

# LAWUDO PILGRIMAGE AND RETREAT

## April 30 – May 18, 2023

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### *Introduction from Venerable Amy Miller*

If it's time to consider that once-in-a-lifetime travel experience or if you're interested in adding a more spiritual element to a trek in Nepal, please read the information below and consider joining our wonderful pilgrimage with retreat to Lawudo.

Lawudo is a remote Buddhist retreat center in the Mount Everest (Solu Khumbu) region of Nepal. It is a sacred place built around a small cave in which the Lawudo Lama\* meditated in the 1930s and 1940s. He was said to have attained high realizations there. The current reincarnation of the Lawudo Lama is Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche, the Spiritual Director of the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT) and my main spiritual teacher. It is Rinpoche who advised a small group of us with a connection to Lawudo to teach there whenever possible during the season and as Rinpoche stated to me, "It's the most important thing you can do for the WORLD!"



Since 1990, I have led friends to join me at Lawudo during the many retreats I have done there. Yet, I've always had the wish to lead a small group to Lawudo;

we could enjoy a trek through stunning scenery, participate in a retreat based in Tibetan Buddhist philosophy, and visit some of the holy places in the area. In 2018, the wish came true with a pilgrimage group of 23.

To whet your appetite, please see the 9-minute slideshow titled Lawudo at the bottom of my website home page by clicking [here](#) or typing:

<http://www.amymiller.com>

You can also get a lot more information at [Lawudo.com](http://Lawudo.com) as well as view some of the spectacular scenery and get a better idea of the general layout of this simple remote retreat center.

**Regarding the COVID-19 Pandemic, we will be continually assessing the situation and remain committed to running a trip that is safe for participants, staff and the communities through which we travel. With this in mind, proof of full vaccination and boosters will be required.**

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\* For a detailed account of the region and the Lawudo Lama, past life and this life, see *The Lawudo Lama: Stories of Reincarnation from the Mount Everest Region* by Venerable Jamyang Wangmo (Wisdom Publications, 2nd edition, March 15, 2015).

## Itinerary

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### Day 1 (April 30)

**Welcome to Kathmandu!**

**Stay: Khachoe Ghakyil Nunnery (Kopan Nunnery)**

*(Elevation 4,500 feet / 1,400 meters)*

You may prefer to arrive 1 or 2 days earlier to Kathmandu to settle in, recover from jet lag, sightsee, and prepare for the trek. Effie Fletcher of Himalayan High Treks ([effie@hightreks.com](mailto:effie@hightreks.com)) can organize any earlier arrival, so do let her know. If you are arriving by plane, our local staff will pick you up at the airport and transfer you to Khachoe Gyakyil Nunnery.

Effie Fletcher of Himalayan High Treks (CST #2085690-40) has been organizing pilgrimages for a variety of organizations since 2001 and treks since 1988.

### Airport Arrival

**Visa:** First you will go through immigration to obtain your visa. A one-month single-entry visa will cost you US \$50 and is easily attainable at the airport upon entry.

Proceed through customs and exit into the public area of the airport. When you're outside, look for a sign that displays "Lawudo." If you do not see anyone at the airport, or if there has been a last-minute change in your flight details, contact **Amber Tamang at +977 98510-84961**. There is a free phone in the arrivals area of the airport.

**A Tip from Amber:** There will be people at the airport who will ask for money to help you with your bags. You can use a free luggage cart if you wish, but if you prefer assistance from one of these people, have a small bill (US \$2 or 200 rupees per bag) handy in your pocket to give to them. Keep your wallet well-hidden as you exit the airport. Our staff will find you and we will make sure you and your luggage are safely transported to Kopan Nunnery.

**5:00pm:** We will all meet before dinner and be briefed about what to expect for the coming days.

**6:30pm:** Dinner at Kopan Nunnery

**7:30pm:** Meditation and Teachings with Ven. Amy

### Day 2 (May 1)

**Relax from travel; Visit Thamel Temples; Circumambulate Boudhanath (Boudha) Stupa; Tour Kopan Monastery and Khachoe Ghakyil Ling Nunnery**

**Stay: Khachoe Ghakyil Nunnery (Kopan Nunnery)**

**6:30am:** Meditation with Ven. Amy

**7:00am:** Breakfast at Kopan Nunnery

**8:00am:** Bus to Kathmandu; walking tour of temples (wear good walking shoes)

**11:30am:** Bus back to Boudha; Lunch

**2:00pm:** Practice and Circumambulation at Stupa

**3:00pm:** Bus to Kopan for tour; Return to Nunnery for tour

**6:00pm:** Dinner at Nunnery

**7:30pm:** Teachings with Ven. Amy



### Day 3 (May 2)

**Kathmandu to Lukla Flight. Then walk 3 - 4 hours from Lukla to Phakding (pronounced Pak-ding)**

**Stay: Namaste Guest House, Phakding**

*(Elevation 8,563 feet / 2,610 meters)*

**5:30am:** Depart nunnery for flight to Lukla; Arrive domestic terminal, Tribhuvan International Airport (KTM) in Kathmandu, for flight to Lukla

**3:00pm:** Arrive in Phakding

**6:00pm:** Dinner in Phakding

**7:30pm:** Teachings/meditation with Ven. Amy

### At Domestic Airport

Luggage is weighed (no more than 33 pounds or 15 kilos per person, which includes carry-on), we are checked in, and we wait to see if the weather will permit us to fly. Be prepared that there can be a variety of delays to flying up on our first try. Usually in this season, there are many morning flights, but occasionally we cannot fly that day and must wait at the airport for several hours before returning to our lodging. So flexibility in the mind is encouraged!

The mountain flight takes about 45 minutes and could happen anytime between 6am and early afternoon. The plane is small and holds about 16 passengers. It is a spectacular flight on a clear day as you will see the Himalayan range come into view, but it can be a bit bouncy due to air currents. It could be the adventure of your life!

We will then land in Lukla, a small trekking village with many lodges. You are now in Solu Khumbu. The people are Nepali Hindus, Buddhist Sherpas, or Tamangs. We will have some breakfast and tea at a lodge while we greet our porters. If our flight is delayed, we will have a light breakfast at the airport in Kathmandu.



### The Trek Begins

We will then start walking over some of the most beautiful terrain you may ever see. This is the starting point for many Everest Base Camp treks and expeditions to summit Mt. Everest. The first day's trek begins with some downhill and relatively flat areas, with a few uphill involved. As it is a popular route, we may be walking with a number of other trekkers, groups, and porters carrying goods. We will pass pack animals such as donkeys and yak. It is best to move to the inside of the path if the animals are passing.

After passing through the busy village of Lukla, we will pass a sacred naga tree. Nagas are serpent spirits who help protect water sources and natural habitat. We will make a short stop to make offerings to help clear any obstacles on our journey. Small stone houses with prayer banners will come into view along with a variety of mani stones (large boulders carved with many mantras of the Buddha of Compassion). We will also cross two dramatic steel suspension bridges and the Sherpa villages of Choplung and Ghat. You can notice the lushness of this area while the Lawudo region, due to its high elevation, will appear starker.

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### Day 4 (May 3)

#### Phakding – Monju

Trek 3-4 Hours

Stay: **Monju Guest House, Monju**

(Elevation is 9,186 feet / 2,800 meters)

**7:00am:** Wake up, tea or coffee

**7:30am:** Meditation with Ven. Amy

**8:00am:** Breakfast

**9:00am:** Trek to Monju

**1:00pm:** Lunch

**6:00pm:** Dinner

**7:30pm:** Teachings with Ven. Amy

We will cross the Dudhkoshi River and follow the river canyon for a while. Potatoes are a main staple for this region; we may see local people working in their fields during the main planting season.

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### Day 5 (May 4)

#### Monju – Jorsallé – Namché Bazaar

Trek 5-6 hours.

Stay: **Holiday Lodge, Namché Bazaar**

(Elevation 11,280 feet / 3,400 meters)

**6:00am:** Wake up, tea or coffee

**6:30am:** Meditation with Ven. Amy

**7:00am:** Breakfast

**8:00am:** Trek to Namché Bazaar

**6:00pm:** Dinner

**7:30pm:** Teachings with Ven. Amy

After we pass Monju, we will enter Sagarmatha National Park. Our guides will pay our park entrance fees here along with a few other checkpoints on the way.

More snow mountains will start coming into view and we will find our first strenuous hill just before Namché Bazaar. The Namché Hill will take about 3-4 hours to climb and is switchbacks over large boulders. **This is one of the most strenuous hills we will ascend during our trek.**

As we enter the village of Namché, we will encounter a vast amount of lodges piled one on top of another. We will stay here for three nights so we get better acclimatized. You can explore local monasteries or various shops, handle any last major internet communication (although Lawudo may have internet by the time we arrive, it will probably be very slow), and access the last ATM before Lawudo. (Before flying up to Lukla, you can purchase Nepal SIM cards in Kathmandu for unlocked smart phones, which may give you some reception and internet while at Lawudo.



Namché Bazaar is the main trading center for local people and bustling hub for the Khumbu region. Upon arrival, your afternoon will be free to explore.

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### Day 6 (May 5)

#### Rest Day at Namché

*Acclimatize and dayhike.*

**Stay:** Holiday Lodge, Namché Bazaar

- 7:00am:** Wake up, tea or coffee
- 7:30am:** Meditation with Ven. Amy
- 8:00am:** Breakfast
- 9:00am:** Day Trek
- 6:00pm:** Dinner
- 7:30pm:** Teachings with Ven. Amy

The best way to avoid altitude sickness is to take things slowly, hydrate well, and do short day hikes returning to the same elevation. So this is a perfect day to climb a little higher, then return to Namché for optimum acclimatization. Participation is highly encouraged.

We will hike to the Cultural Center, the Sagarmatha National Park Visitors' Center, above Namché, and enjoy the views along with some shopping stalls and tea shops. We may even get a glimpse of Mount Everest if the weather is clear. It is also possible to see wildlife such as blood pheasants and Himalayan tahr along this walk. Depending on when we return, the afternoon is free.

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### Day 7 (May 6)

#### Rest Day at Namché

*Acclimatize and day hike.*

**Stay:** Holiday Lodge, Namché Bazaar

- 7:00am:** Wake up, tea or coffee
- 7:30am:** Meditation with Ven. Amy
- 8:00am:** Breakfast
- 9:00am:** Day Trek
- 6:00pm:** Dinner
- 7:30pm:** Teachings with Ven. Amy



To continue our acclimatization, we will hike to the Village of Khumjung. We will enjoy lunch there before heading back to Namché.

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### Day 8 (May 7)

#### Namché Bazaar to Lawudo

*Trek 5 hours.*

*(Elevation 14,000 feet/ 4,270 meters)*

**Stay:** Lawudo

- 6:00am:** Wake up, tea or coffee
- 6:30am:** Meditation with Ven. Amy
- 7:00am:** Breakfast
- 8:00am:** Leave Namché
- 12noon:** Lunch along the way
- 2:00pm:** Arrival to Lawudo!
- 6:30pm:** Dinner
- 7:30pm:** Teachings with Ven. Amy

After our rest in Namché Bazaar, we will walk uphill out of the village and then enjoy the flat of a lovely pine forest for about an hour. We will pass a lovely stupa built for Lama Zopa Rinpoche's mother and the small village of Teshio and get our first look at Lawudo from the path far below. ***The last section of the day's walk from Teshio to Lawudo is our second most physically challenging climb of the trek.*** You can expect a very steep uphill along a tree-

lined and rocky trail. We will make our way along it slowly. It will take us approximately 3-4 hours. Then we will finally arrive at this precious retreat place. Relax, settle in, enjoy the scenery, visit the library, and spend time with Rinpoche's sister, Anila Nawang Samden. I will show everyone the cave that day and we can have time to meditate there as we slowly settle in for retreat.



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### Day 9 (May 8)

#### Walk to Cherok

*Walk is an hour each way.*

**Stay: Lawudo**

**6:30am:** Wake up, tea or coffee

**7:00am:** Meditation with Ven. Amy

**7:30am:** Breakfast

**Morning:** Relax, journal, enjoy the library, meditate in the cave

**12:00pm:** Lunch

**1:30pm:** Walk to Cherok, rest of afternoon free

**6:30pm:** Dinner

**7:30pm:** Retreat begins with Ven. Amy

We will visit Venerable Pema Choden, precious nun and daughter of the past Cherok Lama; the home and gomba are in an interesting cave in a region that is right out of Tolkien!

Cherok is a 1-hour walk slightly uphill from Lawudo. We may pass some huge yaks, see horses, and see beautiful wildflowers beginning to emerge. Once back at Lawudo, I will lead some basic meditation during the afternoon and will explain the format of retreat.

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### Day 10-13 (May 9-12)

#### Lawudo Retreat with Ven. Amy Miller

*A 3-day silent meditation retreat based in Tibetan Buddhist philosophy. [Link to retreat schedule.](#)*

**Stay: Lawudo**

The retreat will begin in the evening on May 9 and conclude the morning of May 12. You do not need to be a Buddhist to participate in all or part of the retreat; however, having an open interest in spirituality can be helpful. While silence is highly recommended, you are welcome to adapt it to whatever works best for you.

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### Day 13 (May 12)

#### Retreat Conclusion; Walk to Thamo and Khari Gomba

*1-hour walk downhill and 1½-hour walk back up.*

**Stay: Lawudo**

**7:30am:** Breakfast concludes the retreat, then take the rest of the morning to relax and reflect on the retreat experience

**12noon:** Lunch

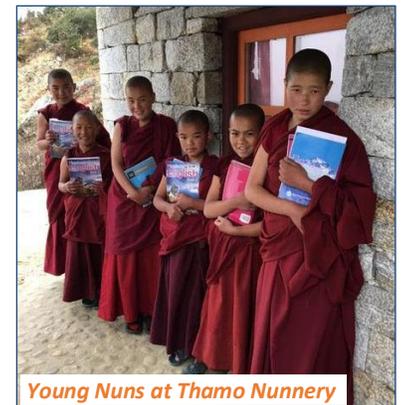
**1:00pm:** Walk to Thamo; rest of afternoon free

**6:30pm:** Dinner

**7:30pm:** Teachings with Ven. Amy

We will walk down a steep slope one hour to Thamo (pronounced Ta-mo). Thamo has a lovely nunnery, or *ani gomba*, named Khari Gomba and presided over by Khari Rinpoche, a 28-year-old reincarnate lama who may or may not be in residence for our visit.

Approximately 30 nuns over the past 13 years built this new nunnery. It was backbreaking work as they hauled sand and stones from the river for years. Things have improved quite a bit since my first nyung né (fasting retreat) with them in 1990, when the toilet was just out along the footpaths!



Most of the original nuns I knew have since passed away, but there is a newer crew of lively Sherpa and Tibetan women. For many women, such as those from poorer areas, this is their only opportunity to get an education.

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### Day 14 (May 13)

#### Day Trip to Thame, Lama Zopa Rinpoche's Birthplace

*Walk 2-3 hours to Thame and 2-3 hours back to Lawudo.*

**Stay: Lawudo**

**6:30am:** Wake up, tea or coffee

**7:00am:** Meditation with Ven. Amy

**7:30am:** Breakfast

**8:30am:** Trek to Thame; visit Rinpoche's birthplace and Thame Gomba; visit Stupa (shrine)

**1:00pm** Lunch at a simple lodge in Thame

**2:00pm:** Trek back to Lawudo

**6:30pm:** Dinner

**7:30pm:** Final reflections with Ven. Amy



Lunch on the Trek

Thamé is where Rinpoche and his siblings were born. We will visit the birth house and Thamé Gompa above the village. A simple lunch will be at a local lodge

before returning to Lawudo around 4pm.

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### Day 15 (May 14)

#### Trek from Lawudo to Monju

*Trek 5-6 hours from Lawudo to Monju.*

#### Stay: Monju Guest House

*(Elevation 9,300 feet / 2,800 meters)*

- 6:30am:** Wake up, tea or coffee
- 7:00am:** Meditation with Ven. Amy
- 7:30am:** Breakfast
- 8:30am:** Lawudo Departure
- 12noon:** Lunch in Namché
- 1:00pm:** Departure for Monju
- 4:30pm:** Arrive Monju
- 6:30pm:** Dinner
- 7:30pm:** Teachings with Ven. Amy

Following breakfast, we will depart our Lawudo mountain home for the return to Lukla and flights to Kathmandu. As the descents are often much more challenging for the knees, you may want to wrap your knees with knee compression sleeves. I have found them very helpful. This is definitely the time to use trekking poles if you like, which can easily be purchased in Kathmandu or Namché.

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### Day 16 (May 15)

#### Trek from Monju to Lukla

*Trek 5 hours from Monju to Lukla; re-confirm tickets; enjoy a free afternoon.*

#### Stay: Himalaya Lodge

*(Elevation 9,383 feet / 2,860 meters)*

- 6:00am:** Wake up, tea or coffee
- 6:30am:** Meditation with Ven. Amy
- 7:00am:** Breakfast
- 8:00am:** Departure from Monju
- 1:00pm:** Lunch after arrival in Lukla
- 6:30pm:** Dinner
- 7:30pm:** Teachings with Ven. Amy

This is our last trekking day of the pilgrimage. Enjoy one last look at the majestic scenery, explore the local village, take in the clean mountain air, and reflect on your Lawudo experience.

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### Day 17 (May 16)

#### Flight from Lukla to Kathmandu

*Fly in the morning; enjoy a free afternoon.*

#### Stay: Hyatt Regency, Boudhanath

*(Elevation 4,500 feet / 1,400 meters)*

- 6:00am:** Wake up, tea or coffee
- 6:30am:** Meditation with Ven. Amy
- 7:00am:** Breakfast
- 8:00am:** Departure from Lukla
- Lunch and Dinner:** On your own
- Afternoon and Evening:** Free

Sometimes the departure day from Lukla is a bit of a hectic adventure as there are many trekkers flying out and many flights. Our flights will hopefully depart before 9:00am.

**Occasionally, trekkers encounter long delays at the Lukla airport due to inclement weather. For the benefit of the group, we may need to hire helicopters to get us from Lukla to Kathmandu. If this is the case, there will be an additional fee (ranging from \$250-350 per person) that is not included in the pilgrimage cost.**

In Kathmandu, we will be picked up and transferred to the Hyatt Regency, walkable to the Boudha stupa. The hotel will be a luxurious relief in some ways from the primitiveness of the previous days and a bit of a jolt, so just breathe and observe your mind.

Take time to reflect on your Lawudo experience, rest, and explore more of Kathmandu. Make any final preparations for onward travel or your flight home.

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### Day 18 (May 17)

#### Stay: Hyatt Regency, Boudhanath

**Breakfast:** At the Hyatt Regency at your leisure

**Lunch:** On your own

**4:00pm:** Meet at the hotel lobby for our last outing together to the Boudha stupa for prayers, teachings, and final circumambulation (*korwa*)

**6:30pm:** Farewell dinner

Rest before heading back home, or do some final shopping and sightseeing in Kathmandu.

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### Day 19 (May 18)

#### Departure Day

**Breakfast:** At the Hyatt Regency or at your leisure

After breakfast, Amber will organize your transfers to the airport, or you may choose to continue exploring the region. Farewell and safe journey.

## Accommodation Information

### Days 1-2: Khachoe Ghakyil Nunnery (Kopan Nunnery)

- Single rooms are clean and modern with attached bathrooms
- If there is a shortage of single rooms, men will share a twin room with another man, and women with another woman

[Read more about the nunnery here.](#)

### Days 3-7, 15 and 16: Trekking Lodges to and from Lawudo

(Namaste Lodge in Phakding, Monju Guest House in Monju, Holiday Lodge in Namché Bazaar, and Himalaya Lodge in Lukla)

- We will be staying at lodges run by local Sherpas on our way to and from Lawudo
- Our trekking accommodation and facilities are relatively primitive
- The rooms are clean and simple
- Simple flush toilets and basic hot showers are shared
- Extra blankets are available, but bringing your own warm sleeping bag is recommended
- Each lodge has a good menu from which we will choose our meals
- Single rooms with bathrooms may be available on a first-come, first-served basis for an additional \$15-\$20 per person per night

### Days 8-15: Lawudo

- Accommodation and facilities at Lawudo are relatively primitive
- We will stay in two- or four-person rooms, men sharing with men, and women with women
- Shared outhouses with squat toilets
- Bucket hot showers

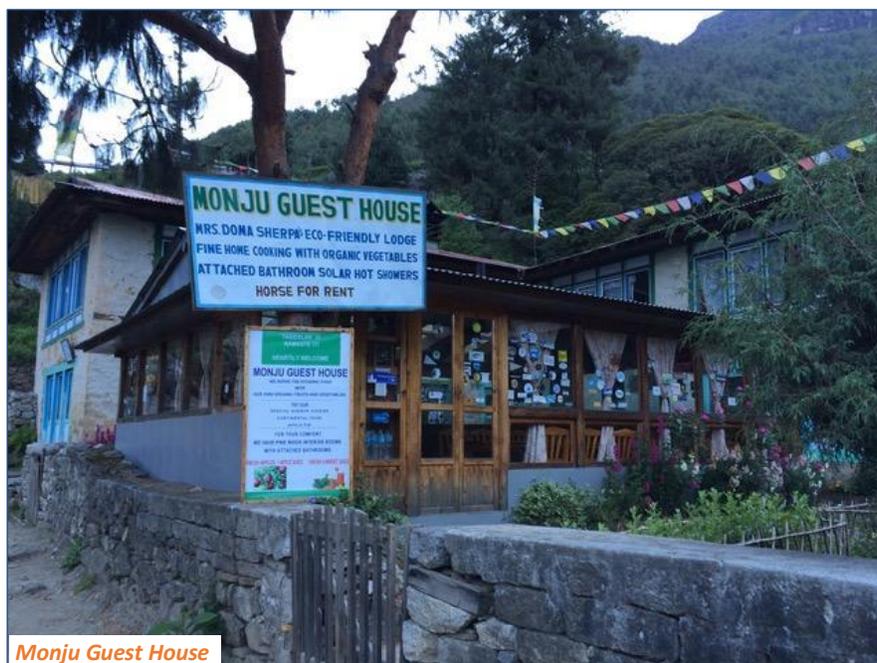
### Days 17 and 18: Hyatt Regency

- The Hyatt Regency Kathmandu is a 5-star hotel near the Boudhanath Stupa, set on 37 acres of landscaped grounds and created in the traditional Newari style of Nepalese architecture
- Free internet access to all guests
- Single rooms with bathrooms are available for an extra charge.

[Read more about the Hyatt Regency here.](#)

### Meals

All meals are included, except for lunch on Days 2, 17, and 18, and dinner on Day 17. All meals are vegetarian, except at the Hyatt, where you can choose non-vegetarian from the menu. Please let us know if you are allergic to any food and we will do our best to accommodate you. It is your responsibility to pack your own medication or special food that you need for the trip.



Monju Guest House

## Pilgrimage and Retreat Leader

### Venerable Amy Miller

Amy J. Miller (Venerable Lobsang Chodren) first encountered Tibetan Buddhism in the spring of 1987 during a course at Kopan Monastery in Nepal. Since then, she has spent a great deal of time engaged in meditation retreats, study, teaching, and Buddhist center management throughout the world. Prior to meeting the Dharma, Amy was a



political fundraiser in Washington, DC, and also worked for *Mother Jones* magazine in San Francisco, California.

Amy has led several pilgrimages to sacred places in the world including Tibet in 2001 and also India, Nepal, and Bhutan for the Liberation Prison Project and Milarepa Center. She led a pilgrimage to Lawudo in October, 2018.

Amy was ordained as a Buddhist nun in June 2000 by the great Tibetan master, Venerable Choden Rinpoche, and has been teaching extensively since 1992. She is also the co-author of [Buddhism in a Nutshell](#).

Based in the United States, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Amy teaches and leads retreats and pilgrimages around the world. You can find more information at [www.amymiller.com](http://www.amymiller.com).

## Guide

### Mr. Amber Tamang

Amber Tamang is from a small village, not found on most maps, in the Solu Khumbu region of Nepal. Amber became a porter in 1992, to put himself through high school and college. He is an advocate of better working conditions for trekking staff. For his undergraduate law degree, his thesis was on legal protection for workers in tourism.



Amber also received a Master's Degree in Nepali Culture, Religion, and Archaeology and has worked as a local guide for many pilgrimages. An independent researcher in the culture and religion of the Himalayas, Amber has published several articles in Nepali and English, including one for *Mandala* magazine. He has also done research on Buddhist Mani Walls, low stone walls inscribed with Buddhist prayers and imagery.

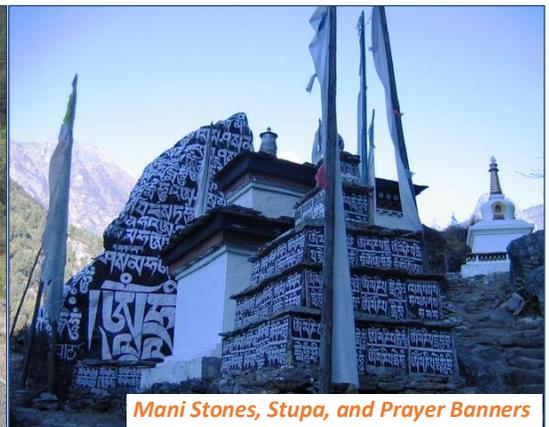
Amber became a guide with [Himalayan High Treks](#) in 1995 and has introduced many travelers to the wonders of Nepal, Tibet, and India. Those who have traveled with him praise his patience and kindness. His English is articulate as he enthusiastically describes the local customs of the Himalaya and its people. Amber and his family live in Kathmandu, Nepal.



Exterior of Lawudo Cave



Suspension Bridge on Trek



Mani Stones, Stupa, and Prayer Banners

## The Journey, Fitness, Gear, and Altitude

After landing at Lukla, we will meet the porters who carry our belongings. Light duffel bags or backpacks are therefore recommended, and there is a **limit of 33 pounds (15 kilos) per person** on the flights. There will be options to leave other items down in Kathmandu while we are trekking, but I find it always helpful to remember that when packing “less is more.” For anyone with heavier equipment, excess baggage and porter fees may apply.

We will then head from Lukla to Phakding in about 3-4 hours, depending on your speed. There are no cars in this region (although there are helicopters), as the roads do not support car travel, so while you will see horses, mules, and yaks, the only way to move is to walk. As a result, the air is much cleaner than down in Kathmandu and you will really notice the difference once you descend following the pilgrimage.

We will be walking approximately 4-7 hours each day to get to Lawudo, with some significant hills en route. You will be walking through some of the most spectacular scenery in the world, complete with waterfalls, small monasteries, prayer flags, mani stones and walls carved with mantras (sacred prayers), stupas (Buddhist shrines), steel suspension bridges over rivers (so do think twice if you have a very bad fear of heights), and some of the loveliest people you will ever meet.

The elevation will start at about 9,300 feet (2,800 meters) at Lukla. Lawudo is about 14,000 feet (4,300 meters), so we will take time to acclimatize with an extra two days spent at Namché Bazaar, a rich trekking village about a 3-5-hour walk from Lawudo.

Although no mountaineering experience is required for our trek, a good level of physical fitness is necessary. Please prepare yourself accordingly. You are walking mostly on dirt footpaths, although many areas are covered in large rocks or broken boulders. Decent foot support is helpful but heavy hiking boots are not

necessary unless you plan to go into higher elevations covered in ice or snow. Heavy boots are not only expensive but can feel leaden on your feet after a day. A waterproof hiking shoe with or without ankle support is adequate, and it's often helpful to bring a slip-on pair of other shoes to change into each evening to give your feet and shoes a rest. Although we are not visiting during the rainy season, it sometimes rains, so some sort of waterproof raincoat is helpful. If you have rain slacks, you can bring them, but they are not necessary. The better prepared you are, the more you will enjoy yourself.



**Please note that if in the opinion of the group leader or local guide, any traveler who is unable to complete the itinerary**

**without undue risk to themselves and/or to the rest of the group, we reserve the right to exclude them from all or part of a trip without refund.**

You should consult your doctor for up-to-date medical travel information or for any necessary inoculations and medication requirements before departure. We will have a first aid kit with essentials, but we recommend that you carry a first aid kit as well with any personal medical necessities (including a spare pair of glasses and any pertinent medical information about allergies, medications, and blood type). For legal reasons, our leaders and guides are prohibited from administering any type of drugs including headache tablets and antibiotics. Please ensure that you are adequately prepared.

Temperatures range from warm sunny days in the 60s or 70s°F (15-20°C) to nights below freezing. We could also encounter some snow at higher elevations. An amazing amount of trekking gear can be purchased in Kathmandu for a fraction of what you might pay in Western countries, so if you plan to arrive a few days early, you can enjoy a shopping spree in Thamel, the tourist area of Kathmandu, and get just about everything you need. A thermal layer and warm parka are recommended, along with wool hat, gloves, and scarf. Quick-dry clothing can be very helpful. You may also enjoy purchasing colorful options in Namché.

You will need a warm sleeping bag, and then feel free to bring a shawl, flashlight or head lamp, journal, pens, extra batteries, biodegradable toiletries, solar charger for mobile devices and cameras, medicines, sunscreen and sunhat, a favorite book, etc. You may want to bring a small Nalgene bottle with you if you are interested in taking home a small amount of holy water that drips from Rinpoche's cave. Any books you bring along that you choose not to keep can be donated to the Lawudo library.

You are welcome to give small gifts to the children, such as pens, or other items to the local people, such as small kitchen items (for example, potato peelers or flower and vegetable seeds). Cash offerings are always well received.

### **Altitude Sickness and Hydration**

Altitude sickness is something to be taken very seriously. It's highly recommended that you check with your doctor prior to departure to secure any altitude sickness medicine such as Diamox. Some pre-existing medical conditions are known to severely worsen at high altitude and be difficult to adequately treat on the ground, leading to more serious consequences. It is imperative that you let us know of any pre-existing medical condition(s), as well as discuss them with your



doctor. But the main thing to prevent altitude sickness in the first place is to proceed slowly with adequate hydration and rest.

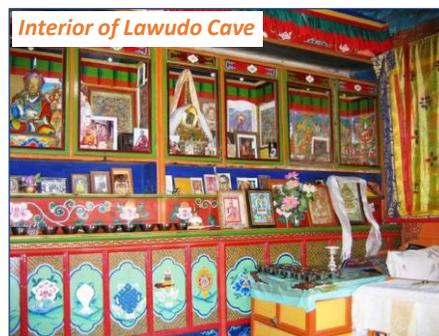
We recommend drinking at least 3-4 liters of water per day to stay hydrated. Tap water is not an option due to contamination so unless you have the proper water filter (contact Effie for water filter recommendations) or iodine tablets, it is not advisable to drink tap water. Bottled water can be easily purchased even though discarding the plastic is challenging. There are now some basic recycling efforts in Nepal even up in the mountains, but it's not ideal.

[Read more about altitude sickness here.](#)

The lodges we will stay in, including Lawudo, are extremely primitive, often with shared accommodation. Flush toilets, hot showers, and electricity have just come into use over the past 10-20 years. We may encounter several squat toilets along the way. Pilgrimage is not about being comfortable; it's often about visiting, practicing, and making offerings at holy places and this can add tremendous richness to your experience.

### **About the Retreat**

The 3-day retreat is open to all levels of Buddhist practitioner. It will include meditation instruction, advice on ways to develop concentration, and guided meditations on a variety of Buddhist topics. While the retreat will be conducted in silence, you are welcome to adapt it to whatever works best for you.



This trip is perfectly appropriate for non-Buddhists although most of the participants will be involved in the 3-day retreat. If you are not interested in doing the retreat, there is volunteer work you can offer at Lawudo, a nice library, stunning views, peace and quiet, as well as some glorious walks you can enjoy.

## Travel and Safety

A one-month visa can be secured at the airport upon arrival. Should you be staying longer than one month, you can arrange a longer visa in the following websites <https://us.nepalembassy.gov.np/tourist-visa/> <http://www.nepalimmigration.gov.np/page/tourist-visa>. Lama Zopa Rinpoche's brother, Sangay Sherpa, who lives in Kathmandu, will be furnished with all of our address and passport information along with emergency contacts.

Please secure travel and evacuation insurance before flying to Kathmandu, and please email the confirmation to [info@hightreks.com](mailto:info@hightreks.com). Effie highly recommends: U.S.I. Travel Insurance Services at <https://select.travelinsure.com/?pcode=32307>

Please notify Effie at [effie@hightreks.com](mailto:effie@hightreks.com) of any questions or concerns you may have prior to booking.

### Staying Connected

Nepali SIM cards (Ncell was working the best during the last pilgrimage) can be purchased in Kathmandu and put in any unlocked smart phone to connect you to the local networks.

This way you can connect to the Internet and family and friends on your journey should you wish. The last time I was at Lawudo, the Internet connection was extremely slow, but the phone connection worked well. If you prefer, this can be a chance for you to “disconnect” for a bit. In addition, it is advisable to let go of devices for the retreat period.

### Theft and Safety

Many national governments provide regularly updated advice on safety issues regarding international travel.

We recommend that you check your government's advice for its latest travel information before departure.

While traveling, there is always the risk of pick-pocketing and petty theft, particularly in the more touristy cities. We recommend that you exercise caution when walking alone at night and encourage you to walk together and only on main, well-lit thoroughfares. Be particularly vigilant on public transport. Simple measures like carrying your day pack in front, not hanging your bag over the back of your chair, and wearing a money belt will reduce any chance that your valuables go missing.

We strongly recommend the use of a neck wallet or money belt while traveling, for the safe keeping of your passport, air tickets, cash, and other valuable items. Leave your valuable jewelry at home—you won't need it while traveling. A lock is recommended for securing your luggage.



We will accompany you on all included activities; however, during your trip you'll have some free time to pursue your own interests. While we will assist you with the available options in a given location, please note that any activities you undertake that are not part of our itinerary will be at your own risk.

Please use your own good judgment when selecting an activity for your free time. Also note that we have the authority to amend or cancel any part of the itinerary if it's deemed necessary due to safety concerns.

### First Aid During Your Trek

We have basic first aid training and our local guide is aware of the closest medical facilities. Please monitor your health and seek assistance accordingly. If at any time during the trek you have any concerns for your health, please tell us immediately.

## Costs

All amounts are in United States Dollars (USD). The total cost of the trip per person based on shared occupancy is \$3,900. This is based on a 20-person group. Should the number of the group fall below 20, the cost per person will increase \$250-\$350. There is also a \$100 discount if the land balance is paid by check no later than October 26, 2022.

### What is included:

- Airport pick-up and drop-off for international and domestic flights (4 transfers as per itinerary)
- Daily teachings and meditation with Ven. Amy
- All meals as previously indicated while on trek and at Lawudo
- All breakfasts and two dinners in Kathmandu
- 2 nights single room, with attached bathroom, at Kopan Nunnery
- 7 nights double room, with shared bathroom, during the trek
- 7 nights two- or four-person rooms, with shared outhouse, at Lawudo
- 2 nights double room, with attached bathroom, at the Hyatt Regency
- Kathmandu sightseeing
- Everest National Park, TIMS trekking permit, and Local Area Municipal Entry fees
- Trekking support (porters and guide); waiting fees
- Staff airfare
- Administrative support
- US\$500 donation to Lawudo (to be paid in cash of \$100 bills upon arrival)
- Gratuities for local guides, retreat porters, and bus drivers

Interior of Lawudo Gompa



- Nepal visa (\$50 for 30 days)
- Pre-trip medical exam (required) and any medications or immunizations needed
- Pre- or post-trek sightseeing and entry fees
- Offerings at temples, to local people, etc. (a key component of pilgrimage)
- Meals while not on trek or at Lawudo (Day 2, 17, and 18 lunch and Day 17 dinner)
- Single rooms or rooms with attached bath that may be available for a small extra charge

The supplement for a single room (two nights) at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Kathmandu is \$240, requested in advance.

Introductory sightseeing or a tour in Kathmandu while waiting/resting before or after the trip, depending on group size, is about \$30-\$60. Meals in Kathmandu are normally very inexpensive.

Airfares from the US range from \$1500 to \$3,000, depending on the carrier. Fares differ based on country of departure.

The currency of Nepal is 125 Nepali rupees (NPR) to 1USD as of July 2022.

### Lawudo Support

A \$500 cash donation per person will be collected at the beginning of pilgrimage and divided equally between Rinpoche's sister, Anila Ngawang Samden, who lives at Lawudo, and Rinpoche's brother, Sangay Sherpa, who is the Director of Lawudo and lives in Kathmandu. If you need a receipt for your donation, Sangay can issue you one.

### What is NOT included:

- International airfare
- Return flights, Kathmandu – Lukla\* (currently listing at \$360 per person, but may change)
- Passport (with at least 6 months additional validity)

\*The cost of flights from Kathmandu to Lukla have increased over the years. It was \$310 round trip in 2014 but were pricing around \$500 following the earthquake and fuel shortage in 2015; therefore, this cost may be subject to change. The current price is \$360 US.

## Register

If you are seriously interested in joining this pilgrimage, please send an email of intent to [LawudoPilgrimage@gmail.com](mailto:LawudoPilgrimage@gmail.com) and my assistant, Ana Paula Ruano, will get back to you with some preliminary questions to determine if this trip is the best fit for you. Once you have emailed your responses back, you will be notified about your participation on the trip and sent some additional information on how to register with Himalayan High Treks (HHT), the tour operator who is helping to coordinate this pilgrimage. **Please do NOT purchase any air tickets for the journey until your participation on the trip has been confirmed.** In addition, HHT will require a copy of your travel insurance including coverage for overseas medical and emergency evacuation as well as a health form to be filled out by a healthcare provider.

I am really excited about sharing this precious experience with others as a most meaningful way to practice and hope you will join this worthwhile journey.

The estimated number of people in our group will be 20 so once we reach that number, the trip will be closed; therefore, reservations are on a first-come, first-served basis.

### Deposit Payment

A \$250 non-refundable deposit will be required no later than January 30, 2023, to secure your place on this trip.

### Remainder Payment

- The remainder of your payment must be paid 90 days prior to the start of the trek (January 30, 2023).
- Your place on this trek is confirmed once you have made full payment.
- **A completed health form from your medical provider along with a copy of your travel insurance policy is required at the same time as your final payment. Please email a copy of these documents to Effie Fletcher at HHT at [info@hightreks.com](mailto:info@hightreks.com).**
- For those who book after January, 2023, full payment is due at the time of booking.

### Additional Financial Information

In general, credit cards can be used in Kathmandu (rarely in the mountains); however, there may be an

additional 4% fee tacked on to any payments due to bank fees. Also, there are ATMs throughout Kathmandu that operate extremely well. Notify your bank and credit card companies that you will be traveling to Nepal so that both your debit and credit cards are not locked due to unusual spending patterns. You can also check to see if they charge foreign transaction fees for these services.

View from Lawudo



### Cancellations and Refunds

If you cancel and notify HHT in writing ([info@hightreks.com](mailto:info@hightreks.com)) before departure, they will refund your trip payment based upon the following HHT Cancellation Refund Schedule.

| <b>Days Before Departure</b> | <b>Fee</b>           |
|------------------------------|----------------------|
| More Than 90 Days            | \$250                |
| Between 61 and 90 Days       | 35% of the land cost |
| Between 15 and 60 Days       | 55% of the land cost |
| Less Than 15 Days            | No Refund            |

- If we cancel this trek before departure for any reason, you are entitled to a **complete refund of the cost paid minus an administrative fee of US \$100 plus credit card fees if applicable.**
- We are not responsible for additional expenses incurred in your preparation.

If the leader of the pilgrimage, Ven. Amy Miller, is unavailable to lead the pilgrimage and retreat due to an emergency, another leader will be assigned to replace her.

## What to Pack

Lots of items such as trekking poles and sleeping bags can be rented in Kathmandu. Other items such as duffle bags and sleeping bag liners can be purchased inexpensively. Let Effie know if you need this arranged.

### Documents

- Passport/visa
- Photocopy of passport name page
- Health documentation
- Guide book/maps (optional)
- Debit/credit card
- Travel insurance policy
- Contact numbers in US in case of emergency

### Clothing (quick-dry clothes recommended)

- Hiking shoes broken in first, please! (waterproof can be helpful, but not essential)
- Comfortable tennis shoes/slip-ons for evenings after trekking
- Thick and warm socks (sometimes people like to wear two pairs of socks while trekking)
- Loose-fitting trousers or mid-length skirts (waterproof optional)
- Rain pants (if trousers are not waterproof)
- Warm waterproof jacket or parka
- Wind breaker or rain poncho if you like (consider if you would like one to fit over a daypack)
- Loose-fitting upper layers to include a t-shirt for sunny trekking days and long sleeve polypropylene type tops (these are lighter to carry than sweaters, can keep you dry when wet yet dry quickly) or fleece
- Long johns, leggings, or fleece slacks as an extra layer under your trousers or skirt
- Warm gloves, hat, scarf
- 1-2 bandanas

### Personal Supplies

- Quick drying towel
- Toiletries
  - Face/hand cream
  - Personal and laundry soap (biodegradable, if possible)
  - Toothbrush and toothpaste
  - Dental floss (doubles as sewing thread)
  - Personal hygiene supplies such as:
    - Deodorant
    - Shampoo
    - Comb/brush
    - Razor and shaving cream
- Extra pair of eyeglasses or contact lenses
- Contact lens solution
- Ear plugs
- Anti-bacterial hand cleaner or towelettes
- Packets of tissues/toilet paper
- Reading material

### Equipment/Miscellaneous

- Good quality warm sleeping bag.
- Duffle bag to fit everything including your sleeping bag
- Sunhat and sunglasses

- Trekking poles, if required
- Daypack or fanny pack
- Luggage locks
- Water bottle that can hold hot water at times
- Flashlight/torch with extra batteries and spare bulbs if necessary (small headlamps are highly recommended)
- Lighter
- Camera, lenses, and extra battery if needed (if you are bringing any heavier camera equipment, let Amber know as he will discuss the extra baggage charge at the domestic airport)
- If you are bringing a smartphone or tablet, please be sure to have adequate chargers (solar can be an option at Lawudo; lodges will charge you to recharge electrical devices)
- Electric converter/adaptor
- Alarm (you may opt to bring a separate alarm clock in the event you would like to disengage from your phone)
- Swiss Army-type pocket knife
- Katags (offering scarves) for offerings
- Local currency in small bills (occasionally the ATMs in the main trekking villages don't work, so please bring an adequate amount of cash, should you wish to buy things and/or make offerings)
- Snacks such as dried fruit, nuts, hard candies, energy bars, powdered drink mixes that are not perishable

### Medical

- Medicines (including Diamox for altitude sickness or Dexamethasone if allergic to sulfa medications), vitamins, and other personal food needs
- Water purification tablets or water filter (consider this as an alternative to buying bottled water along the trek as Nepal has a huge sustainability issue with plastic and waste management)
- Moleskin/Band-aids®/Plasters for blisters
- Medications for:
  - Diarrhea (discuss with your doctor)
  - Headache or fever
  - Upset stomach
  - Colds or allergies
- Cough drops/lozenges
- Topical antibiotic such as Neosporin®
- Tweezers
- Laxative, if inclined to constipation
- Sunscreen
- Lip balm
- Insect repellent

### Optional

- Small pair of binoculars

### Most Essential Things to Pack

- A positive attitude and a sense of humor

### Most Essential Things to Leave at Home

- Expectations