, as well as setting aside a sum for emergency disaster relief should the need arise.

