



↑ Galloping around the outskirts of Lo Manthang.  
 ↓ Ancient cave dwellings dot the flaming red cliffs of Dhakmar.

through stands of poplars and barley fields, continue past Ghami junction towards the picturesque hamlet of Dhakmar, notable for its flaming cliffs. According to legend, Dhakmar's rocky surrounds were colored by the blood of an ogress bested by the ever-present Guru Rinpoche in battle.

Beyond Dhakmar, it is just a 5-km (3.1-mi) hike to the wonderful Ghar Gumpa. Founded in the eighth century by—you guessed it—Guru Rinpoche, Ghar is one of Nepal's oldest monasteries. Its isolated setting, combined with a fine array of frescos, clay statues, and colorful Buddhism-themed wooden tablets, make it one of the trek highlights. Once you have soaked up Ghar's historic ambiance, head northwards for another 4.3 km (2.7 mi) to Morang La pass (4,286m/14,062 ft) before making a final descent to the walled city of Lo Manthang.

The former capital of the Lo Kingdom, Lo Manthang, was built in the fifteenth century and was one of the most important stops on the ancient salt trade route between Nepal and Tibet. The city is surrounded by a 6-m (19.8-ft) high earthen wall, and its alleyways are packed with whitewashed mud-brick houses, most of which have a central courtyard and flat roofs used for drying crops and storing wood. The most notable buildings in Lo Manthang are the five-story Raja Palace and the monasteries of Jampa Lhakhang, Thupchen Lhakhang, and Choede Lhakhang. Steeped in history and rich in Tibetan culture, Lo Manthang is the standout highlight of any trek in Upper Mustang, and most parties take at least one (and often two) days to explore this fascinating medieval outpost.

Departing Lo Manthang, the trail heads south over Lo La pass (3,950m/12,959 ft). Immediately after reaching the high point, >



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↑ Cliffside monastery in the village of Chhoser, located a short walk north of Lo Manthang.  
 ← Mud bricks drying in the sun.