

Western Nepal

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Best Views & Viewpoints

- Phoksumdo Lake (p263)
- Jaljala La (p272)
- Rara Lake (p254)
- → Kagmara Phedi (p261)
- → Numa La (p268)

Best Architecture & Culture

- Shey Gompa (p276)
- → Thasung Chholing Gompa (p264)
- → Bön monasteries of Do Tarap (p267)

Why Go?

The allure of Western Nepal is the immense scale of the landscape; extensive forests and alpine meadows give way to wave after wave of stark, khaki ridges that spread through the rain shadow of the Himalaya, all framed by snowcapped peaks. Touched lightly by the 2015 earthquakes, this remote expanse hides some of the country's best trekking secrets, including spectacular turquoise lakes, timeless Tibetan monasteries and breathtaking high passes. With language and traditions quite different from the rest of the country, western Nepal feels very much like the frontier it is.

All treks in Nepal's Wild West are seriously off the beaten track – these aren't teahouse-and-apple-pie treks. If you're not put off by the logistical difficulties of securing flights, fuel, permits and food, or the relatively higher costs of trekking far from Kathmandu, then the west is the place for you. This is one corner of Nepal where you need a reliable trekking agency on your side.

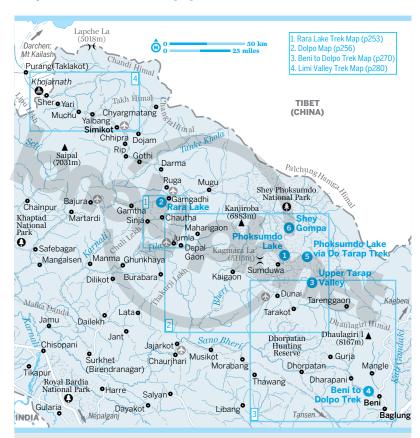
When to Go

- → Most of western Nepal is either outside the monsoon's influence or in the rain shadow of the Dhaulagiri Himal.
- Summers (June to August) tend to be drier here than in the rest of Nepal, and there are few leeches, although one problem with summer treks in the west is the inordinate number of flies.
- → The trekking season, therefore, is from late spring and throughout summer until late October, though the best time to visit the high valleys is from late August to September, when the wildflowers are in bloom.
- Snow blocks passes in winters and many higher villages are deserted.

History

Much of western Nepal was part of the ancient Tibetan Zhang Zhung kingdom, an empire that extended north into Ngari (western Tibet) and west to Kumaon (India), and this legacy is visible in the region's scattering of Bön monasteries. Tibetan peoples

migrated into Dolpo and Humla during the 6th and 8th centuries when Zhang Zhung was conquered by central Tibet. Until Jumla was conquered by the army of Bahadur Shah in 1788, the people of western Nepal had very little to do with Kathmandu.



Western Nepal Highlights

- 1 Camping by the meditative turquoise waters of **Phoksumdo Lake** (p263), Nepal's deepest and most beautiful lake.
- Trekking through verdant, bird-filled forests to the tranquil shores of Rara Lake (p254) for a rare taste of picture-postcard wilderness.
- 3 Walking with yak caravans and exploring the stone villages and Bön monasteries of the **upper Tarap Valley** (p267).
- Making your own inner journey in the footsteps of Matthiessen's *The Snow Leopard* on the **Beni to Dolpo trek** (p269), the enchanting approach trek to legendary Dolpo.
- 5 Pitching your tent in the starkly beautiful wilderness between the Baga La and Numa La on the Phoksumdo Lake via Do Tarap trek (p264).
- 6 Discovering remote monasteries and sacred peaks in the snow leopard country surrounding the fabled Crystal Mountain and **Shey Gompa** (p276).