

Overview

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Mani Rimdu Festival is celebrated at Tengboche, Thame, and Chiwong Monasteries in Solukhumbu, Nepal. This is a sacred ceremony and series of events of empowerment. It is a sequence of nineteen days of celebration that 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; the second day is 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 locals and foreign tourists attend the performance. This trek rewards you for seeing the real and ideal culture of the Sherpa people and the great Himalayan scenic 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. The Mani Rimdu Festival for the year 2024 will be celebrated on the 15th, 16th, and 17th of November.

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 mandalas take 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 second 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, are performed by five young priests. The dancers are without masks and portray female spiritual figures, the partners of 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 front of the mandala on its own shrine, at the very heart of the temple.

Alternative Mani Rimdu Festival Trek to Lower Khumbu in Chiwong Monastery, trip combined with Pikey Peak Trek. The budget package cost USD 699 per person on a minimum two-person group basis.

10 Nov: Drive to Dhap from Kathmandu

11 Nov: Trek to Jhapre.

12 Nov: Trek to Pikey Base Camp (3640 m).

13 Nov: Trek to Loding (2515 m)

14 Nov: Trek to Junbesi (2700 m). Excursion Thupten Chholing Monastery

15 Nov: Trek to Chiwong. first day of the festival (Wong: The blessing)

16 Nov: Festival day (Tsam: the mask dance)

17 Nov: Festival day. (Jhinsak; Fire Puja)

18 Nov: Trek to Salleri, 3 to 4 hours walk.

19 Nov: 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 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 is on a twin- or 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 guides and porters as per state law.
- Taxes and documentation charges.

Cost Excludes

- International airport transfers. We can arrange it if you ask us.
- Accommodation, meals, and transfers in Kathmandu.
- We arrange guided tours and monument entrance fees in Kathmandu, depending on your request.
- All bar bills, beverages such as Coke, Fanta, and 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).
- Tips for guide and porters.