



The Responsible Travellers

www.theresponsibletravellers.com

Off the Beaten Track: Dolpa Wilderness Circular Trek Trip Notes



Highlights:

- Sightseeing UNESCO sites in Ktm valley
- 15 nights fully catered tented camping trek
- 5 Nights B&B Hotel
- Average daily walking 5-7 hours
- Bon Culture & Shey Phoksundo Lake
- Return Mountain Flight Nepalganj – Dunai
- Return internal flight Ktm - Nepalganj

Grade C 21 days

This is graded "C" as it:

- The trails are not always well defined
- On occasion you will experience a degree of exposure, and difficult underfoot conditions such as shale
- There are two high passes to negotiate in two consecutive days with prolonged climbs
- Maximum altitude: 5190m
- Camp facilities

Introduction

In the far north west of Nepal, Dolpa is a remote, fascinating and magnificent Shangri-La.....This region is home to high mountain passes, the highest population of snow leopard in Nepal who reside in Shey Phoksundo National Park, and the Bhotia people practicing the ancient Bon Po religion that disappeared from Tibet in the 9th century. Peter Matthiesen's the Snow Leopard book is based here, in which he describes Phoksundo Lake and the surrounding areas. Home not only to the flagship snow leopard and prey species Blue sheep, Tibetan wolf and musk deer, this region is also rich in flora with 286 species of botanical importance and medicinal plants such as Yarchagumba. It has also been made famous by the Oscar nominated film "Caravan" which was filmed in the National Park. Due to it's unique natural, social and cultural diversity Shey Phoksundo has been proposed as a world heritage site. Trekking here is the ultimate wilderness experience. The area has only been open to western exploration since 1989. The terrain is high and tough, so this is not for the faint hearted. Those who travel here will be rewarded with a true ancient mountain culture and Shangri La. Our itinerary takes you on a circuit of Dolpo, including Phoksundo Lake, Numa la and Baga la Pass, Sipchowk (one of the highest settlements in the world), and Reboo Ghompa with a local Aamchi who practices herbal and spiritual medicine!

This is most definitely off the beaten track and should be a rewarding and enriching experience for any visitor.

Detailed Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival in Kathmandu

Arrive in Kathmandu (5hrs 45mins ahead of GMT winter time, 4 hrs 45 mins ahead of GMT in the summer). Transfer to the hotel from the airport. Evening will be spent settling in and relaxing in the hotel, group dinner will be arranged in a restaurant in the evening. Accommodation: City Hotel Bed & Breakfast

Day 2: Kathmandu Sightseeing

This morning there will be a full trip briefing by the leader. The day then incorporates a guided sightseeing tour to two of Kathmandu's major sights. Our first destination is one of the country's most important temples – Swayambhunath popularly known as the monkey temple due to the large population of macaque monkeys resident here. Believed to be self created thousands of years ago, the temple is a very large whitewashed dome with a gilded spire top which is surrounded by a complex of smaller temples. It sits atop a hill and thus can be seen from many miles away. The balcony there provides a good view overlooking the valley and the mountains in the north. A good part of the morning will be spent here enjoying the view and mingling amongst the pilgrims who come here to worship in the various temples.

Our second visit will take us to Kathmandu Durbar Square. The old palace stands here amidst a complex of temples dating back to the 17th Century. However, the Kasthamandap, a building which supposedly had been built from a single Sal tree and given Kathmandu its name, is thought to date back to the 12th century. Some of the major highlights in the Square are the Taleju Temple standing tallest to the north of the palace, Kumari Bahal – home to the Living Goddess "Kumari", and Kala Bhairav which is the most fearsome aspect of Lord Shiva depicted on a huge slab of stone. From the window of the Shiva and Parvati temple the image of the divine couple benignly looks down upon the subjects. After the tour you can walk amongst the back streets of Thamel enjoying the shops and bazaar atmosphere.

Accommodation: City Hotel Bed & Breakfast

Day 3: Transfer to Nepalganj

This morning there will be a full trip briefing by the leader. After the briefing, the morning time is free to go shopping or sightseeing. We then take a magnificent internal flight to Nepalganj – the gateway to the west of Nepal. This flight travels parallel with the Himalaya and weather permitting we shall see from the Langtang, the Ganesh Himal, and Annapurnas

Arriving in the heat of the sub tropical Terai we shall notice the difference in the climate here and look forward to the coolness of the hotel.

This is the gateway and administrative centre for the far west part of Nepal. The town houses mainly government, UN and NGO offices.

Accommodation: City Hotel Bed & Breakfast

Day 4: Nepalganj to Juphal and trek on to Dunai

We fly to the mountain airstrip of Juphal where we shall meet our trek crew. After making final preparations we will begin our trek along the Thulo



Beri River to our first camp at Dunai. In the afternoon we can explore the village and visit the monastery.

Flight time: 30 mins

Walking time: 3 hrs

Altitude: 2140m

Accommodation: Fully catered tented camp

Day 5: Dunai to Tarabagar

From Dunai the trail continues following the Thuli Beri past the village of Byasgar and numerous other villages through this beautiful alpine valley to camp at Tarabagar.

Walking time – 6 ½ hrs

Final altitude – 2200m

Accommodation: Fully catered tented camp

Day 6: Tarabagar to Lasicap

Trekking on from here we will go via Sahartara visiting the 300 years old monastery & hot springs before trekking on to our next stop at Lasicap. The trail after Sahartara drops to cross the tributary Yalangkot Khola and then we follow the main river to Camp. We stay at an auspicious location here with the confluence of the Tarap and Barbung rivers which creates the Thuli Beri. We can do a small walk around the village and visit the monastery in the afternoon.

Walking time – 6 to 6½ hrs

Final altitude – 2772m

Accommodation: Fully catered tented camp

Day 7: Lasicap to Chhyur

After Lasicap the trail drops to cross the Barbung Khola, then following the Tarap Khola we pass through the settlement of Kanigaon. After the village we enter the pine forest emerging shortly at a large clearing in Lahini. The landscape changes as the valley closes into a spectacular deep gorge, the trail is constantly undulating, steeply a lot of the times high above the river steadily gaining altitude to Chhur.

Walking time – 8 hrs

Final altitude – 3441m

Accommodation: Fully catered tented camp

Day 8: Chhyur to Kalang Bridge

We cross the bridge this morning, then re-cross at Thanjam.

We keep trekking through this spectacular gorge passing through Nawarpani and Toltol to Kalang Bridge.

Walking time – 6 1/2 hrs

Final Altitude – 3750m

Accommodation: Fully catered tented camp

Day 9: Kalang Bridge to Dho

Today is a short day to Dho. We will arrive here for lunch and the afternoon can be spent resting and exploring the village. The landscape changes quite dramatically here, transitioning from the narrow gorge into the broad glacial valley of Tarap. The settlement being at the lower end of the valley has thus been rightfully named Dho Tarap as is the meaning in the local language. The people here are of Tibetan stock and speak Tibetan dialect. Much like in Tibet, men wear their hair long in braid of red pigtail which is then tied around the head and the women are seen in their traditional chuba adorned with lots of jewellery of turquoise and coral. You can see pictures of these fascinating people on the website. The camp will be on grassy meadow at the lower end of the village where the Tarap Chu and Dho Chu meet. This grassland will be used for Yak grazing, and you may have the chance to see these great woolly creatures whilst we stay here.

Walking time option 3hrs, Final altitude – 4100m

Accommodation: Fully catered tented camp



Day 10: Acclimatizing Day at Dho

Today we will be resting and acclimatizing here. The day will be well spent exploring the village and visiting the monasteries. The village is made up of small clusters of flat roofed stone houses with stacks of wood piled on the terraces. These are stored in a way that over time they get dried well for burning and they are used to shield the terrace from wind. Above the village are two monasteries. The Reboo Gomba which is of recent built is said to contain remains of a demon. The Mekyll Gomba's stands above all and houses a big statue of the Maitrya Buddha. In the afternoon we could head east along the Doto Chu and visit the Sipchowk Gomba an ancient Bon monastery. Bon is the old religion of Tibet which pre-dates Buddhism and is based on the worship of nature and its natural forces.

Walking time – variable

Final altitude – 4100m

Accommodation: Fully catered tented camp

Day 11: Dho to Takshi

We break camp and head up the valley. At Tok Kyu we cross the tributary Chhoila Chu and continue following the main valley to Thaksi. It will be worth visiting the Chamba Lhakang at atok Kyu on the way. We can also visit Reboo Gomba where the local Aamchi practices traditional herbal medicine. You may see marmots on the mountainside and soaring overhead Lammergeiers and Himalayan Griffins are some of the mountain birds of prey to look out for.

Walking time – 7 hrs

Final altitude – 3800m

Accommodation: Fully catered tented camp



Day 12: Takshi to Danigar

We will start early today as it is a long and tough day going over the Numa La pass. By starting early we have better chance of avoiding the windy and unpleasant conditions that can develop late morning/ early afternoon. We start our ascent continuing past the Shering Gomba, Jaglung Gomba up to the chorten. From here we steadily ascend up the endless moraine and arrive at the pass at 5149m. Our effort is worth every bit as we will be treated to fantastic views of Dhaulagiri, Kajiroba and other surrounding peaks. We descend down to Danigar to camp.

Walking time – 8 hrs

Final altitude – 4600m

Accommodation: Fully catered tented camp

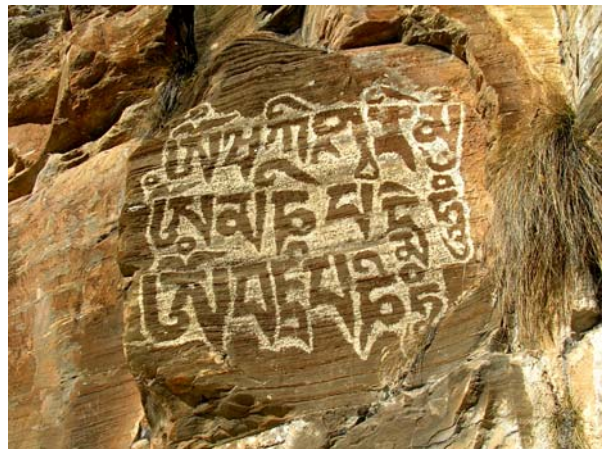
Day 13: Danigar to Yak Kharka

Today is another long and tough day as we cross the Baga La pass at 5190m the highest point of our trek. The views are spectacular yet again from the top of the pass seeing Dhaulagiri and its surrounding mountains. The descend from here is long, negotiating steep scree slopes sometimes, following the Ghunchu Khola, then the Meduwa to Yak Kharka our camp for the day. You should be able to see marmots, and blue sheep which is now an endangered species. This part of Nepal is known for greater concentration of Snow Leopard, owing to the bigger population of its favorite prey - blue sheep.

Walking time: 6 hrs

Final altitude: 4000m

Accommodation: Fully catered tented camp



Day 14: Yak Kharka to Rimgmo

The trail continues to follow the Meduwa River, then we ascend bracing the cliffside trail onto a ridge from where we will be able to see the Phoksundo Lake and the beautiful waterfall. We climb a little from here and descend gradually through pine and birch forest to the amazing village of Rimgmo then onward to camp near the lake.

Walking time: 5 hrs

Final altitude: 3600m

Accommodation: Fully catered tented camp

Day 15: Free Day at Phoksundo Lake

Today is a rest day after efforts over the passes. Now you are here at the famous Phoksundo Lake to enjoy and explore. The day can be spent walking along the turquoise blue lake and discover the very beautiful remote village and monastery.

Walking time – variable

Final altitude – 3600m

Accommodation: Fully catered tented camp



Day 16: Ringmo to Rechi

We climb back up to the village then descend a little to the Phoksundo Khola, then a steep climb through the forest will bring us atop a ridge looking back from where there is good view of the waterfall and the lake. We descend from here zigzagging down to the National Park entrance at Polam, which is a winter retreat of the inhabitants of Ringmo. From here we divert up the Pugma valley heading north-west to visit the Puma village & monastery. We then re-join the main trail descending to Rechi for our final resting place for the day.

Walking time – 4 hrs, Final altitude – 2940m

Accommodation: Fully catered tented camp

Day 17 & 18 Rechi to Juphal

We descend along a winding trail which at times is just a jumble of rocks and sticks that we negotiate close by the river. A mixture of the old and new trails allows us to pick the best route through this

valley, camping midway at Chhepka from where we descend Suli Gaad valley crossing the river several times before reaching our trail end at Juphal.

Walking time – 4 hrs, Final altitude – 2475m

Accommodation: Fully catered tented camp

Day 19: Flight to Kathmandu

Today we exit the fascinating Shangri-La of Dolpo and fly south to Nepalganj. This shall be a “pit-stop” for us to connect to a flight onto Kathmandu. On return you will have time to reflect this amazing journey.

Accommodation: City Hotel Bed & Breakfast

Day 20: Free day in Kathmandu

Today is a free day in Kathmandu for you to enjoy sightseeing or shopping at your own leisure. A late breakfast and hot shower will be most welcome! There are many sights of interest so please ask your leader or one of our members of staff for details of places of interest.

Accommodation: City Hotel Bed & Breakfast

Day 21: International Departure

This will be undeniably a journey like no other. Your sense of achievement after trekking in the Dolpa Wilderness and the culture you will have experienced will touch you deeply. However, the best thing will surely be that as a result of your holiday the Nepali community will benefit from development projects through our affiliated charities.

Recommended Extensions

We suggest the following extensions which can be added to the end of this itinerary:

i) 2 days chitwan Safari ii) 2 day Spa Resort

Independent & Bespoke Group Trips

This trip can be tailor made for either an independent trek or for your own group. You can select any departure date and adjust the itinerary if necessary to suit your needs.

please contact us at:

info@theresponsibletravellers.com



To book e-mail: info@theresponsibletravellers.com

Additional Information

What's included in your holiday?

- ✓ Carbon Balancing of international flights
- ✓ Internal flight return Pokhara - Ktm
- ✓ 5 nights hotel B&B accommodation
- ✓ 15 nights fully catered tented camp
- ✓ 1 day guided sightseeing, transport and entrance fees in and around Ktm as specified in the itinerary
- ✓ Return flights Ktm – Nepalganj - Dunai
- ✓ All transportation included in the itinerary
- ✓ Porterage and guides fees
- ✓ National Park Entrance fees & permits
- ✓ 100% profits donated to charity

What's not included:

- ❖ International flights & airport taxes
- ❖ Meals: lunch and dinner whilst in City B&B
- ❖ Incidental extra personal expenses
- ❖ Nepal Tourist Entry Visa
- ❖ Single persons supplement
- ❖ Additional sightseeing not specified in the itinerary
- ❖ Travel Insurance
- ❖ Staff tips

Travelling alone.....and don't want to pay a single supplement? No problem, you will be paired up with someone of the same gender to share a room / tent. If you would prefer the privacy of a single occupancy the Single Supplement for this trip is £145

Thought of Funding raising for charity?

You may choose to take this opportunity to raise sponsorship for one of our affiliated charities, If you wish to do so please contact us at: info@theresponsibletravellers.com and we will forward details to you.

First class staff & service levels

We are a highly credible tour operating organisation specialising in the Himalayan countries. All our staff are specially selected based on their experience, expertise and qualifications. We pride ourselves on a highly personalised airport to airport service with quality of care. The trip Leader will be an experienced professional leader working full time in the Himalayas & Central Asia with many years of experience. He/she will have full mountain wilderness & first aid qualifications and will have received training from either Himalayan Mountaineering Institute, Nepal Mountaineering Association or one of the European Alpine Clubs. As a responsible employer we pride ourselves on hiring local staff and paying wages higher than most organisations. If you want to read more about our employment policy please go to: www.theresponsibletravellers.com/our-ethics/employment-policy.html

Further Information:

If you have any queries regarding this trip, whether it is about preparation, the itinerary or general travel information please do not hesitate to contact us. If this trip is not for you perhaps you would like to contact us for details of alternative trips. All our trips and additional extensions can be viewed online at: www.theresponsibletravellers.com or write to us at info@theresponsibletravellers.com.

Administration & Practicalities

Insurance: It is compulsory to take full holiday insurance which covers trekking to the maximum altitude of your trek/trip, and also covers full rescue and repatriation costs. You will need to provide a copy of your insurance details, including an emergency 24 hour telephone number to the trek leader before departing Leh. This should include any correspondence stating clarification of the required cover. If your policy documents are not available or prove to provide insufficient cover you may not be able to continue your trip. Please ensure that your policy also covers any extra activity outside of the stated itinerary you wish to do if you are extending your trip.

Passport: Passports need to be valid for a minimum period of 6 months from the date of visa application if you are applying in the UK and from the date of entry into Nepal.

Visa Details: Visas are available in advance from the Nepal Embassy online at:

<http://www.nepembassy.org.uk/visa-information.html>

You can also have the visa processed at Kathmandu airport. If you intend to wait until your arrival at the airport please remember to bring two passport photos and US\$40 dollars in cash (N.B US dollars - is the only accepted payment).

Money: The local currency is Nepali Rupees (approx exchange rate 120 NRS - £1 – subject to daily fluctuation) Please note this can not be purchased in the UK. It is advised to take either sterling or US Dollars. Traveller's cheques and cash can be exchanged for local currency in Kathmandu. Credit cards are not generally accepted. In Kathmandu there are ATMs available to access cash via Cirrus / MasterCard / Visa.

Flight Information: This trip is land only and operates Ktm to Ktm. Please contact us if you want advice about international flight options and how to purchase.

Health: It is important you are prepared & fit and healthy for your trek. We strongly recommend you visit your local GP and ask advice regarding any vaccinations required.

Itinerary: All that is possible will be done to ensure the trip follows the outlined itinerary. However, due to factors beyond our control such as local weather, politics and airlines it may be necessary to vary one or more of the days. If this does occur we shall do our utmost to ensure minimal impact to you.

What to expect

Weather

October to April is the dry season. During this time you should have warm days with temperatures between 15 -25 degrees Celsius depending on altitude with relatively clear skies and little precipitation. During the winter months temperatures may reduce to -10 degrees Celsius during night-time.

Group Size

Due to the remote locations that are visited, we remain sympathetic to the local culture and environment by limiting our trips to a maximum of 12 places. This may be slightly smaller than other operators, and we believe it ensures the maximum enjoyment and fulfilment of our trip members and minimize the pressures on the environment. This also avoids the feeling of "herding" from being part of a large group. There is a minimum of 6 to operate the trek.

Wildlife

The Dolpa region has high pastures with blue sheep, Tibetan wolf and musk deer, on whom the elusive snow leopard preys. Lower down the forest is home to Langur monkeys. You are likely to get sightings of the Himalayan birds of prey such as Griffin vultures and lammergeiers. The area is also home to many rare flora species.

Baggage:

You should use a Rucksack or Kit bag that is strong enough to withstand the rigors of transportation in the mountains. Suitcases or rigid bags can not be used as these are a difficult and awkward load for porters. The weight limit for your trek bag is 15kg. The limitation for luggage on the internal flight is 15kg for the hold and 10kg for hand luggage. Please see your airline for details of your international flight luggage allowances.

More about us & Our Ethics.....

Here at **The Responsible Travellers** we take great pride in the fact that we are **doing the right thing** by you our customers, by our staff, and by the people, country and environment in which we operate.

We believe actions speak louder than words, over the next few pages you can read how our ethics are put into practice.



Our Guarantee:

100% of profits are donated to Charitable Projects

- ✓ We pay the cost to Carbon Balance your international flight to the Himalayas
- ✓ Through a committed Environmental Policy we work to ensure minimal impact of our activities
- ✓ We have a simple and fair Pricing Policy with no extra fees charges – price us up against other companies!
- ✓ Have a fair and ethical Employment Policy which is committed to employing local staff and paying fair wages

Are you ready for a change in the way you approach your holiday?

Before you go.... we start to take responsibility for your trip by carbon balancing your flights.



The impact on climate change from the way in which we live today is a topic we have all heard about, and is under much debate from the world's scientific community. This is something that we can not and should not ignore. This is why when you go on holiday with "The Responsible Travellers", we commit as part of our Responsible Tourism policy to ensure your trip contributes towards renewable energy technologies in the Himalayas. Given the great "green debate", we have chosen to implement this policy in a way that ensures we know we are making a difference. For every traveller to the Himalayas we donate twice the amount it costs to purchase commercial carbon credits** to either Nepal's Renewable Energy support programme BSP. Or Ladakh's Ecological Development Society depending on your destination. Travel with peace of mind with **The Responsible Travellers**

Whilst you are there.... Our Employment and environmental policies demonstrate our continued sense of responsibility. Firstly, our belief in aid through trade and therefore the generation of local employment and how this is managed is at the very heart of our operation. This is why we have a 100% commitment to employing only local staff. Our customers benefit from this by being able to get closer to the culture and learn more from the experience in the Himalayas, travelling with those who are born and bred in the area. By employing this policy we are also ensuring that the local economy benefits as much as possible rather than commercial organisations. We take great pride in ensuring fair wages to all our local staff and protecting our porters from exploitation. Secondly, our environmental policy addresses waste management, water usage, and encourages and supports the use of renewable resources. In addition, we work closely with the Nepal Sustainable Tourism Development Unit and WWF to ensure the strongest commitment to the local environment. Read more at: www.theresponsibletravellers/ethics.html



The choice is easy when you are...

After you've gone..... The Responsible Travellers donates all profits from its travel operations to charitable projects in Nepal. We believe the most effective way to invest is with the help of specialist organisations. We work with our partners to find suitable projects and locations to invest and then all the funds go directly to the local project. Our partner charities and areas of investment include:



Education

We believe all development starts with educating the people. We support community education programmes, child support programmes, and interest free loans for adult education through our beneficiary charity CHANCE Registered UK charity. 1107201..



Community Development

We help communities to provide themselves with improved facilities and encourage this to be done in an environmentally friendly way. Our volunteer programs allow visitors to experience this first hand when they opt for a family home stay and participate in the community project holidays.



Re-Forestation & Renewable Resources

Our third area of work involves working with BSP – the national biogas organisation in Nepal. The WWF estimate that only 29% of the original forest covers in Nepal still remains. Between 1990 and 2005, Nepal lost 1.2 million hectares of forest We work with BSP Nepal in order to help the communities develop Biogas – a renewable energy resource which provides clean fuel, stops deforestation, and offers far reaching health and sanitation benefits.



*To see more details of our charitable giving please go online to:
<http://www.theresponsibletravellers.com/ethics/projects.html>*

Our commitment to **Doing the Right Thing** extends from investing in local charitable projects, to making sure that our customers also get a good deal.

To help you have a hassle free holiday, we provide a fair and simple **pricing policy**:

- ✓ We charge a fair price: to make sure the holiday is as satisfying as possible; we charge what we believe is a fair price, not what we can get away with – compare us to other companies!
- ✓ No extra land charges or hidden fees: To keep life simple we make a single charge
- ✓ No profiteering from single supplements: we charge a fair price based on cost & do not charge excessive premiums for single supplements
- ✓ No nagging for donations: We do not request charitable donations from you in order to justify our responsible tourism policy. We work hard on your behalf so you can just concentrate on having a great time!

....Doing the right thing