



NOMADIC SKIES

DOLPO - REMOTE HIMALAYAN NEPAL

SEEKING & TRAVELLING DEEPER

DISCOVER REMOTE NEPAL

Explore Dolpo, the remote
and sacred Phoksundo Lake and
the land of ancient Bon religion
and hidden Tibetan culture.

Exclusive small group accompanied expeditions to the hidden valleys of the sacred Phoksundo Lake deep within the high Himalayas of Nepal and in an area of ancient Nepal-Tibetan culture.

Nomadic Skies is founded on the principle of promoting travel that deepens links with and economic benefits for fragile mountain communities in Nepal.

We are offering small group expeditions (8 to 12 people) that will not only explore the stunning nature and landscapes of remote North West Nepal - a fabled, area deep within the high Himalaya - but undertake an exploration of the culture of the mountain people of Dolpo.



"Their trek is a shared experience with a community not just a hike through a wonderful landscape."

ANNE INCE





15 nights / 16 days,
starting and finishing
in Kathmandu.

Dates:

Expeditions will be organised from February to mid-June and from mid-September to late November (the months from mid-June to mid-September are monsoon months). Check our website and facebook page for upcoming expeditions or contact us directly for specific date requests.



Mode of travel:

Mini-bus transport in Kathmandu.
4 internal flights within Nepal (2 incoming to reach Dolpo and 2 on return) which will include a spectacular journey through the Himalayan valleys by 20-seater Twin Otter Aircraft. 7 days of trekking - 4 longer days of 6-7 hours and 3 shorter days of around 4-5 hours.

Group size and composition:

Our groups will be between 8 and 12 people and be internationally and locally led. We also link to locals within the mountain communities to provide us unique insights into the culture and natural environment in which they live.

Level of difficulty:

The route is on relatively good paths but with some steep ascents and exposure in places (vertigo could be an issue). The expedition will ascend to around 3800metres culminating in Ringmo by the fabled Phoksundo Lake at 3650metres. An optional additional ascent to the Yak pastures and rock fields above Ringmo would involve ascending to around 4000 metres. A good level of health and fitness and experience of walking is therefore required for this expedition.



Slower & Experiential Trekking:

Nomadic Skies focuses specifically on trekking in remote but populated areas. Unlike many other trekking companies that merely pass by local communities, we focus on building our treks around a meaningful and mutually beneficial relationship with local communities and locals with unique skills and insights who can add to our journeys.

In Dolpo we have linked to village elders, amchis (Tibetan herbalists and healers), lamas (monks), craftspeople, musicians and local yak and goat herders with the knowledge of wildlife and the habits of the elusive snow leopard. These links add a depth to our journeys - with locals inviting us into their houses, guiding us among their villages, sharing their music and stories, showing us intimate religious ceremonies that are seldom seen by other trekkers. We believe in timetabling our treks to allow for this depth of interaction and the spontaneity of chance meetings and the frequent request to join, share and discuss with locals. We call this

'slower and experiential trekking' and our past journeys have shown how this provides insights that so many trekkers can miss when they either stick to main trekking routes, spend their time within the 'bubble' of their trekking group, or stick to rigid and onerous walking itineraries that provide little opportunity for meaningful interaction.

Travel that benefits local communities

The backgrounds of Nomadic Skies' founders are in international and rural development and we aim to ensure that our journeys benefit local communities economically, socially and culturally. We hire local staff and guides and provide donations to community funds for experiences that locals provide along our journey. We also try to buy and procure locally wherever possible. Tourism is one of the potential sources of income and employment in these fragile rural and remote communities and we believe that our journeys should be contributing to the survival of these communities.



"The trip was amazing, a masterpiece of organisation, you have a lot to congratulate yourself about."

JEANETTE ARNOTT



Expedition Highlights:

- Tours of the cultural and historical areas and monuments of the Kathmandu valley including the ancient cities and temple complexes of Patan and Bhaktapur, the sacred Buddhist sites of Boudhanath (one of Nepal's largest Buddhist Stupas) and Swayambunath (the Monkey Temple). We will also visit the heart of Kathmandu's liveliest quarter, Thamel, with its curio sellers, bookshops, bars, restaurants, music and expedition supply shops.
- A scheduled flight to the low-lying area of Nepal (known as the Terai) will be followed the next morning by a spectacular 45 minute flight over the Nepal Hills and through the valleys of the High Himalaya to Juphal Airfield. Recently upgraded and surfaced, this airfield is carved into the Southern valley-side of the Thuli Bheri Nadi River with scenic views across the nearby mountains.
- During the following days we follow the Suli Gad River Valley with its aqua-blue tumbling waters. We will pass through the deserted winter village of the semi-nomadic Dolpa-pa and through forest with the likelihood of seeing Nepal grey langur monkeys, musk deer and a variety of Himalayan birdlife. Higher up in the valleys you are also likely to see rarer Bharal (Blue Sheep) and Dolpo is a sanctuary for the rare, but seldom observed, Snow Leopard.
- Moving from the southern more populated predominantly Hindu valley of the Thuli Bheri and into the upper Suli Gad valley we will have entered the land of the Dolpa-pa. In the communities of Rechi, Rike and Ringmo we begin to encounter the ancient Nepal-Tibetan culture of Dolpo with unique architecture, customs, dress and language.



- Most trekking groups coming to the area have little meaningful interaction with local communities arriving from one hard trek to leave the next morning. We have laid the foundations for a deeper and more engaged interaction with the Dolpo-pa who are highly interested in understanding and benefitting from international tourism which at present benefits them very little. Our shorter walk days in the upper valleys and 3 nights spent at Ringmo will allow interactions with the community to explore the history, customs, lifestyle as well as modern challenges in this unique area.

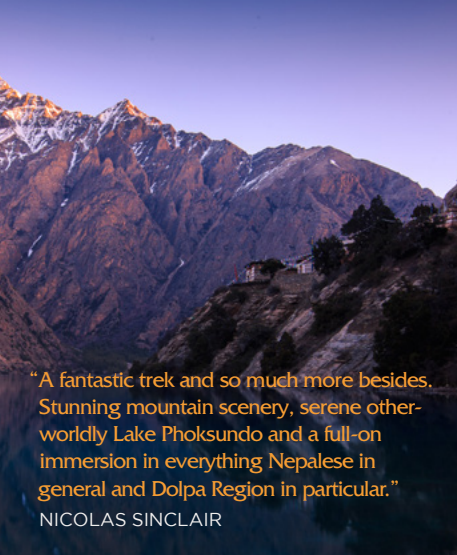
Past journeys have seen us:

- Being shown and integrated into intimate and spectacular community and religious ceremonies.
- Led by a senior amchi (Tibetan healer) in the explanation and identification of local plants and herbs for healing purposes.
- Involved in evenings of traditional music and dance
- Having the process of identifying an incarnate lama explained by the family of the child identified as a reincarnated, religious Bon leader.
- Being taken by local herders to find the tracks of snow leopards
- Spending evenings by traditional firesides, sampling local food, tea and being told the stories and legends of the local area – as well as us sharing our stories.





- We will arrive in the beautiful traditional village of Ringmo on the shores of the sacred and fabled Lake Phoksundo, nestled among high mountains and glaciated peaks. The traditional stone built, flat roofed houses and the numerous painted chortens (shrines that symbolize an enlightened mind and a place for meditation and worship) make Ringmo a truly special and spiritual location.
- The Bon religion of the area pre-dates Buddhism with their own distinctive scriptures and meditational practices aiming towards enlightenment which has many similarities to other schools of Buddhism. We will have an opportunity to understand this religion more and will visit the Tshowa Bon Monastery which is situated spectacularly on the shores of the stunning aqua-blue Lake Phoksundo just outside Ringmo.
- The implausibly shimmering, deep turquoise waters of Lake Phoksundo needs to be seen to be believed. Photos taken on a sunny day will result in you being accused of a poor Photoshop edit. But to spend time by this lake as the colours change through the day is a truly profound and unforgettable experience. Local legend tells of a passing demon who when hiding from the Saint Padmasambhava bribed the local community with a turquoise gem to keep her location secret. Padmasambhava discovered this and destroyed the emerald gem and the locals divulged the location of the demon. The vindictive demon flooded the village and the waters turned turquoise as a reminder of the event. Legend says the destroyed village can still be seen at the bottom of the lake.



- The Dolpo-pa are crop farmers, pastoralists and traders and yaks are an important part of their farming and trading lives. You will see herds of impressive yaks and Dzo (a hybrid of cows and yaks) grazing and herded around Ringmo. A way of life that has changed little in generations.
- We will offer you the opportunity to walk the 'devils path', a path improbably carved into the rockface of Lake Phoksundo's easterly shores which ascends to a lofty viewpoint where the whole of Lake Phoksundo can be seen in its full spectacular glory.
- We will explore the local forests learning more about the medicinal use of plants, herbs and trees or just relax and meditate by the shores of the lake or interact with the Rigmo-pa and watch as they sit outside their houses spinning yak hair into yarn and twine and weave strips of bright cloth.
- Those who wish to ascend further can also participate in a local guided day trip ascending a broad and then steeper ridge of Pelangtahn to the upper yak pastures above Ringmo. The glimmering glaciers and snow peaks of numerous of Western Nepal's highest mountains can be viewed from here and we will explore the rock fields where Bharal (blue sheep) and musk deer graze and where locals say they have often seen snow leopards.
- The usually dry conditions, clear air, lack of any light pollution and altitude make the dark night skies awe inspiring. Peer into one of the purest and clearest star spattered skies on earth and see the milky way like you will have never seen it before. Find a quiet spot, lie back and look into our universe and wonder...



"I am taking away many many extraordinary memories and moments: marvelling at the stunning scenery whether from the vantage point of the Suli Gad river valley or the rock meadow above Ringmo, sitting alongside and talking to Dolpo-pa in their homes and tea houses, being blessed by B'on and Buddhist lamas, meditating at the monastery on the shores of Phokusundo Lake, spotting snow leopard prints on the path, being chased by an angry yak, drinking my first cup of tea of the day brought by Norbu and the lads in the early morning with frost still on the ground, and letting the beauty and serenity of the remote and beautiful land and culture finally quieten my inner mental churn of work and lists and commitments and obligations.

NICKY HARFORD



Indicative full Itinerary:

Note: Every Nomadic Skies Journey is unique and takes advantage of seasonal activities ceremonies and opportunities that arise with our local contacts and interaction.

- **Day 1 :**
Arrive in Kathmandu. First night will be in a boutique hotel in Thamel.
- **Day 2 :**
Trekking permits organised while the group explores Thamel (lively shopping, bar and restaurant area) and then undertakes a tour of historic Patan city and the Durbar Square and palace. In late afternoon ascend the iconic Swayambhunath (Monkey Temple Hill) to see the sunset over the city. Participate in a group meal. 2nd night in Thamel.
- **Day 3 :**
Pack kit for transportation to the airport and then travel to the iconic Boudhanath Stupa – one of Nepal's largest and most sacred Buddhist Stupas (also known as 'Little Tibet') where the group will be able to explore the area and have lunch. In the afternoon we will travel to Kathmandu's Domestic Airport to catch a flight to Nepalgunj (around 1-hour flight time). Evening meal in Nepalgunj and accommodation in a Nepalgunj Hotel.
- **Day 4 :**
Rise early and after a light breakfast travel to Nepalgunj airport to take a spectacular early morning flight to Juphal in Dolpo by 20 seater Twin Otter Plane (about 45 minutes). On arrival we will have refreshments and while our kit and porters are organised we will discuss the trekking and safety arrangements on the trek and have a chance to explore Juphal. After a lunch we descend by foot from Juphal to the Thuli Bheri River (around 2 hours) where we will make our first camp.



- **Day 5 :**

After a camp breakfast we cross a suspension bridge over the Thuli Bheri River and enter Shey Phoksundo National Park. We ascend the Suli Gad River Valley and pass through the deserted winter village where those living high up in the valleys live with their animals during the fiercest winter months. We ascend through increasingly thick forest to the village of Chhepka where the second camp will have been pitched. This is the first of the longer trekking days (6 to 7 hours).

- **Day 6 :**

Continue ascending the Suli Gad valley and have a forest lunch. In the afternoon we will reach the delightful village of Rechi towards the North of the Suli Gad Valley where our third camp will be located. The second of the longer trek days (6 to 7 hours).

- **Day 7 :**

We will travel north to the head of the Suli Gad Valley, where there is the Taprizia School (supported by Swiss and French funding). We will have entered the beautiful and open valley of the Meduwa Khola, there we'll pass through forest and ascend to the little visited Rike Village which is closely linked with our ultimate destination - Ringmo. Our camp will be pitched near the village with views down to the huge Phoksundo water fall and the glaciated peaks of Kanjirowa Himal. An easier and more leisurely day of trekking (about 3 to 4 hours) and exploration.





- **Day 8 :**

Crossing the Medewa Khola River by wooden bridge we then undertake a relatively short but steep ascent (around 400M) to the valley of Phoksundo Lake and enter Ringmo village through fields and exotic chortens - a 3 to 4 hour trek arriving for lunch in Ringmo. After lunch we will explore our new home for the next 3 nights and visit the nearby Tshowa Bon Monastery spectacularly positioned on the easterly shore of Lake Phoksundo.

- **Day 9 :**

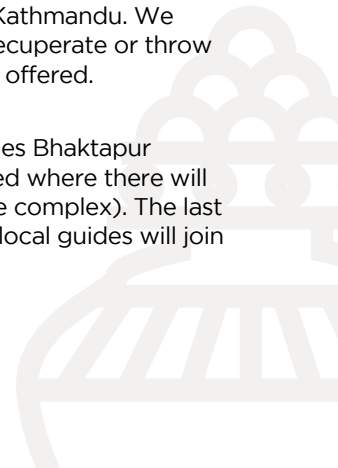
For those who wish to, an adventurous day, exploration of the Devil's path leads to a lofty and spectacular viewpoint over Lake Phoksundo where we will have a picnic lunch before exploring further or descending to Ringmo. Others who want a more relaxing day can explore the village and local weaving and be offered an introduction to Buddhist meditation and/or a guided tour of the local forest to discuss local flora/fauna and use of medicinal plants. An evening will be arranged to find out more from locals about the history, culture and legends of the Dolpo-pa and Ringmo as well as discussing the modern problems and aspirations of the area. We will sample local foods including the famous Tibetan butter tea.

- **Day 10 :**

An expedition to the high yak pastures above Ringmo will be offered to those who wish an active day. The ascent will bring us to scenic rock meadows where we may see Blue Sheep and Musk Deer and we will look for signs of Snow Leopard. Panoramic views are commanded of many of western Nepal's highest mountains. Cultural and shorter excursions as well as a more detailed exploration of Bon religion will be offered to those who do not wish to ascend. We will re-join together for our last evening with the people of Ringmo.



- **Day 11 :**
After offering our farewells we will descend on a different route from our entry to Ringmo. We will pass above the spectacular Phoksundo waterfall, over a viewpoint, through a higher winter village and to the Meduwa Khola River. After lunch we will descend back to Rechi Village. This is around a 4 to 5 hour trek.
- **Day 12 :**
From Rechi we descend further down the Suli Gad river and this time pass through Chhepka to stop for the night at the small but delightful Shyangta homestead – around a 6 to 7 hour trek.
- **Day 13 :**
From Shyangta we return down the Suli Gad and exit the national park to have lunch at our original first campsite by the Thuli Bheri River. After a leisurely lunch (awaiting the heat of the midday to pass) we will ascend back up to Juphal where we will spend our last camping night in Dolpo.
- **Day 14 :**
An early rise and striking of the camp will be followed by an early morning flight to Nepalgunj where we will transfer to the flight to Kathmandu. We will stay in Kathmandu (Thamel) where people can rest, recuperate or throw themselves into the city life. A group evening meal will be offered.
- **Day 15 :**
A trip to the third of Kathmandu Valley's three historic cities Bhaktapur (Kathmandu and Patan being the other two) will be offered where there will be a chance to visit the Durbar Square (palace and temple complex). The last evening will be a special farewell group dinner where our local guides will join to say goodbye.
- **Day 16 :**
Depart Kathmandu.





Cost:

Contact us or look on our website for upcoming expedition dates and costs.

Single person supplements will apply.

Prices won't include international travel to Kathmandu (which start at around £500 from major UK cities) but Nomadic Skies can advise on flight booking.



What's Included:

- All airport transfers in Nepal.
- 4 nights accommodation in Kathmandu – in a small boutique, high quality hotel.
- Historical tours of Kathmandu's most sacred and historical sites with historical interpretation.
- Breakfast and dinner in Kathmandu (lunch independently not included)
- 1 night hotel, dinner and light breakfast in transit in Nepalgunj on route to Dolpo.
- Internal flights to and from Dolpo (2 flights incoming and 2 flights return).
- 10 nights fully equipped camp trekking with all equipment provided (expedition members should bring their own sleeping bag). Tents will be equipped with thick (12cm) inflatable mattresses.
- Trekking fees and National Park Fees.
- Full catering – breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks during the time in Dolpo.
- International expedition leader during the whole expedition.
- Local expedition manager, additional trained guide and cook for the camping and trekking part of the expedition.
- Luggage portage during the camp trek by mule and porter.
- Support and advice on kit preparation, packing and the purchase of international flights, travel insurance etc.
- 100% consumer financial protection through The UK Travel Trust Association (TTA).



And what's not:

- International flights to and from Kathmandu.
- Tourist visa fee for entry to Nepal (US\$40 or £32) – visa can be arranged on arrival.
- Lunch during the 4 nights in Kathmandu.
- Alcoholic and carbonated drinks.
- Tips for local guides and porters (optional).
- Personal travel insurance (to cover ascending to 4000M altitude).

Note on safety and emergency

The expedition will have 2 staff permanently on hand that are trained as first responders in case of medical emergency. We will be carrying two fully equipped expedition medical kits. In case of any medical emergency the expedition is in contact with Nepal helicopter evacuation services that can be mobilised to the area. Due to mountaineering activities in Nepal, the country has a well-developed helicopter rescue service and international mountain hospitals.

“An extremely well-planned and well-led trek, with interest and activity in every day, from the streets and temples of Kathmandu to the dramatic V-shaped gorges of Dolpo which we trekked through, and the villages we passed by or stayed in, and the various locals we met, and on a couple of occasions, sang and danced with.”

JOHN SHADE





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