



Mu Gumba

High mountain Buddhist monastery of the Tsum Valley

Mu Gompa (Mu Gumba) is the largest and highest monastic sanctuary in Nepal's sacred Tsum Valley, sitting at an elevation of 3,700 meters (12,139 ft) near the Tibetan border in Northern Gorkha, within the Manaslu Conservation Area. It was established in the late 19th century under the Gelugpa tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. The monastery serves as a spiritual anchor for the upper valley, also blessed by Guru Rinpoche. Renowned for its rich collection of historical relics, ancient Kangyur scriptures, and a 125-year-old statue of Avalokiteshvara, Mu Gompa also operates as an active Shedra (scripture school) and enforces a century-old Shayagya (non-violence) tradition that makes the surrounding valley a pristine haven for local wildlife.

Features

- **History:** 150 years old monastery.
- **Location:** Tsum Valley, Tsum Numbri - 4, Gorkha (within the Manaslu Conservation Area).
- **Structure:** Built in traditional Tibetan style as a three-story rectangular stone structure. Its exterior walls are whitewashed to represent purity, and its roofs are adorned with golden ornaments.
- **Shayagya** (non-violence): The surrounding valley of the monastery has adopted non-violence, no killing of animals is allowed.

History

- **Establishment:** Mu Gompa was founded in the **late 19th century (approx. 1895 AD)** by Buddhist monks and Tibetan lamas who ventured into the upper Tsum region seeking a clean, secluded high-altitude sanctuary for meditation.
- **Gelugpa Lineage:** The monastery belongs to the **Gelugpa tradition** (Yellow Hat sect) of Tibetan Buddhism, making it one of the most significant learning centers for Gelug practices in the northern Gorkha region.
- **Northern Border Isolation:** Positioned near the high mountain passes (such as *Ngula Dhojyang Pass*, 5,093 m) bordering Tibet, the monastery historically maintained strong cross-border spiritual, educational, and cultural trade ties.
- **Opening to Foreigners:** Because Tsum Valley was completely closed to outside travelers for decades, Mu Gompa was only officially opened to restricted trekking groups in **2008**.

Architecture & Layout

- **Traditional Structure:** Constructed using locally carved stone walls, heavy timber beams, and whitewashed exteriors built to endure harsh, snow-filled alpine winters.
- **Sacred Relics Inside:** The main prayer hall holds a historical 125-year-old statue of Avalokiteshvara (the Bodhisattva of Compassion) alongside images of Guru Rinpoche.
- **Scriptures & Artifacts:** It houses centuries-old Kangyur (wrapped Buddhist canon texts), ancient woodblock printing blocks, thangkas (religious scroll paintings), and murals.
- **Mani Walls & Stone Plates:** Surrounding the monastery compound are thousands of hand-engraved stone plates (Mani stones) depicting Buddha images and inscribed with the Om Mani Padme Hum mantra.



(Photo Source: The Everest Holiday)

Religious & Cultural Significance

- **Pinnacle of the Tsum Beyul:** Mu Gompa sits as the highest monastery in the Tsum Valley. Tsum is regarded as a sacred "Beyul"—one of 108 hidden refuges blessed by Guru Rinpoche (Padmasambhava) in the 8th century.
- **Milarepa's Legacy:** Nearby caves in the upper valley, most notably Namkading Cave (Milarepa Cave) were used by the 11th-century Tibetan saint Jetsun Milarepa for extensive meditation retreats.
- **Active Monastic Center & School:** The monastery functions as an active Shedra (religious school) where young monks from neighboring villages (such as Nile and Chhule) live, study scriptures, and perform daily rituals.
- **Shayagya Tradition:** The surrounding valley observes *Shayagya*—a sacred pledge codified in 1921 that strictly prohibits hunting, slaughtering animals, or harming wildlife.



Major Festivals & Celebrations

- **Saga Dawa:** Celebrated during the full moon of the 4th month of the Tibetan calendar (May/June) to commemorate Lord Buddha's birth, enlightenment, and parinirvana.
- **Lhosar (Tibetan New Year):** Marked by special multi-day purification rituals, butter-lamp lightings, community gatherings, and prayers for global peace.
- **Monastic Routine & Pujas:** Monks participate in early morning and late afternoon prayer sessions using traditional long horns (radung), cymbals, and drums.



Quick Tips for Visitors

- **Strict Vegetarian Zone:** Do not carry meat or animal products into the upper Tsum Valley or monastery premises.
- **Clockwise Rule:** Always walk clockwise around the monastery, prayer wheels, stupas, and Mani walls.
- **Monastic Decorum:** Remove hats and shoes before entering prayer halls, avoid loud behavior, and ask for explicit permission before photographing s