

## Overview

Mani Rimdu Festival is celebrated at Tengboche, Thame, and Chiwong Monasteries of Solukhumbu Nepal. This is a sacred ceremony and series of events of empowerment. It is a sequence of nineteen days of celebration, which concludes with a three-day public festival. Sherpa gets time to gather and celebrate this festival with the monastic community. Lamas and Sherpa gather at the monastery for five days for the welfare of the world. Demons are quelled and the virtuous are rewarded. The monks wear elaborate masks, and costumes and through a series of ritualistic Lama dances, dramatize the triumph of Buddhism over Bon. The main first days of the festival involve prayers, second day for colorful lama dancing, they wear brocade gowns and wonderfully painted paper-mâché masks. The last day is for some humorous dances and chanting prayers. Hundreds of local people and foreign tourists attend the performance. This trek rewards you to see the real and ideal culture of the Sherpa people and the great Himalayan picturesque views.

## When is Mani Rimdu for the year 2024?

The date of the Mani Rimdu festival is fixed according to the Tibetan Lunar calendar. In Tengboche, the Mani Rimdu is performed in the 9th Tibetan month which usually falls in October or November full-moon. Mani Rimdu Festival date for the year 2024 will be celebrated on the 17th, 18th, and 19th of October.

## Mani Ramdu is divided into six Preparations:

### Construction of the Sand Mandala

The sand mandala is constructed step by step. Colored sand is used to build complicated and symbolic designs. Sand mandala takes many days to complete. Defensive blades symbolizing deities are placed around the Mandala. The bowl of Mani Rilwu pills (spiritual medicine) is placed above the center. The Mandala symbolizes the palace of Garwang Thoze Chenpo (Lord of the Dance). Creation of the Buddha of Kindness, the main idol of Mani Rimdu. The mantra "OM AH HUNG RHI, OM MANI PADME HUMG" is repeated thousands of times by the monks during the weeks of ceremony before the public festival. During meditation, they imagine kindness flowing in the form of the mantra, into the Mandala and the Mani Rilwu pills. Kindness then releases out from the Mandala, blessing all those who attend the Mani Rimdu festival.

### Wong (The Empowerment)

The Wong is the opening day of the public ceremony. It's performed on the full moon day, of the tenth month in the Tibetan lunar calendar. The sacred Mani Rilwu (sacred or blessed pills) and Tshereel (pills for long life), are given to everyone attending.

## **Chham (The Dances)**

The dances take place on the 2nd day of Mani Rimdu. Symbolic demons are conquered, chased away, or transformed to Protectors of Dharma. As the theme of the dance positive forces fight with those of disorder through the dances. The dances convey Buddhist teaching on many levels from the simplest to the most philosophical. During the dance, the monks are believed to become divine beings. The dances are only performed during Mani Rimdu because they are considered to be very Sacred, and not for ordinary entertainment.

## **Ser-Kyem**

Ser-Kyem is most commonly used to make tea offerings to Dharma guards such as Mahakala. It has two pieces: a larger raised dish-shaped bowl and a smaller raised offering bowl. The smaller is placed in an upright position in the larger dish when the offering is being made. When not in use, the smaller offering bowl is placed upside down in the larger bowl. The food offerings can also be placed in the larger dish when in use. This offering of spiritual nectar is made in many ceremonies. The six dancers represent Ngag-pa, Tantric magicians.

They make offerings of alcohol from silver vessels, and small tormas, to the Lama, Yidam, Khandro, and Shi-Dak (the Earth deities). A Buddhist consultant takes 'refuge' in the Lama (spiritual guide), Yidam (personal deity), and Khandro (wisdom dakini). A central theme in Tibetan Buddhist practice is to make offerings to these beings so that they will help with the virtuous actions which lead to Buddhahood.

## **The Fire Puja (Jinsak)**

The Fire Puja is performed in the yard the day after the dances. The Fire Puja is an offering to Agni (the god of fire), and to the Gods of the mandala - to allay all harm in the world. The harm is visualized as dissolving into the grain and butter is burned. Afterward, the sand mandala in the temple is pulled to pieces, and the sand is given as an offering to the serpent gods (Nagas).

## **Chhingpa**

The next dance portrays the Four Protecting Ghings, defending the Buddhist faith against attack by demons. Shining paper masks hide the faces of the dancers, each a different color and each displaying a constant smile. The dancers' hops are rhythmically accompanied by the beating of cymbals. The dancers charge at children in the audience and scare them for fun.

The Dakini dance is performed genially. Slow motion dance steps, keeping perfect time with the soft tinkle and slow beat of bells and drums is performed by five young priests. The dancers are without masks, and portray female spiritual figures; the partners of

## Mani Rimdu Festival Trek

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Padmasambhava. It is believed that they come from his pure land of Shangdok Palri where they live within his mandala. They herald the imminent arrival of Guru Rinpoche at the Mani Rimdu. Two of the Ghing are male, and carry cymbals, while the two females carry drums. The males represent skillful means and the females represent wisdom; these two aspects of the path. The tormas are made from barley flour and decorated with colored butter. It begins by symbolizing the body of the deity, and by the end of the ceremony, symbolizes enlightenment itself. It stands in the front of the mandala on its own shrine, at the very heart of the temple.

**Alternative Mani Rimdu Festival Trek to Chiwong Monastery in the lower Everest Region. The budget package cost USD 699 per person on a minimum two-people group basis.**

12 Oct: Drive to Dhap from Kathmandu

13 Oct: Trek to Jhapre.

14 Oct: Trek to Pikey Base Camp (3640 m).

15 Oct: Trek to Loding (2515 m)

16 Oct: Trek to Junbesi (2700m). Excursion Thupten Chholing Monastery

17 Oct: Trek to Chiwong. First day of the festival (October end full moon day)

18 Oct: Festival day

19 Oct: Festival day.

20 Oct: Trek to Salleri, 3 to 4 hours walk.

21 Oct: Back to Kathmandu by public jeep/bus (Flights available on Mondays and Fridays only)

## Outline Itinerary

**Day 01 : Kathmandu - Luka - Ghat (2590m)**

**Day 02 : Ghat to Namche Bazaar (3440m)**

**Day 03 : Acclimatization at Namche Bazaar (3440m)**

**Day 04 : Trek to Tengboche (3870m), 5-6 Hours Hike.**

**Day 05 : Attend the Mani Rimdu Festival. Stay overnight at lodge.**

**Day 06 : Attend the Mani Rimdu Festival. Stay overnight at lodge.**

**Day 07 : Trek to Namche (3440m), 5-6 hours walk. Stay overnight at lodge.**

**Day 08 : Trek to Lukla/2800m 2/3 hours walk. Stay overnight at lodge.**

**Day 09 : Fly back to Kathmandu at around 8:30am. Shopping and relax.**

## Cost Includes

- One licensed and experienced English speaking local trekking guide.
- 1 Sharing Sherpa porter between 2 clients to carry your main pack (weight limit 25 kg)
- An assistant guide to support the guests and porters as per group size.
- Lodge accommodation during the trek on twin/double sharing basis.
- Daily meals: (8 Breakfasts, 8 Lunches and 8 Dinners during the trek.
- Tea, coffee, cookies and fresh fruits during the trek.
- Kathmandu – Lukla – Kathmandu Flight (USD 360 per person)
- All necessary permits for Mani Rimdu Festival Trekking.
- Food, accommodation and salary of your guide and porters.
- Insurance for guide and porters as per state low.
- All local tax, vat, office service charge and domestic airport taxes etc.

## Cost Excludes

- International airport transfers. We can arrange if you ask us.
- Accommodation, meals and transfers in Kathmandu.
- Guided tour and monuments entrance fees in Kathmandu, we arrange on your request.
- All bar bills, beverages such as coke, fanta, mineral water during the trek
- Hot shower, hot water, internet and personal nature expenses.
- Personal travel insurance, international air ticket and Nepal visa fee.
- Rescue operation charge in case of emergency (we arrange rescue on request).
- Gratitude and tips for guide and porter.