

Earthbound Expeditions

# Upper Mustang Motorbike Tour

11 days, from US$2,190 per person

Duration
**11 days**

Grade
**Moderate to strenuous**

Max altitude
**3,950 m**

Start and end
**Kathmandu**

The bike
**Royal Enfield Himalayan**

Best season
**Mar to Nov**

Accommodation
**Hotels and lodges**

Meals
**All meals on the trek**

Group size
**2 to 8 riders**

Longest day
**Up to 200 km a day**

# Upper Mustang Motorbike Tour Overview

Ride a Royal Enfield up the deepest gorge in the world and onto the Tibetan plateau, to the walled city of Lo Manthang at 3,840 m.

### Tour overview

A nine-hundred-kilometre ride from Kathmandu to the walled city of Lo Manthang and back, on a Royal Enfield Himalayan. Six of the days are on dirt roads. The route follows the Kali Gandaki through the deepest gorge in the world and then onto the Tibetan plateau, into a former kingdom that was closed to outsiders until 1992 and still requires a permit costing $50 a day.

### Riding to Mustang

The road to Lo Manthang was completed within the last fifteen years, and it has changed the region, which some people regret. It has also opened up a landscape that takes walkers eight days to reach and riders four. If you have two weeks and you ride, this is the best two weeks of riding in Nepal.

### Lo Manthang

A walled city of about a thousand people at 3,840 m, built in the fourteenth century, with a royal palace, three major monasteries and murals older than anything comparable in Tibet. The kingdom of Lo had its own king until 2008. It is neither a ruin nor a museum; people live there and their children go to school there.

### Who this trip is for

Riders with genuine off-road experience who want a challenging route rather than a tour. It is not suitable for riders who have only ridden on roads, and we will tell you so rather than accept an unsuitable booking. A non-riding partner is welcome to travel in the support jeep and sees the whole route.

## Key highlights of the Upper Mustang Motorbike Tour

- The Kali Gandaki gorge, with Dhaulagiri on one side, Annapurna on the other and the road in between
- Four days of riding on the far side of the Himalaya, in a landscape very different from the rest of Nepal
- The walled city of Lo Manthang at 3,840 m, with a full day to explore it
- The sky caves at Chhoser, cut into the cliff and inhabited for three thousand years
- Challenging riding on gravel, sand, river crossings and switchbacks, on a motorcycle designed for it

## Itinerary

| Day | Route | Hours | Distance | Altitude |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Arrive Kathmandu | - | - | 1,400 m |
| 2 | Bike fitting and a valley shakedown ride | 3 | 80 km | 1,400 m |
| 3 | Kathmandu to Pokhara | 6 to 7 | 200 km | 820 m |
| 4 | Pokhara to Tatopani | 5 to 6 | 115 km | 1,190 m |
| 5 | Tatopani to Jomsom | 5 | 75 km | 2,720 m |
| 6 | Jomsom to Ghami, via Kagbeni | 6 | 75 km | 3,520 m |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7 | Ghami to Lo Manthang, over the Lo La | 4 | 45 km | 3,840 m |
| 8 | Lo Manthang and the Chhoser caves | 2 | 30 km | 3,840 m |
| 9 | Lo Manthang to Jomsom | 7 to 8 | 120 km | 2,720 m |
| 10 | Jomsom to Pokhara | 8 to 9 | 185 km | 820 m |
| 11 | Fly to Kathmandu, and out | 25 min | - | 1,400 m |

Day 1

### Arrive in Kathmandu

We meet you at the airport and take you to your hotel. The afternoon is free. In the evening we brief you on the route, the permits and the road conditions, so that you know what to expect before you start riding.

Altitude: 1,400 m  On foot: None, arrival day  Night: Hotel, Kathmandu  Meals: Dinner

Day 2

### Motorcycle fitting, permits and test ride

In the morning you go to the workshop, collect your motorcycle, adjust the levers and mirrors, and ride it around the area until you are comfortable with it. Your passport is with the Department of Immigration for the restricted area permit, so this day is required. In the afternoon we ride up to the valley rim and back, about eighty kilometres, so that the group can settle into riding together.

Altitude: 1,400 m  On foot: 80 km riding  Night: Hotel, Kathmandu  Meals: Breakfast

Day 3

### Ride from Kathmandu to Pokhara

You ride two hundred kilometres west on the Prithvi Highway, following the Trishuli river for most of the way. The road is tarmac and busy, and the day is an opportunity to get used to Nepali traffic with a support vehicle behind you. It takes six to seven hours with stops, and you reach the lake in the late afternoon.

Altitude: 820 m  On foot: 200 km riding  Night: Hotel by the lake, Pokhara  Meals: Breakfast

Day 4

### Ride from Pokhara to Tatopani

You ride north-west through Beni, where the tarmac ends, and up the Kali Gandaki into the gorge. The last sixty kilometres are gravel, broken tarmac and water flowing across the road. Tatopani means hot water, and there are hot pools beside the river where you can relax after your first full day on dirt roads.

Altitude: 1,190 m  On foot: 115 km riding  Night: Guesthouse, Tatopani  Meals: Breakfast, dinner

Day 5

### Ride from Tatopani to Jomsom

This is the best riding day of the lower section. The road climbs 1,500 m through the deepest gorge in the world, with Dhaulagiri (8,167 m) on your left and Annapurna I (8,091 m) on your right, and seven vertical kilometres between the peaks and the river. Pine forest gives way to scrub and then to bare ground. Lunch is in Marpha, and you reach Jomsom by mid-afternoon.

Altitude: 2,720 m  On foot: 75 km riding  Night: Lodge, Jomsom  Meals: Breakfast, dinner

Day 6

### Ride from Jomsom to Ghami via Kagbeni

It is half an hour north to Kagbeni, where the restricted area begins and the police check your permit carefully. Beyond it the landscape changes completely, with ochre and grey cliffs, no trees and the Kali Gandaki riverbed a kilometre wide. You ride through Chele, climb to the Taklam La and reach Ghami by late afternoon. The surface is sand and gravel all day, with a headwind after eleven.

Altitude: 3,520 m  On foot: 75 km riding  Night: Guesthouse, Ghami  Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

Day 7

### Ride from Ghami to Lo Manthang via Dhakmar

You ride past the longest mani wall in Mustang and below the red cliffs at Dhakmar, whose colour is explained by a local legend about a demon that your guide will tell you. You cross the Lo La at 3,950 m, from where you see the walled city on the plain below, and most riders stop here for the view. The distance is short but the riding is demanding.

Altitude: 3,840 m  On foot: 45 km riding  Night: Guesthouse, Lo Manthang  Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

Day 8

### Lo Manthang and the Chhoser caves

There is no long ride today. You spend the morning inside the city walls, visiting the royal palace and the three main gompas of Jhampa, Thubchen and Chodey, whose fifteenth-century murals are the main reason for Lo Manthang's importance. In the afternoon you take a short ride north to Chhoser, where a cliff face is full of caves that were inhabited for three thousand years. You climb up into them on ladders.

Altitude: 3,840 m  On foot: 30 km riding  Night: Guesthouse, Lo Manthang  Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

Day 9

### Ride from Lo Manthang to Jomsom

You ride through the whole restricted area in one day, a hundred and twenty kilometres of gravel that takes seven to eight hours. It is a long day, and for many riders the most enjoyable, because by now you know the motorcycle and the surface, and the route is downhill. In Jomsom there is a hot shower and a comfortable bed.

Altitude: 2,720 m  On foot: 120 km riding  Night: Lodge, Jomsom  Meals: Breakfast, dinner

Day 10

### Ride from Jomsom to Pokhara

You ride down the gorge and out, retracing days 5 and 4 in one long day. It takes eight to nine hours with stops, and the last two hours are on tarmac. You stay in a lakeside hotel with a good meal and a comfortable bed.

Altitude: 820 m  On foot: 185 km riding  Night: Hotel by the lake, Pokhara  Meals: Breakfast, dinner

Day 11

### Fly to Kathmandu and departure

The flight takes twenty-five minutes, with the Annapurnas visible from the left-hand windows, while the motorcycles return by truck. The afternoon in Kathmandu is free, and if your flight is the same evening we will book a day room for you.

Altitude: 1,400 m  On foot: None, flight day  Night: No overnight  Meals: Breakfast

## What's included

- A Royal Enfield Himalayan 411, serviced before you collect it, with fuel for the whole route
- A lead rider who knows the road, and a mechanic riding at the back with a tool roll and spare parts
- A support jeep carrying luggage, spare parts, fuel and any rider who needs a rest
- Upper Mustang restricted area permit and the ACAP permit
- Ten nights: two in Kathmandu, two in Pokhara, two at Jomsom, one at Tatopani, one at Ghami and two at Lo Manthang
- Breakfast every day, dinner on the riding days, and all meals inside the restricted area
- A licensed guide in the restricted area, and entry to the Lo Manthang gompas and the Chhoser caves
- The Pokhara to Kathmandu flight on day 11, with the motorcycles returning by truck
- Airport transfers, and a helmet, gloves and knee guards if you prefer not to bring your own

### Not included

- International flights and the Nepal visa
- Travel insurance, which must cover motorcycling and travel to 4,000 m
- Lunch in Kathmandu and Pokhara, and drinks throughout
- Damage to the motorcycle, which is charged at cost, with the workshop's invoice shown to you
- Your own riding gear if you prefer it, and boots, which we ask you to bring
- Tips for the lead rider, the mechanic, the guide and the driver

## Permits and other costs

| Permit | Fee | Issued by |
|---|---|---|
| Upper Mustang restricted area permit. Four days on this route, about $200, at the rate set by cabinet decision on 18 November 2025 (previously $500 for ten days). Issued only against your passport, through a registered agency, so your passport is at the immigration office on day 2. | $50 per person per day | Department of Immigration, Kathmandu or Pokhara, through an agency |
| Annapurna Conservation Area permit (ACAP). Upper Mustang lies within the conservation area, so this permit is also required. It is checked at Jomsom. | NPR 3,000, about $22 | Kathmandu or Pokhara, before you start |
| International Driving Permit. With the motorcycle category endorsed. It cannot be issued in Nepal and it is checked at the checkpoints north of Kagbeni. Bring your home licence as well. | Whatever your own country charges | Before you leave home |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Licensed guide, and a registered agency. A restricted area permit is issued only through an agency, so it has never been legal to ride this route independently. Since 22 March 2026 the permit no longer requires two foreign travellers, so a single rider can now book. | Inside the trip price | Nepal Tourism Board and the Department of Immigration |

| Other cost | Amount | Note |
|---|---|---|
| Nepal visa on arrival, 15 days | $30 | Paid in cash at the airport bank counter |
| Upper Mustang restricted area permit | $200 | $50 a day for the four days north of Kagbeni. Issued through an agency only |
| ACAP permit | $22 | NPR 3,000. Mustang lies within the Annapurna Conservation Area |
| Royal Enfield Himalayan hire | $45–60 a day | Nine days, serviced before you collect it. Included in your price |
| Fuel for the whole route | $110–150 | About 900 km. Petrol north of Jomsom costs a third more than in Pokhara |
| Support jeep, driver and mechanic | $130–180 a day | Shared across the group. The largest single cost on this trip |
| Kathmandu and Pokhara hotels | $35–75 a night | Four nights in total |
| Lodges and guesthouses on the route | $12–30 a night | Six nights. All supplies in Lo arrive by jeep over a pass, so prices are higher than you might expect |
| Pokhara to Kathmandu flight | $110–140 | The motorcycles return by truck |
| Travel insurance with motorcycling cover | $150–260 | Standard travel policies exclude motorcycling over 125cc. Check your policy |
| Damage deposit | $300 | Held on your card and released at the end if the motorcycle is returned undamaged |
| Tips for the lead rider, mechanic, guide and driver | $120–180 | Per rider, paid at the end of the trip |

## Packing list

**Bring your own boots and armoured jacket**

We provide a helmet, gloves and knee guards if you need them. We cannot provide a properly armoured jacket or boots that cover your ankles in your size, and these are the two items that matter most in a low-speed fall on gravel. Please bring both. Everything else travels in the jeep, so you can pack for comfort rather than weight.

## Helmet and eyewear

- A helmet, your own if you prefer; a peak is useful against the low sun in the gorge
- Goggles or a visor that gives clear vision when there is sand in the air
- A buff or neck tube, which you will wear over your face every afternoon
- Sunglasses for when you are off the motorcycle

## Clothing

- A riding jacket with shoulder, elbow and back armour, which we cannot provide in your size
- Riding trousers or jeans with knee armour; we can provide knee guards if you prefer
- A warm mid layer for the mornings and for evenings in Lo Manthang
- A waterproof jacket, for the lower gorge rather than the plateau
- Everyday clothes for the towns, carried in the jeep

## Gloves and footwear

- Riding boots with ankle protection. Trainers are not permitted on this route
- Two pairs of gloves: warm gloves for the morning and lighter gloves for the afternoon
- Walking shoes for Lo Manthang and the Chhoser caves, which involve climbing ladders

## Health

- Sun cream, factor 30 or above. This is important at 3,800 m, where light reflects off the grey rock
- Lip balm, and eye drops for the sand
- Rehydration salts and your usual remedy for an upset stomach
- A small personal first aid kit for grazes, which are common
- Your own prescription medicines in their original packaging

## Bags

- One soft bag for the jeep. Hard suitcases do not travel well on the Mustang road
- A small tank bag or rucksack for what you need on the motorcycle
- A dry bag for electronics, because dust gets into everything
- Two litres of water capacity; the jeep carries more

## Documents

- Passport valid for at least six months, and four passport photographs for the permit
- Your home motorcycle licence and an International Driving Permit with the motorcycle category endorsed
- Insurance that confirms in writing that it covers motorcycling above 125cc, and the assistance line number
- A card for the damage deposit, and cash in US dollars and Nepali rupees

## Altitude profile

| Day | Place | Sleep at | Highest point |
|---|---|---|---|
| 3 | Pokhara | 820 m | 1,400 m |
| 4 | Tatopani | 1,190 m | 1,190 m |
| 5 | Jomsom | 2,720 m | 2,720 m |
| 6 | Ghami | 3,520 m | 3,620 m |
| 7 | Lo Manthang | 3,840 m | 3,950 m |
| 8 | Lo Manthang | 3,840 m | 3,900 m |
| 9 | Jomsom | 2,720 m | 3,950 m |
| 10 | Pokhara | 820 m | 2,720 m |

## Getting there and back

The flights and long drives on this itinerary, and what happens if one is delayed or cancelled.

### Getting to Kathmandu

Fly to Tribhuvan International Airport via Delhi, Doha, Dubai, Istanbul, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur or Singapore. There are no direct flights from Europe or North America. Arrive a day early if you can, because day 2 includes the motorcycle fitting and you will want to be rested for it.

### Visa on arrival

Complete the form at the kiosk, pay $30 in cash for a 15-day visa at the bank counter, and then go to immigration. Bring clean dollar notes. Indian nationals do not need a visa.

### Pokhara flight on day 11

The flight takes twenty-five minutes, with the mountains visible from the left-hand windows, while the motorcycles return to Kathmandu by truck. If cloud prevents the flight, we drive, which takes seven hours, so flying is preferable. If you would prefer to ride the last section, tell us when you book and we will add a day at no charge.

### Required documents

You need an International Driving Permit with the motorcycle category endorsed, issued before you leave home, and insurance that confirms in writing that it covers motorcycling above 125cc. We ask for photographs of both before you fly. Many standard travel policies exclude motorcycling entirely, and travellers often discover this only when they need to claim.

## Accommodation

Comfortable hotels at the start and end of the trip, and simple lodges and guesthouses in between. Lo Manthang, at 3,840 m, has electricity and hot water but no heating.

| Where | Nights | Type | Room | Bathroom |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Kathmandu | 2 | Three-star hotel in or near Thamel | Twin or double | Private, hot water |
| Pokhara | 2 | Hotel by Phewa Tal | Twin or double | Private, hot water |
| Tatopani | 1 | Riverside guesthouse next to the hot pools | Twin | Private, hot water |
| Jomsom | 2 | Lodge | Twin | Private, hot water |
| Ghami | 1 | Village guesthouse | Twin, basic | Shared, with hot water by the bucket |
| Lo Manthang | 2 | Guesthouse inside or beside the walls | Twin | Private in the better guesthouses; no heating anywhere |

### Hot shower

Available every night except at Ghami, where hot water is provided by the bucket. Lo Manthang uses solar power, so shower in the late afternoon rather than after dark.

### Heating

None north of Jomsom. Lo Manthang at 3,840 m is cold indoors in October, and thick blankets are provided. Bring a warm layer for the evening.

### Charging

Mains power everywhere, including Lo Manthang, which has had electricity since 2016. Power cuts are common north of Kagbeni, so carry a power bank.

### Wifi

Available in the cities and at Jomsom. Unreliable at Ghami and Lo Manthang, where mobile data works better than wifi.

### Fuel

There are fuel pumps at Beni, Jomsom and Lo Manthang, and the jeep carries jerrycans. Petrol north of Jomsom costs about a third more than in Pokhara, and fuel is included in your price.

### Riding kit

A helmet, gloves and knee guards are provided if you need them. Bring your own boots and an armoured jacket; these are the two most important items, and we cannot provide them in your size.

### Luggage

All luggage travels in the support jeep. You ride with a small tank bag or a rucksack, with nothing strapped to the motorcycle.

### Cash

There are cash machines in Kathmandu, Pokhara and Jomsom, and none at Ghami or Lo Manthang. Withdraw what you need at Jomsom on day 5.

## Meals

| Meal | Time | What it is like |
|---|---|---|
| Breakfast | 6:30–7:30 | Served early, because the wind rises at eleven. Eggs, Tibetan bread, porridge and plenty of tea |
| Lunch | 12:00–13:00 | Wherever the group has reached. Dal bhat at a roadside restaurant; included inside the restricted area |
| Dinner | 19:00 | Dal bhat, thukpa, momo and fried rice. North of Kagbeni the menu is mainly potato, barley and whatever supplies have arrived by jeep |
| Tea | 16:00 | Black tea, or the local tea with salt and butter, which we recommend trying once at Lo Manthang |

| Diet | How we manage it |
|---|---|
| Vegetarian | Easy throughout. North of Kagbeni almost all food is vegetarian, because meat has to be brought up by jeep. |
| Vegan | Manageable with notice. Dal bhat without ghee and vegetable curry are suitable. Butter tea is not suitable. |
| Gluten free | Limited but possible. Rice, dal, potato and eggs are suitable. Tibetan bread, noodles and momo all contain wheat and make up most of the menu in the north. |
| Nut allergy | Tell us when you book. Your guide will speak to each guesthouse. There is no clinic north of Kagbeni, so we treat allergies very seriously. |
| Halal | Available in Kathmandu and Pokhara. On the route we recommend eating vegetarian food. |

## A typical day

| Time | What happens |
|---|---|
| 6:00 | Tea, while the mechanic checks the motorcycles |
| 6:30 | Early breakfast |
| 7:30 | Riders' briefing: the day's road surface, hazards and regrouping points |
| 8:00 | Ride, before the wind rises |
| 12:00 | Lunch, while the motorcycles are checked |
| 13:30 | Afternoon ride, usually into a headwind |
| 16:00 | Arrival, and the mechanic checks the motorcycles again |
| 19:00 | Dinner, and a briefing on tomorrow's route |

## Difficulty and preparation

This is not an endurance event, but six to eight hours a day standing on the footpegs on loose gravel is demanding on your shoulders, forearms and concentration.

### Difficulty 4 of 5

The riding is demanding, although the holiday as a whole is not. The days are long, the surface is loose, the wind is constant and some sections are exposed. Experienced gravel riders will enjoy it. Riders whose experience is only on tarmac will spend the first three days learning, which is why day 2 includes a test ride.

- Six days on gravel, sand, corrugations and stream crossings, some of them exposed
- Two days of over 180 km, including 120 km of dirt road on day 9
- A strong up-valley wind from about eleven every morning, carrying sand
- Two nights at 3,840 m, and a pass at 3,950 m
- A support jeep, a mechanic and a spare motorcycle on every departure

### Getting ready

**12 weeks before: Ride on gravel**
If you only ride on tarmac, book a trail or adventure riding day at home. Standing on the footpegs, weighting the outside peg and allowing the front wheel to move should all be habits before you ride on a ledge above the Kali Gandaki.

**8 weeks before: Build arm and core strength**
Riders here tire in the shoulders and forearms rather than the legs, from six hours of controlling a moving front wheel. Grip exercises, rows and planks three times a week make day 9 much more manageable.

**4 weeks before: Test your riding gear**
Wear the boots and jacket you are bringing on a long ride at home. Boots that are comfortable for two hours may not be comfortable for eight, and there is nowhere to buy replacements after Pokhara.

**1 week before: Check your documents**
Make sure you have your International Driving Permit with the motorcycle category endorsed, and an insurance policy that confirms in writing that it covers motorcycling above 125cc. Both are checked, and both are commonly overlooked.

## Altitude and safety

The ascent from Pokhara at 820 m to Lo Manthang at 3,840 m takes place over four days, which is gradual enough that most riders do not notice it. However, riding can mask the early symptoms, because you are concentrating, so the lead rider checks on the group at each stop rather than waiting to be told. Day 8 is deliberately short for this reason, as well as to allow time for the caves.

### What to watch for

- A headache on the first evening at Lo Manthang that does not ease after drinking water and eating
- Loss of appetite, or poor sleep with a racing pulse
- Finding the riding harder than the day before on easier ground, which riders often overlook

### How to prevent it

- Four days of gradual ascent from Pokhara, with no large increase on any single day
- A short day at Lo Manthang rather than a long excursion on the first full day
- Three to four litres of fluid a day, which is harder to remember when riding than when walking
- A pulse oximeter carried by the lead rider and used at Ghami and Lo Manthang

### What we do

**1. Report symptoms early**
Tell the lead rider as soon as you have a headache. When riding it is possible to ignore symptoms for a day, and this is what we aim to prevent.

**2. Travel in the jeep**
Any rider who feels unwell travels in the jeep rather than on the motorcycle. This is the purpose of the support jeep.

**3. Descend**
From Lo Manthang, descending means riding to Ghami and then Jomsom, a loss of 1,100 m in a few hours. Descent on this route is fast, which provides a significant safety margin.

## Weather by month

Upper Mustang lies behind the Himalaya and receives very little monsoon rain, so this is one of the few routes in Nepal that can be ridden throughout the summer.

| Month | Day at Lo Manthang | Night at Lo Manthang | Night at the Lo La | Conditions | Note |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| January | 5°C | -12°C | -16°C | We do not run it | Very cold, and the Lo La is often under snow. Most guesthouses north of Kagbeni close for the winter. |
| February | 7°C | -10°C | -14°C | We do not run it | Still closed, mainly because of the wind at these temperatures rather than snow. |
| March | 11°C | -5°C | -8°C | Good | The route opens from about the 20th. Cold mornings and clear air. The Tiji festival at Lo Manthang takes place in late March or May. |
| April | 15°C | -1°C | -3°C | Best | One of the two best months. Warm enough for comfortable riding, dry, and barley is being planted around the villages. |
| May | 18°C | 3°C | 1°C | Best | Warm and dry, with a strong afternoon wind. The Tiji festival usually takes place in May and is worth planning a trip around. |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| June | 20°C | 6°C | 4°C | Good | The monsoon reaches the rest of Nepal but has little effect on Mustang. Riding north of Kagbeni is fine; the road up from Beni is the main concern. |
| July | 21°C | 8°C | 6°C | Good | Hot, dry and relatively green for Mustang. The section from Beni to Tatopani can close for a day after heavy rain, so we monitor it. |
| August | 20°C | 8°C | 6°C | Good | Similar conditions. The risk of landslides on the lower road is the main reason for caution, and it should be taken seriously. |
| September | 18°C | 4°C | 2°C | Good | The monsoon clears during the month and the lower road dries out. The last ten days are excellent. |
| October | 15°C | -1°C | -4°C | Best | The best month of the year. Cold mornings, very clear air, everything open, and Dhaulagiri and Nilgiri visible every day. |
| November | 11°C | -6°C | -9°C | Good | Clear and cold until about the 10th. After that, the guesthouses north of Kagbeni begin to close for the winter. |
| December | 7°C | -10°C | -14°C | We do not run it | Closed. Cold and windy, and most residents of Lo Manthang move down to Pokhara for the winter. |

Figures for 3,840 m, which is where you sleep for two nights. The gorge below Jomsom runs ten to fifteen degrees warmer and the wind is the thing that actually decides how a day feels.

## Guides and porters

### Your riding team

A lead rider who has ridden this road many times sets the pace, and a mechanic rides at the back with a tool roll, so no rider is ever alone at the back. A support jeep with a driver carries the luggage, spare parts, jerrycans, a spare motorcycle and any rider who needs a rest.

### Your guide in the restricted area

Inside the restricted area a licensed guide joins the group, as the permit requires. The guide is essential for understanding the monasteries of Lo Manthang and the Chhoser caves, as they can explain the iconography and know which buildings are open on the day.

### Motorcycle maintenance

The motorcycles are serviced before you collect them and checked twice a day, at lunch and on arrival. Chains are adjusted, levers checked and tyre pressures set for the road surface. This work is largely unseen, but it is essential to the success of long days such as day 9.

# Responsible travel

### Riding through villages

The road through Mustang is also the street where children play and goats are herded. We ride at walking pace through every settlement, without exception and without using the horn. The road is new, and the villages have not adapted to it; it is our responsibility to adapt to them.

### Staying on the road

Riding across open ground in Mustang causes damage that lasts for decades, because at 3,800 m in a rain shadow the vegetation does not recover. Tyre tracks made ten years ago are still visible. We do not ride off the road, and we ask you not to.

### Supporting local communities

Sixty per cent of the Upper Mustang permit fee is intended to return to the district, and much of it has funded the restoration work in Lo Manthang that you will see. The permit is expensive, but it is one of the better designed permits in Nepal.

### Photography in the gompas

The murals at Jhampa and Thubchen are five hundred years old, and flash damages the pigment. Photography inside is either forbidden or charged, depending on the monastery and the day, and your guide will tell you which applies. Ask before photographing people, and respect their answer if they decline.

# Booking and payment

### How to book

Email us or send a WhatsApp message with your dates, the number of riders, and an accurate description of your riding experience and the surfaces you have ridden on. This information is the most important part of your enquiry, and we will tell you clearly whether this route is suitable for you.

### Deposit

A deposit of twenty-five per cent secures the motorcycles and the jeep, and the balance is due forty-five days before you fly. The restricted area permit requires a scan of your passport thirty days before departure and cannot be arranged at short notice.

### Cancellation

If you cancel more than forty-five days before departure, your deposit can be transferred to another departure within a year. Within forty-five days, the motorcycles and the vehicle are committed and we retain fifty per cent. Within twenty-one days, we retain the full amount. We strongly recommend cancellation insurance.

### Damage deposit

A deposit of three hundred dollars is held on your card when you collect the motorcycle and released at the end of the trip. Scratches and scuffed levers are expected and are not charged. Structural damage is charged at the workshop's cost, and you are shown the invoice.

### Insurance

You need a policy that covers motorcycling above 125cc, travel to 4,000 m and, ideally, helicopter evacuation, together with the policy number and the assistance line. We ask to see it before you fly. This is the most common problem for riders.

## Optional extras

### Royal Enfield Himalayan 450

$220, same length

The newer model, with more power, better suspension and a taller seat. Recommended if you are over six feet tall or have ridden adventure motorcycles extensively. The 411 is more forgiving and is the better choice if you are less experienced.

### Muktinath, on the way back

$110, 1 extra day

A day trip from Jomsom to Muktinath at 3,760 m, one of the most important pilgrimage sites for both Hindus and Buddhists. The road is good tarmac for most of the way, and the temple courtyard has a notable view of Dhaulagiri and Tukuche.

### Two nights at Lo Manthang instead of one day

$190, 1 extra day

A second full day in Lo Manthang, with time to visit the Luri cave monastery to the south-east and the Tingkhar valley to the north-west. Lo Manthang is the main destination of the trip, and one day is not enough to see it fully.

### Ride back to Kathmandu instead of flying

no charge, 1 extra day

Two hundred kilometres of tarmac on day 11 instead of a twenty-five-minute flight, arriving in Kathmandu in the evening. It adds a day and replaces the flight, and about half our riders choose this option.

### Non-riding partner in the support jeep

$1,490, same length

The whole route in the jeep, with the same rooms, meals and permits. A passenger sees more of the scenery than the riders, who need to watch the road surface.

### A rest day in Pokhara at the end

$120, 1 extra day

Taken after day 10. A lakeside hotel, a boat trip, a massage and free time, which is welcome after eight days of riding.

## Frequently asked questions

Answers to the 12 questions travellers ask us most often. If your question is not here, contact us and we will answer it.

### How experienced a rider do I need to be?

You need to be competent on gravel, comfortable handling a 200 kg motorcycle on a loose surface, and able to pick it up after a fall, which is likely to happen. This tour is not suitable for learners. If you have only ridden on tarmac, complete a gravel or trail riding day at home first, and give us an accurate account of your experience.

### Do I need a licence?

You need your own full motorcycle licence and an International Driving Permit with the motorcycle category endorsed. Obtain the permit before you travel, because it cannot be issued in Nepal, and it is checked at the checkpoints north of Kagbeni.

### What are the road conditions like?

The road is tarmac to Beni, followed by gravel, broken surfaces and stream crossings to Jomsom. North of Kagbeni it is a dirt road cut into the hillside, with sand, loose stones and corrugations, and it is narrow in places. It is a road rather than a trail, and jeeps use it every day, but it requires your full attention.

### How far do we ride each day?

Between thirty and two hundred kilometres. The distances are short, but the road surface makes progress slow. Day 9 covers a hundred and twenty kilometres and takes seven to eight hours. Days 7 and 8 are deliberately short, so that you have time and energy to see Lo Manthang.

### How strong is the wind?

Wind is a major feature of the Kali Gandaki valley. A strong up-valley wind starts at about eleven every morning, blows hard through the afternoon and carries sand. For this reason we start early every day, and the riding is much more comfortable before lunch.

### Which motorcycle will I ride?

A Royal Enfield Himalayan 411, which is well suited to this route, with long-travel suspension, a low first gear, high ground clearance and a frame that withstands being dropped. The newer 450 is available for a supplement. We do not use the Classic 500 on this route.

### What happens if the motorcycle breaks down?

The mechanic rides at the back of the group and carries cables, levers, inner tubes, a chain link and a tool roll, and the jeep carries the heavier spare parts. Punctures and broken levers are repaired at the roadside in about twenty minutes. For more serious problems, you ride the spare motorcycle carried with the jeep.

### What if I drop the motorcycle?

Most riders do, usually on sand and at walking pace. Cosmetic damage is expected and is not charged. Structural damage is charged at the workshop's cost, and we show you the invoice. A damage deposit of $300 is held on your card and released at the end of the trip.

### Can I ride as a pillion passenger?

Not on this route. The surface north of Kagbeni is not suitable for a passenger on a fully loaded motorcycle. A non-riding partner can travel in the support jeep, cover the whole route, see everything and pay less. Many couples choose this option.

### Will the altitude be a problem?

Rarely. You sleep at 3,840 m for two nights, and the ascent is gradual, over four days. A few people feel the effects at Lo Manthang on the first evening. Riding can mask the symptoms of altitude, so we monitor the group closely rather than waiting to be told, and day 8 is kept short partly for this reason.

### How much does the permit cost?

The Upper Mustang restricted area permit costs $50 per person per day north of Kagbeni, which is four days on this route. It is issued only through a registered agency, only with your passport, and only in Kathmandu or Pokhara. Together with the ACAP permit at NPR 3,000, the total is about $220, and it is included in your price.

### When is the best time to go?

Late March to early November. Upper Mustang lies in the rain shadow of the Himalaya and receives very little monsoon rain, so the route can be ridden from June to August, when most of Nepal cannot. In those months the road up from Beni is the most vulnerable section, and we monitor it. In winter the region is cold and windy, and most of it is closed.

Photos, videos and reviews of this trip: earthbound.rajansimkhada.com/royal-enfield-motorcycle-tour-in-himalaya