

1

00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:11,560

We have this idea of this place, this paradise up in the mountains.

2

00:00:11,560 --> 00:00:18,720

What we call Shangri-La.

3

00:00:18,720 --> 00:00:19,720

Those are all caves.

4

00:00:19,720 --> 00:00:20,960

Yes, they are.

5

00:00:20,960 --> 00:00:22,960

All made by people.

6

00:00:22,960 --> 00:00:27,200

Come on, come on, come on, come on, come on.

7

00:00:27,200 --> 00:00:28,200

Be careful.

8

00:00:28,200 --> 00:00:31,920

It's very slippery and incredibly dangerous.

9

00:00:31,920 --> 00:00:36,800

It's not a cave, it's a city.

10

00:00:36,800 --> 00:00:49,960

Oh, word.

11

00:00:49,960 --> 00:00:53,560

The great western religions tell us that heaven doesn't have a physical address.

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00:00:53,720 --> 00:00:57,240

You can't use Google Maps to calculate the route to paradise.

13

00:00:57,240 --> 00:01:03,440

But the legend of Shangri-La says differently.

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00:01:03,440 --> 00:01:08,600

For hundreds of years, explorers, spiritualists, and, well, nutcases, have been lured to the

15

00:01:08,600 --> 00:01:14,520

Himalayas by the tantalizing promise of a mystical hidden valley, a real utopia.

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00:01:14,520 --> 00:01:22,360

The residents there, they say, never age, and war and sickness are just distant memories.

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00:01:22,360 --> 00:01:27,960

But surely the story of Shangri-La is just that, a story, a hopeful myth about a magical

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00:01:27,960 --> 00:01:29,160

world.

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00:01:29,160 --> 00:01:33,640

But maybe not.

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00:01:33,640 --> 00:01:39,080

In the most remote reaches of Nepal near the border of Tibet is an area known as the Mustang,

21

00:01:39,080 --> 00:01:44,680

a region that has been closed off to the outside world and seemingly to the passage of time.

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00:01:44,680 --> 00:01:49,320

But now, archaeologists have been granted access to explore this hidden realm.

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00:01:49,400 --> 00:01:54,440

They've discovered thousands of so-called sky caves, man-made chambers carved into the sides

24

00:01:54,440 --> 00:02:00,040

of impossibly high cliffs, who made them, how, and what secrets are hiding inside.

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00:02:01,720 --> 00:02:06,280

Several caves have already been explored and have yielded up incredible artifacts and

26

00:02:06,280 --> 00:02:09,080

manuscripts that may point to a real paradise.

27

00:02:09,960 --> 00:02:14,680

I plan to join a team of explorers near the roof of the world, seeking the truth behind

28

00:02:14,680 --> 00:02:16,600

the mythical kingdom of Shangri-La.

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00:02:17,320 --> 00:02:22,120

The mission is dangerous, but the reward could be nothing short of heaven on earth.

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00:02:29,480 --> 00:02:35,640

My name is Josh Gates, with a degree in archaeology and a passion for exploration.

31

00:02:37,320 --> 00:02:40,520

I have a tendency to end up in some very strange situations.

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00:02:40,920 --> 00:02:47,240

My travels have taken me to the ends of the earth,

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00:02:47,240 --> 00:02:49,880

as I investigate the greatest legends in history.

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00:02:51,880 --> 00:02:53,960

This is Expedition Unknown.

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00:02:56,360 --> 00:03:01,320

My expedition begins half a world away from the United States in the Himalayan nation of Nepal.

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00:03:11,320 --> 00:03:19,560

Catmandu, a city of more than a million people perched at the intersection of faith and commerce.

37

00:03:20,280 --> 00:03:24,120

On every corner, sights and smells that boggle the mind.

38

00:03:24,120 --> 00:03:31,480

This is one of my absolute favorite places in the world, a city that crackles with human energy.

39

00:03:31,480 --> 00:03:36,840

You step off the curb here and you're swept up in a river of Buddhists and Hindus of touts

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00:03:36,840 --> 00:03:41,240

and trekkers, all somehow blended together in a beautiful chaos.

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00:03:47,480 --> 00:03:53,000

Catmandu has long been a destination for spiritual pilgrims and a magnet for daring climbers from

42

00:03:53,000 --> 00:03:58,120

around the world. And despite the never-ending influx of visitors, the locals have gained a

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00:03:58,120 --> 00:04:02,120

reputation as some of the kindest and most hospitable hosts on earth.

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00:04:03,000 --> 00:04:10,920

And perhaps nothing has tested the resilience of the Nepalese people, like the 7.8 earthquake that

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00:04:10,920 --> 00:04:18,440

devastated parts of Catmandu in 2015. Stunning historic sites shattered, collapsed and ruined.

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00:04:23,320 --> 00:04:29,800

But almost a year later, the cleanup is in full force and Catmandu is once again open for business.

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00:04:30,360 --> 00:04:35,240

Inside one of the city's many bookshops, I even managed to learn my first lesson about Shangri-La.

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00:04:35,880 --> 00:04:41,480

So we all know and use the term Shangri-La to describe anything that seems like a paradise on

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00:04:41,480 --> 00:04:46,280

earth. But it turns out that the term itself isn't actually all that mysterious. It was

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00:04:46,280 --> 00:04:52,040

first coined in 1933 by a British writer named James Hilton in his novel Lost Horizon.

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00:04:52,600 --> 00:04:56,920

And in the book, he uses it to describe this mystical valley in the Himalayas,

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00:04:56,920 --> 00:05:03,560

a place of eternal happiness whose residents are nearly immortal. But it's a work and a word of fiction.

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00:05:04,120 --> 00:05:09,960

So end of expedition? Hardly. Because it turns out that Hilton based the term Shangri-La on something

54

00:05:09,960 --> 00:05:17,240

much older. Shangri-La, or at least the inspiration for it, sprang from the Tibetan Buddhist culture

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00:05:17,240 --> 00:05:22,920

that dominates Nepal to this day. To learn about the real origins of Shangri-La, I'm meeting a monk

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00:05:23,000 --> 00:05:27,160

at Swayambunath Temple, otherwise known as Charlton Heston's worst nightmare.

57

00:05:28,120 --> 00:05:32,360

Monkeys, very cute, but they can be a bit moody and aggressive.

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00:05:34,280 --> 00:05:38,120

These monkeys are considered holy, which means that nobody messes with them

59

00:05:38,120 --> 00:05:43,480

and they basically run the joint. Easy, easy. Taking one at a time, they may be cute,

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00:05:43,480 --> 00:05:47,080

but as a group, these guys start to feel like some kind of a primate street gang.

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00:05:47,880 --> 00:05:51,720

I think I could fight one monkey. A thousand of them, maybe not so much.

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00:05:53,560 --> 00:05:57,080

I have no idea where all these monkeys are going. As soon as a

63

00:05:57,720 --> 00:05:59,640

matinee, King Kong screening happening up here.

64

00:06:07,960 --> 00:06:14,120

At the top of the temple, I emerge into another world, a realm of incense, of prayer wheels,

65

00:06:14,120 --> 00:06:19,160

and of sacred spaces. I must have come to the right place after all the llama that I'm meeting

66

00:06:19,240 --> 00:06:25,000

is named Buddha. Thank you very much for meeting with me. I appreciate it.

67

00:06:25,640 --> 00:06:32,200

I want to talk to you about Shangri-La, what we call Shangri-La. We have this idea of this place,

68

00:06:32,200 --> 00:06:36,840

this paradise up in the mountains. Is it based though on something real?

69

00:06:37,800 --> 00:06:42,040

Yeah, we don't call it Shangri-La. Traditionally we call it Shambhala.

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00:06:42,520 --> 00:06:49,880

Shambhala. Right. And so what is Shambhala? Shambhala is a sacred land, pure land. It's a kind of

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00:06:49,880 --> 00:06:57,560

physical place, but not for the mundane people like us. Right. You know, we can't go there with

72

00:06:58,120 --> 00:06:59,960

mortal body that we have now.

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00:07:02,600 --> 00:07:07,240

Tibetan Buddhism teaches the pursuit of enlightenment, a mental state achieved through

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00:07:08,200 --> 00:07:14,360

meditation, encapsulated by pure joy and a total release of a sense of self. Shambhala is the physical

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00:07:14,360 --> 00:07:22,760

expression of this enlightenment. So it's a kind of otherworldly place? Yes, yes. That's the basic

76

00:07:22,760 --> 00:07:28,040

notion. If I go to Shambhala, all my suffering is gone. It's only bliss days, blissful world.

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00:07:28,040 --> 00:07:33,560

Right. So how do I find Shambhala? How do I get to Shambhala? Very easy. You can go to Himalayas

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00:07:33,560 --> 00:07:43,320

and meditate and then begin your journey. I see. So Shambhala is a state of being, but could it also

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00:07:43,320 --> 00:07:48,520

be related to a real place? There's a team of archaeologists trying to figure that out right

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00:07:48,520 --> 00:07:54,840

now in a remote ancient kingdom within Nepal known as the Mustang. They've recently begun to explore

81

00:07:54,840 --> 00:08:00,680

a valley filled with mysterious sky caves, trying to determine who built them, what happened to them,

82

00:08:00,680 --> 00:08:06,440

and whether this could have been a real life Shambhala. My mission is to join them and to find out.

83

00:08:08,680 --> 00:08:12,760

But before journeying into the Mustang, it's important that I get properly equipped.

84

00:08:13,320 --> 00:08:18,200

The markets here offer just about every piece of gear you can imagine. What would you put in here?

85

00:08:20,040 --> 00:08:26,440

What's an ashtray? Oh, lovely. I guess that is fitting. Smoking does kill kids.

86

00:08:27,400 --> 00:08:33,320

I have you on. You have what I want? Oh, yeah. What do I want? I want this is what I want? Yeah. A

87

00:08:33,320 --> 00:08:40,360

pornographic pipe. You know me too well. Yeah. It's your new cable connection? Yeah. Good luck with that.

88

00:08:40,360 --> 00:08:45,480

Looks like there shouldn't be any problems with that hookup. The vendors are always eager to make a

89

00:08:45,480 --> 00:08:51,320

sale. Some even claim to cater to celebrity clients. Marlon Brando was here a few weeks back. He came to

90

00:08:51,320 --> 00:08:57,320

my shop. Yeah. So that's a major news story. How did he look? Yeah, he's very handsome. Guys,

91

00:08:57,320 --> 00:09:01,800

I don't know how to tell you this. You know what? Forget it. It's fine. It's fine. Don't worry about it.

92

00:09:04,600 --> 00:09:09,640

But Kathmandu is also a staging area for the nearly 100,000 trekkers who pass through these

93

00:09:09,640 --> 00:09:15,160

crowded markets every year. Stores are filled with climbing gear for even the most hardcore expeditions.

94

00:09:15,400 --> 00:09:23,320

Sir, is it 100 degrees in here? I don't think it's going to be this cold. It's negative 40 degrees.

95

00:09:23,320 --> 00:09:28,760

Yes. You think I'm going to need all of this? Yes. Okay. If you say so. Get the expert. I just got to

96

00:09:28,760 --> 00:09:36,840

get my shoes on here. I'm close. I feel like I'm in a Christmas story right now. I got this, guys.

97

00:09:37,000 --> 00:09:37,640

Nobody jump in.

98

00:09:47,240 --> 00:09:51,800

By the light of a new day, my crew and I head to Kathmandu's airport. We're accompanied by our

99

00:09:51,800 --> 00:09:56,040

fixer and my dear friend Mahendra, one of my most trusted contacts in the region.

100

00:09:57,240 --> 00:10:01,160

To link up with the archaeologists investigating the sky caves of Mustang,

101

00:10:01,160 --> 00:10:07,800

I'll need to undertake one hell of a commute. First, we'll have to fly by plane from Kathmandu

102

00:10:07,800 --> 00:10:13,720

to the remote landing strip in Jomsam. From there, we'll take a convoy of 4x4s north into the Mustang

103

00:10:13,720 --> 00:10:19,640

Valley and the village of Chooksang. Unfortunately, my crew and I have arrived during a political

104

00:10:19,640 --> 00:10:26,600

firestorm. Tensions are brewing to the west and India has decided to shut off all fuel flowing

105

00:10:26,600 --> 00:10:32,680

into Nepal. The result? A crippling gasoline shortage that threatens to derail my entire expedition.

106

00:10:36,760 --> 00:10:38,840

Welcome to Nepal's domestic terminal.

107

00:10:41,320 --> 00:10:47,160

Thousands of people and tens of thousands of bags, all trying desperately to get out of the

108

00:10:47,160 --> 00:10:52,360

capital. With no fuel, a lot of people are stranded here, turning the domestic terminal here into

109

00:10:53,320 --> 00:10:59,320

a bedlam. Our flight to Jomsam is no different. Our fixer Mahendra talks to the pilot and brings

110

00:10:59,320 --> 00:11:03,960

back what I'm hoping is good news. What's the word? We supposed to have a travel flight?

111

00:11:03,960 --> 00:11:06,360

A charter flight, yeah. We cancelled? Charters cancelled. Yeah.

112

00:11:14,200 --> 00:11:18,680

My crew and I are trying to get out of Kathmandu airport to meet archaeologists working in the

113

00:11:19,640 --> 00:11:23,480

Himalayas investigating a real life Shangri-La but things aren't looking good.

114

00:11:24,280 --> 00:11:28,760

What's the word? We supposed to have a travel flight. A charter flight, yeah. We cancelled?

115

00:11:28,760 --> 00:11:31,240

Charters cancelled. Yeah. 100%? 100% yeah.

116

00:11:32,760 --> 00:11:38,200

There's no fuel, no gas. No gas, so they can't fuel the plane? Yeah. If we can't get enough gas to

117

00:11:38,200 --> 00:11:44,680

fly to the mountains, my search for Shangri-La ends right here. We can drive it, right? We can drive it.

118

00:11:44,680 --> 00:11:50,760

What's the drive time? Around 16 hours. And you've seen lines before waiting for hours?

119

00:11:50,760 --> 00:11:54,280

And there's no fuel to be added up? There's no fuel there. Okay. Now the jeeps that we're supposed

120

00:11:54,280 --> 00:11:58,760

to meet up there, they have fuel? They have fuel. Where'd that fuel come from? From Blackmagid.

121

00:11:58,760 --> 00:12:01,800

So we've got that part of the problem solved. Now we gotta figure out this problem. So how do we

122

00:12:01,800 --> 00:12:08,120

get to Jomsam? Maybe we talk to helicopter company. They have fuel? They have some fuel left.

123

00:12:08,120 --> 00:12:12,680

Well let's see if they can hook us up. Okay sir. Thanks. Mahendra goes to Wheel and Deal.

124

00:12:13,240 --> 00:12:21,880

And we wait. 20 minutes later, we get our answer. You got it? Yeah, we got him. Seriously? Yeah.

125

00:12:22,840 --> 00:12:27,000

So helicopter, yeah? Yep, so we'll take one helicopter and we're gonna shuttle people there,

126

00:12:27,000 --> 00:12:31,800

drop in Jomsam, unload all the gear, come back to Kathmandu, pick up the remainder of the people,

127

00:12:31,800 --> 00:12:36,440

and then I'll meet you there in Jomsam. Okay, so one helicopter, two flights? Correct. We have a

128

00:12:36,440 --> 00:12:42,520

limited window there, but we should be okay. It's good to know Mahendra. Let's do it. There's a

129

00:12:42,520 --> 00:12:48,520

catch though. The chopper will not only need to make two trips to ferry my team, but due to the

130

00:12:48,520 --> 00:12:54,200

altitude, we have to limit the weight of our gear and we can't go over by a single pound. 13.0.

131

00:12:54,760 --> 00:12:59,800

We frantically weigh everything, including ourselves. No, I am not showing you a number.

132

00:13:00,760 --> 00:13:09,080

Woo! I've been trying to work out. I've watched your car. 13.6. 13.6 plus. 5.5. 5.5 plus.

133

00:13:09,080 --> 00:13:15,000

16.3. 16.3. Hey, Andrew, what was your first estimate? My first estimate was a thousand and ten

134

00:13:15,000 --> 00:13:21,000

pounds. And we thought we had to cancel the flight. So we're at five seven nine pounds. What's our

max

135

00:13:21,000 --> 00:13:25,400

weight? Eight hundred eighty pounds. Eight eighty, we're good, we're under. All right, everybody

136

00:13:25,400 --> 00:13:29,480

hit a salad for dinner last night? Yep. All right, we should be able to do this. Let's go.

137

00:13:29,480 --> 00:13:31,880

With our gear stripped down, we hit the runway.

138

00:13:33,880 --> 00:13:38,600

Due to its location, Catmandu Airport is socked in by fog nearly every morning,

139

00:13:38,600 --> 00:13:43,560

and all manner of aircraft have to wait for a window to punch through the mist. Incidents and

140

00:13:43,560 --> 00:13:48,360

accidents are common. The huge plane behind my helicopter recently skidded off the runway.

141

00:13:49,880 --> 00:13:54,280

I tried to put that out of my mind though as we climb aboard our modified high altitude chopper.

142

00:13:56,360 --> 00:14:01,560

Coordinates check. Seat belts check. Fuel sure.

143

00:14:10,120 --> 00:14:14,200

As we rise over Catmandu, the scope and scale of the city comes into view.

144

00:14:15,400 --> 00:14:21,800

And then we enter the clouds. This is in short some of the most stressful flying on earth.

145

00:14:21,800 --> 00:14:26,040

It doesn't matter how high the helicopter rises, because all around us are eight of the

146

00:14:26,040 --> 00:14:31,880

10 tallest mountains in the world. Everest is out there. The pilot flies blind and navigates

147

00:14:31,880 --> 00:14:37,240

through stomach churning wind shear. There you are here. Yeah, you can feel it. But then,

148

00:14:38,760 --> 00:14:39,960

fog looks like it's burning off.

149

00:14:44,200 --> 00:14:48,760

There is nothing in the world to which I can compare this view. No metaphor to do it justice.

150

00:14:49,400 --> 00:14:54,360

Beyond the glass, there is only the towering, snow-capped majesty of Himalaya.

151

00:14:55,400 --> 00:14:59,080

Is it any wonder that Buddhists consider this the home of the gods?

152

00:15:01,480 --> 00:15:06,760

But like any glimpse at heaven, this one is fleeting. Not much wiggle room in here.

153

00:15:06,760 --> 00:15:12,120

Yeah, I don't know. The pilot navigates between two soaring peaks,

154

00:15:12,120 --> 00:15:16,840

and while it seems like the absolute ends of the earth up here, I'm amazed to see a village

155

00:15:16,840 --> 00:15:19,880

and an airstrip below. Helps an airport, yeah?

156

00:15:22,040 --> 00:15:26,920

Fuel is running low, and we circle into land with nearly 50 mile an hour wind gusts.

157

00:15:27,560 --> 00:15:29,320

Not much of a runway. Short.

158

00:15:34,120 --> 00:15:37,080

Not that. There we go. Hey, great flying. Thank you.

159

00:15:38,680 --> 00:15:43,800

We offload our gear, resupply the chopper with black market fuel, and send it back to the capital.

160

00:15:47,800 --> 00:15:53,240

Two hours later, it returns with the remainder of my equipment, and more importantly, the rest of my crew.

161

00:15:55,160 --> 00:15:58,840

Hey, the gang's all here. Let's go find Shangri-La.

162

00:16:02,360 --> 00:16:07,640

Reunited, we suck in the thin, cool air and enter what feels like a waking dream,

163

00:16:07,640 --> 00:16:12,120

a picture-perfect village 8,800 feet above sea level.

164

00:16:12,120 --> 00:16:17,480

This is the village of Jomsom. It's a little more than a street with few little shops and

165

00:16:17,480 --> 00:16:22,200

guest houses for trekkers who make it up this high. For us, a staging area where we could begin

166

00:16:22,200 --> 00:16:26,440

prepping our vehicles for the road ahead. A convoy of jeeps and trucks are packed,

167

00:16:26,440 --> 00:16:29,320

and then we hit the road. And I do mean the road.

168

00:16:35,880 --> 00:16:39,800

There's only one here. This valley is the deepest in the world,

169

00:16:39,800 --> 00:16:45,080

flanked by the planet's seventh and tenth highest peaks. This is wild. We're really just driving

170

00:16:45,080 --> 00:16:51,320

in the bottom of the riverbed here. This is the road, and it's like this the whole way.

171

00:16:51,320 --> 00:16:54,280

Yeah, just letting that sink in.

172

00:17:10,360 --> 00:17:16,440

Here's the plan. From Jomsom, we'll follow the snaking canyon north to the town of Chuksang

173

00:17:16,440 --> 00:17:21,160

to meet the archaeologists. From there, our convoy will push further north to investigate

174

00:17:21,160 --> 00:17:24,280

the mysterious sky caves that could be the real-life Shangri-La.

175

00:17:30,360 --> 00:17:34,040

That is, assuming our vehicles survive the journey. So I just drive right through the

176

00:17:34,040 --> 00:17:37,000

river, Mahendra? Yeah. Just right through. Right through it.

177

00:17:43,480 --> 00:17:47,240

I have no idea how deep the water is, but there's not exactly a way around.

178

00:17:49,080 --> 00:17:53,560

Mahendra, I appear to be in the river. Here we go. We got it.

179

00:17:56,280 --> 00:17:57,720

Let's see how the rest of those guys fare.

180

00:17:58,280 --> 00:18:06,120

The rest of the convoy makes its way across, and for a change of pace, we meet up with an actual road.

181

00:18:06,760 --> 00:18:10,840

This road is very narrow. This is a two-way road? Yeah, there's two-way road here.

182

00:18:10,840 --> 00:18:13,800

And I'm technically driving on the left. No, no, right, right.

183

00:18:15,160 --> 00:18:18,520

But how do we let this guy pass? No, no. You have to stick this way, this way.

184

00:18:22,840 --> 00:18:24,840

Oh boy. Thank you.

185

00:18:27,880 --> 00:18:30,840

Yeah, I'm on the left. Yeah, yeah.

186

00:18:35,560 --> 00:18:38,600

Two hours later, we make it to the next village known as Cagbeni.

187

00:18:39,240 --> 00:18:43,800

While Mahendra hunts for more fuel, I take a moment to explore life at 10,000 feet.

188

00:18:45,480 --> 00:18:50,360

Being so far up, away from civilization, people in these high Himalayan towns have to get very

189

00:18:50,360 --> 00:18:58,280

creative. This is a solar oven. This is legit. This is essentially a big solar panel that is

190

00:18:58,280 --> 00:19:03,480

concentrating sunlight onto this pot, which is piping hot, and they are boiling water.

191

00:19:04,680 --> 00:19:08,600

Also, you can use this to search for extraterrestrials. So it's kind of a two-fer.

192

00:19:09,640 --> 00:19:12,760

One street over, we find a somewhat familiar place for lunch.

193

00:19:14,280 --> 00:19:17,480

The place really does have everything. They even have a Yak Donald's.

194

00:19:18,440 --> 00:19:22,440

Famous, of course, for the big Yak, which everyone knows, is two-wall Yak patties.

195

00:19:23,000 --> 00:19:26,360

Special sauce, cheese. They also have the Yak nuggets.

196

00:19:27,800 --> 00:19:29,960

And then, of course, they got a Yak email for the kids, which is...

197

00:19:31,000 --> 00:19:33,720

It's a bunch of Yak meat, just a smaller portion of it, really.

198

00:19:37,880 --> 00:19:42,840

Fed, fuel, and back on the road. A few miles north, we pass a faded sign.

199

00:19:42,920 --> 00:19:47,640

Rough translation, entering the Mustang region. No trespassing by outsiders.

200

00:19:48,200 --> 00:19:53,240

This is a world that was totally closed off to foreigners until the 1990s. Even today,

201

00:19:53,240 --> 00:19:58,840

entry permits like ours are extremely limited. The result? A place out of time, and nearly

202

00:19:58,840 --> 00:20:04,280

untouched by the modern world. It's almost night when we arrive at our destination.

203

00:20:05,080 --> 00:20:09,400

This is Chuk Sang? Yeah, this is Chuk Sang. We are staying tonight here. Here? Yeah.

204

00:20:10,360 --> 00:20:12,520

Welcome to Chuk Sang.

205

00:20:15,880 --> 00:20:18,440

So what is this place? Tea house. We have some good food, though.

206

00:20:19,320 --> 00:20:23,160

Do they have beer? Yeah, they have beer. That's it. We're here. We're never leaving.

207

00:20:24,200 --> 00:20:27,560

Okay, guys, let's grab the gear and get inside and get warm.

208

00:20:27,560 --> 00:20:33,880

Our hotel for the night isn't actually a hotel, or a motel, or an inn, or a B&B, or an air B&B.

209

00:20:33,880 --> 00:20:37,080

Here in Nepal, hospitality comes in the form of a tea house.

210

00:20:37,640 --> 00:20:41,080

You find these all over the Himalayas. They're basically very simple guest houses.

211

00:20:41,080 --> 00:20:45,400

It caters to a lot of trekkers. A family will run this place. They have food downstairs and

212

00:20:45,400 --> 00:20:51,560

and hot tea and coffee. They are very simple but essential accommodations. These are lifesavers

213

00:20:51,560 --> 00:20:59,480

up here. There is no heat here, or electricity at night. It doesn't look like, but that's okay,

214

00:20:59,480 --> 00:21:06,760

because, well, it's not outdoors. I mean, it's almost outdoors. It's really cold in this room.

215

00:21:07,480 --> 00:21:14,840

Home sweet home. For the sixth time today, the crew schleps hundreds of pounds of gear from point A

216

00:21:14,840 --> 00:21:20,520

to point B. Oh, and it's now about 38 degrees. The house behind there, the second door down,

217

00:21:20,520 --> 00:21:24,120

is the gear room. Yep, copy. We'll set up all our gear over there, our charging station.

218

00:21:25,000 --> 00:21:29,800

We charge batteries and bed down for the night. Tomorrow, we make the ascent into the mountains

219

00:21:29,800 --> 00:21:32,520

and possibly to the secret realm of Shangri-La.

220

00:21:32,920 --> 00:21:41,960

Real icy in here and wet and so much weight in the cargo vehicles that you just can't get through it.

221

00:21:55,480 --> 00:21:58,520

After spending the night in a tea house in the Himalayan mountains,

222

00:21:58,520 --> 00:22:01,960

dawn reveals our first look at the village of Chuxang, Nepal.

223

00:22:04,840 --> 00:22:09,560

This may as well be a set from Game of Thrones, mud brick complexes,

224

00:22:09,560 --> 00:22:16,280

earthen tunnels, and agricultural practices dating back hundreds of years. Back at the tea house,

225

00:22:16,280 --> 00:22:20,920

my crew and I get busy packing for the onward journey. And right on schedule is archaeologist

226

00:22:20,920 --> 00:22:25,080

Mark Aldenderfer and Mohan Singh Lama from Nepal's Archaeological Ministry.

227

00:22:25,880 --> 00:22:29,000

You're a hard man to reach. Well, you know, this is where we like it, you know,

228

00:22:29,000 --> 00:22:32,600

where we can't be found easily. This is your office. This is my office. That's right. What an

229

00:22:32,600 --> 00:22:37,320

office, huh? A good trip up. Little crisis with the fuel. Oh yeah, so we're sorry. But we, uh,

230

00:22:37,320 --> 00:22:42,040

Mahendra got us here and then a bumpy road, but we made it. Good. Well, it's good to see you guys.

231

00:22:42,040 --> 00:22:46,120

I'm glad you're here. Mark may look like the lost almond brother, but he happens to be one of the

232

00:22:46,120 --> 00:22:50,280

leading experts on high altitude civilizations. So we're just getting the cars loaded up,

233

00:22:50,280 --> 00:22:53,320

but while they're doing that, maybe you can give me a walk around. Yeah, let's do it.

234

00:22:54,040 --> 00:23:00,120

Yeah. We hike out of Chuk Sang to find our first clue to Shambhala's location. Unfortunately,

235

00:23:00,120 --> 00:23:02,920

Mark can't get us there without a minor near death experience.

236

00:23:05,400 --> 00:23:07,800

Little bit of a bridge here. Just a little bit.

237

00:23:11,720 --> 00:23:14,280

Oh my God. I hope you don't have vertigo.

238

00:23:14,840 --> 00:23:20,200

Make sure you look down into the canyon.

239

00:23:21,400 --> 00:23:25,240

Some of the deepest canyons in this whole area. Kind of just trying to focus on the straight ahead

240

00:23:25,240 --> 00:23:31,080

here. Okay, okay. Watch the bolts popping out. Yeah, I'll be sure to do that, Mark. Seriously.

241

00:23:32,840 --> 00:23:38,040

The span is lined with ceremonial flags called katas. Basically, I'm crossing a bridge covered

242

00:23:38,040 --> 00:23:45,320

with prayers, which I'm choosing to take as a good sign. Where have I seen this bridge before?

243

00:23:46,040 --> 00:23:47,400

Oh, Temple of Doom. That's right.

244

00:23:52,600 --> 00:23:57,640

We make it across safely, and Mark leads me to a view that I've traveled 8,000 miles to see.

245

00:24:00,600 --> 00:24:05,000

Okay, this is stunning. It's a pretty extraordinary place, isn't it? God, it's

246

00:24:05,080 --> 00:24:08,920

on a scale that's hard to imagine. Well, this is what I wanted to show you here, this

247

00:24:09,560 --> 00:24:12,680

that remarkable complex of caves over there on the other side of the river.

248

00:24:14,120 --> 00:24:18,680

Those are all caves. All caves. All made by people. All made by people. They're not natural

249

00:24:18,680 --> 00:24:23,240

caves at all. They've been all excavated by people that have come here and built them over time.

250

00:24:23,240 --> 00:24:26,920

And you can see how difficult it would have been to get in these things as well.

251

00:24:26,920 --> 00:24:31,800

Do we know who built them? We believe that the people who built these were from the Tibetan Plateau.

252

00:24:32,520 --> 00:24:35,720

How many individual caves total do you think there are?

253

00:24:36,360 --> 00:24:39,000

No one's counted them, but I would guess there's more than 10,000.

254

00:24:39,800 --> 00:24:41,080

More than 10,000. Yeah.

255

00:24:41,080 --> 00:24:46,840

Individual caves? Yeah. And of that 10,000, how many have explorers been into?

256

00:24:46,840 --> 00:24:49,160

300. 300? Yeah. Out of 10,000? Yeah.

257

00:24:50,920 --> 00:24:52,440

You guys got a lot of work to do. Yeah.

258

00:24:52,440 --> 00:24:55,000

Think about it though for a second. How hard it is to get in these things.

259

00:24:55,000 --> 00:24:57,400

Right. And so everything has to be done by technical climbing.

260

00:24:58,360 --> 00:25:02,600

The cliffs are made of very poor sandstone riddled with larger rocks.

261

00:25:02,600 --> 00:25:06,520

The result is a fragile conglomerate that can collapse at the slightest touch.

262

00:25:07,160 --> 00:25:11,160

Several years ago, the first exploratory teams ventured into these caves.

263

00:25:11,160 --> 00:25:15,640

One climber broke his back. The other was hit by a falling rock that fractured his skull.

264

00:25:17,400 --> 00:25:20,040

Well, if you want something hard to get into, check that out up there.

265

00:25:21,640 --> 00:25:26,120

Those are caves? Yes, they are. I mean, those must be a thousand feet off the ground.

266

00:25:26,120 --> 00:25:29,880

They're quite up there. That's insane. So those are unexplored.

267

00:25:29,880 --> 00:25:33,560

Those are the kind of things that, you know, we live to look for,

268

00:25:33,560 --> 00:25:36,760

but wonder how we'd ever get inside them. Right.

269

00:25:36,760 --> 00:25:40,120

So those could be filled with archaeological treasures?

270

00:25:40,120 --> 00:25:44,600

Yes. Why doesn't the archaeology department take a drone and fly up to look inside?

271

00:25:45,400 --> 00:25:50,600

It's our policy. Our government has no authority to fluid the drones.

272

00:25:50,600 --> 00:25:53,800

No drones? Without the permission from the civil aviation.

273

00:25:53,800 --> 00:25:57,480

Due to our proximity to Tibet, where the political situation is volatile,

274

00:25:57,480 --> 00:26:00,040

drones are highly illegal in the Mustang region.

275

00:26:00,840 --> 00:26:03,480

Usually when we talk about things that are undiscovered, they're things that

276

00:26:04,680 --> 00:26:08,840

people haven't found. It's really interesting to be able to see something,

277

00:26:08,840 --> 00:26:12,280

to know that it's right there, and it's still undiscovered because we can't get to it.

278

00:26:12,280 --> 00:26:13,400

Can't do it. That's right.

279

00:26:18,040 --> 00:26:22,920

To understand who made these cave complexes and whether they could be related to Shambhala,

280

00:26:22,920 --> 00:26:26,360

Mark and Mohan are exploring some of the structures lower to the ground.

281

00:26:30,440 --> 00:26:32,680

What is this? Is it a cave?

282

00:26:34,520 --> 00:26:36,840

It's a cave complex with what's called a chapel.

283

00:26:36,840 --> 00:26:38,520

A lakang. Okay, please.

284

00:26:39,640 --> 00:26:43,560

This is a Buddhist monastery that has been hand carved out of the cliffs.

285

00:26:43,560 --> 00:26:47,160

It's at least 500 years old and is literally falling apart.

286

00:26:53,080 --> 00:26:58,520

Wow, this is something. Looks like you touch anything here and it's going to disintegrate.

287

00:26:58,520 --> 00:27:02,280

It's this nasty conglomerate except it's even worse than what we usually climb in.

288

00:27:02,280 --> 00:27:04,280

Dangerous stuff, yeah? Dangerous stuff.

289

00:27:04,280 --> 00:27:05,400

Where do we go up? Yeah.

290

00:27:05,400 --> 00:27:06,040

Straight up.

291

00:27:09,000 --> 00:27:10,040

Everybody be careful.

292

00:27:11,720 --> 00:27:12,920

Oh my word.

293

00:27:13,400 --> 00:27:24,920

I'm entering a cliff carved monastery in the northern reaches of Nepal.

294

00:27:24,920 --> 00:27:30,360

We're searching for clues as to why thousands of these caves were carved more than 500 years ago

295

00:27:30,360 --> 00:27:34,040

and how they could be linked to the fabled Shambhala or Shangri-La.

296

00:27:39,480 --> 00:27:40,040

Oh wow.

297

00:27:42,920 --> 00:27:43,880

This is incredible.

298

00:27:43,880 --> 00:27:49,000

The interior is supported by intricate woodwork and decorated with brightly painted pigments.

299

00:27:49,000 --> 00:27:54,040

But this is just the lobby. The shrine of the monastery itself is through a small opening

300

00:27:54,040 --> 00:27:58,040

in the cave wall. All of this was just hand carved out of the rock.

301

00:27:58,040 --> 00:27:59,400

Yeah, you can see it. Wow.

302

00:28:01,640 --> 00:28:07,160

We make our way deeper into the site when suddenly I come face to face with monsters.

303

00:28:09,480 --> 00:28:11,640

Wow. Look at that.

304

00:28:12,920 --> 00:28:20,200

This is crazy. These are mummified snow leopards that have been stacked up here.

305

00:28:20,200 --> 00:28:23,880

They're here to guard it, to protect it. And who knows how long they've been here.

306

00:28:24,760 --> 00:28:27,720

But something that they've never seen before.

307

00:28:29,960 --> 00:28:33,160

We round the corner and enter the inner sanctum of the monastery.

308

00:28:35,480 --> 00:28:38,760

Inside the chamber is a magnificent shrine of Buddha,

309

00:28:38,760 --> 00:28:44,280

surrounded by fierce looking deities, intricately painted walls and hand carved ornamentation.

310

00:28:44,920 --> 00:28:48,280

This wooden frame behind the Buddha is unbelievable.

311

00:28:50,360 --> 00:28:53,880

Look behind you, you can see one of the protected deities.

312

00:28:53,880 --> 00:28:57,160

Yeah, Mahakala. There's a story that apparently goes at this place.

313

00:28:57,160 --> 00:29:00,360

That you should not enter this if you're not pure of heart.

314

00:29:00,360 --> 00:29:01,160

Oh, now you tell me.

315

00:29:01,160 --> 00:29:05,240

Well, I'm sorry. We'll find out in about 15 or 20 minutes whether or not you really do have

316

00:29:05,240 --> 00:29:07,080

a pure heart because you're said to die.

317

00:29:09,720 --> 00:29:10,760

Wow. So...

318

00:29:10,760 --> 00:29:11,240

Cheche?

319

00:29:13,240 --> 00:29:15,160

Sammy, you guys gonna be all right?

320

00:29:15,160 --> 00:29:16,280

Think good thoughts.

321

00:29:16,280 --> 00:29:16,600

Right.

322

00:29:16,600 --> 00:29:18,040

Think nice thoughts.

323

00:29:18,040 --> 00:29:18,760

Okay, got it.

324

00:29:19,720 --> 00:29:23,400

I'm not too eager to feel the wrath of the Buddhist deities watching over me.

325

00:29:23,400 --> 00:29:28,040

And based on the offerings, it looks as though the locals are still trying to curry favor with them as well.

326

00:29:28,680 --> 00:29:31,080

Tell me a little bit about what goes on in this room.

327

00:29:31,080 --> 00:29:35,880

They meditate here and they treat the local peoples.

328

00:29:35,880 --> 00:29:38,040

So it's a meditation place, but also if you were sick,

329

00:29:38,120 --> 00:29:39,320

you would come here for healing.

330

00:29:39,320 --> 00:29:39,880

It's a medicine place.

331

00:29:39,880 --> 00:29:42,360

Yeah, there'd be an amchi, a medicine llama.

332

00:29:42,360 --> 00:29:45,880

A person would come here and you'd bring your complaint to him and they would try to find

333

00:29:45,880 --> 00:29:46,840

out what's wrong with you.

334

00:29:46,840 --> 00:29:48,600

The family physician, basically.

335

00:29:48,600 --> 00:29:54,600

This monastery is a rock-carved hospital of sorts, a place of spiritual and physical healing.

336

00:29:54,600 --> 00:29:57,640

But it's only one of 10,000 caves in the region.

337

00:29:59,080 --> 00:30:02,520

To find out why there are so many more and what else they were used for,

338

00:30:03,480 --> 00:30:06,280

we head back to the mortal world to continue our search.

339

00:30:07,240 --> 00:30:09,720

Mark guides the convoy further north into the valley.

340

00:30:10,360 --> 00:30:14,840

His route will take us through the tiny town of Chosur, towards the city of Lomantang,

341

00:30:14,840 --> 00:30:18,520

once the capital of an ancient kingdom and the largest village in the region.

342

00:30:19,560 --> 00:30:23,240

The drive through the Mustang is almost perversely difficult and lonely,

343

00:30:23,240 --> 00:30:26,840

but tiny villages dot the path all the way up to the Tibetan border.

344

00:30:26,840 --> 00:30:30,200

In fact, we even make a major discovery right by the side of the road.

345

00:30:33,960 --> 00:30:34,360

Right there.

346

00:30:35,160 --> 00:30:36,360

Shangri-La, it's real.

347

00:30:36,920 --> 00:30:38,440

Mark, you've missed it this whole time.

348

00:30:38,440 --> 00:30:38,840

I know.

349

00:30:39,480 --> 00:30:40,440

Mythical kingdom.

350

00:30:41,080 --> 00:30:41,880

It's real, folks.

351

00:30:42,600 --> 00:30:44,920

And they offer late checkout and free continental breakfast.

352

00:30:46,760 --> 00:30:49,880

Passing up the chance to get a AAA discount at Shangri-La,

353

00:30:49,880 --> 00:30:51,960

we carry on and look for the real thing.

354

00:30:52,760 --> 00:30:54,920

How would you describe the roads north of here?

355

00:30:54,920 --> 00:31:00,680

There's some parts of it that are good, that is decent, and then most of the road is quite scrappy.

356

00:31:00,680 --> 00:31:02,920

When you say some parts are decent, the half mile?

357

00:31:02,920 --> 00:31:04,040

Oh, god.

358

00:31:04,120 --> 00:31:08,760

You're going to want to use whatever driving skill you have achieved over the years of your

359

00:31:08,760 --> 00:31:10,200

life driving in weird places?

360

00:31:11,160 --> 00:31:12,280

This is the ultimate test.

361

00:31:13,640 --> 00:31:14,440

How bad could it be?

362

00:31:16,440 --> 00:31:16,760

Bad.

363

00:31:17,640 --> 00:31:21,240

We leave the valley and begin to climb up along the side of the cliffs.

364

00:31:21,240 --> 00:31:24,360

There's no pavement, a narrow track, and instead of a shoulder,

365

00:31:24,360 --> 00:31:27,640

you get a 300-foot drop into a new career in archaeology.

366

00:31:28,200 --> 00:31:29,000

As a subject.

367

00:31:29,880 --> 00:31:32,440

As we progress, the road gets markedly steeper.

368

00:31:34,280 --> 00:31:36,120

Then it gets downright sinister.

369

00:31:37,800 --> 00:31:38,120

Ice.

370

00:31:39,400 --> 00:31:40,520

Wow, look at this.

371

00:31:40,520 --> 00:31:41,640

Go through, you think, Mander?

372

00:31:41,640 --> 00:31:41,960

No.

373

00:31:41,960 --> 00:31:42,840

Yeah, yeah.

374

00:31:42,840 --> 00:31:43,160

Go through?

375

00:31:43,160 --> 00:31:43,640

Yeah, go through.

376

00:31:47,000 --> 00:31:48,120

Okay, here we go.

377

00:31:51,640 --> 00:31:52,360

I see water.

378

00:31:54,040 --> 00:31:54,360

Okay.

379

00:31:56,760 --> 00:31:58,200

Come on, come on, come on, come on, come on.

380

00:31:58,200 --> 00:31:58,680

Good.

381

00:32:03,000 --> 00:32:03,880

Come on, come on, come on.

382

00:32:04,040 --> 00:32:04,520

Okay.

383

00:32:13,560 --> 00:32:16,280

Struggling to pass 12,000 feet above sea level,

384

00:32:16,280 --> 00:32:20,680

my road trip to the sky caves of Nepal hits a major roadblock, literally.

385

00:32:23,640 --> 00:32:25,880

I get out of the car to assess the situation.

386

00:32:27,080 --> 00:32:27,960

He might be stuck.

387

00:32:30,040 --> 00:32:30,600

He's stuck.

388

00:32:31,960 --> 00:32:32,360

Stuck?

389

00:32:33,080 --> 00:32:35,640

Cascading ice and water from the peaks above

390

00:32:35,640 --> 00:32:38,520

have turned an unstable road into a death trap.

391

00:32:38,520 --> 00:32:41,720

One of our vehicles is now stuck in the slushy mess.

392

00:32:41,720 --> 00:32:46,040

Real icy in here and wet, and so much weight in the cargo vehicles that

393

00:32:46,040 --> 00:32:47,080

you just can't get through it.

394

00:32:47,720 --> 00:32:51,880

Our team tries to fill the hole with flat stones over which the 4x4 can roll.

395

00:33:02,920 --> 00:33:06,280

Go, go, go, go, go, go, go, go, yeah.

396

00:33:07,160 --> 00:33:07,400

Yeah.

397

00:33:08,520 --> 00:33:08,840

Okay.

398

00:33:11,160 --> 00:33:15,240

Now that one vehicle is free, my crew climbs out of the convoy to cross on foot.

399

00:33:16,520 --> 00:33:20,360

So it's really steep here, and we're going to walk this crossing,

400

00:33:20,360 --> 00:33:22,280

send the cars through this little weight in the crossing.

401

00:33:24,280 --> 00:33:26,520

Here's the fun fact, there's no oxygen up here.

402

00:33:33,240 --> 00:33:43,640

Out of breath, but safe, we climb back into the 4x4s and press on to the tiny town of Chaucer.

403

00:33:47,080 --> 00:33:51,800

It's the last place for us to gear up on our journey, and Mark has an unusual shopping list.

404

00:33:53,000 --> 00:33:55,560

Stopping here to pick up a couple of local helpers from the village

405

00:33:55,560 --> 00:33:57,640

and to acquire some ladders, which we're going to need.

406

00:33:57,640 --> 00:34:01,000

Lash all that to the car, drive a little bit further, and then we're going to be on foot.

407

00:34:01,960 --> 00:34:05,960

The ladders are hardly state of the art, unless the art is from the Renaissance period.

408

00:34:06,920 --> 00:34:08,040

Okay, we got a ladder.

409

00:34:08,600 --> 00:34:09,160

Yeah, yeah.

410

00:34:09,160 --> 00:34:09,720

Let's go.

411

00:34:09,720 --> 00:34:10,520

We're ready to go.

412

00:34:13,560 --> 00:34:18,520

We pack up our new cargo and drive until the steep and rocky terrain forces us to walk.

413

00:34:26,200 --> 00:34:26,840

Stop here.

414

00:34:26,840 --> 00:34:27,480

Yeah.

415

00:34:27,480 --> 00:34:28,440

No more road.

416

00:34:28,440 --> 00:34:28,760

Okay.

417

00:34:29,560 --> 00:34:29,960

On foot.

418

00:34:31,480 --> 00:34:37,720

Okay, let's get ready to hike.

419

00:34:43,640 --> 00:34:46,200

The landscape here is utterly empty.

420

00:34:46,200 --> 00:34:49,720

For the first time in my life, I'm getting a good idea of how Buzz Aldrin must have felt.

421

00:34:51,480 --> 00:34:52,680

Not easy.

422

00:34:53,000 --> 00:34:59,800

Mark has brought us here because high above the village of Chaucer, archaeologists have identified

423

00:34:59,800 --> 00:35:04,840

another collection of skycades, and locals claim to have spotted other structures that have never

424

00:35:04,840 --> 00:35:05,560

been explored.

425

00:35:09,480 --> 00:35:13,640

We hike on, enveloped by the clearest sunshine and purest air on earth.

426

00:35:13,640 --> 00:35:17,560

Though as we pass 13,000 feet, I could use a bit more of the air.

427

00:35:17,560 --> 00:35:20,040

Honestly, it's like breathing through a cocktail.

428

00:35:20,040 --> 00:35:24,040

The Nepalese who grew up at these heights are having a slightly easier time of it.

429

00:35:32,600 --> 00:35:33,160

Hold on.

430

00:35:43,400 --> 00:35:44,040

Caves, yeah?

431

00:35:45,080 --> 00:35:49,560

Hours of hiking and we've arrived at some seriously remote, man-made caves.

432

00:35:51,000 --> 00:35:52,520

Okay, now we just have to get in.

433

00:35:53,080 --> 00:35:54,120

Okay, get the ladders going.

434

00:35:54,120 --> 00:35:54,760

We'll get up there.

435

00:35:55,320 --> 00:36:01,080

The Nepalese team quickly lashes the two ladders together into an extension ladder in which I have zero confidence.

436

00:36:04,520 --> 00:36:05,640

How far up do you figure that is?

437

00:36:06,280 --> 00:36:07,640

About 40 feet, give or take.

438

00:36:08,440 --> 00:36:10,280

Okay, let's get into it.

439

00:36:12,680 --> 00:36:15,800

One of our local guides takes the first trip up to the cave.

440

00:36:15,800 --> 00:36:16,520

Okay.

441

00:36:16,520 --> 00:36:18,760

As he climbs, the ladder shudders underneath them.

442

00:36:20,280 --> 00:36:21,240

You made it.

443

00:36:21,240 --> 00:36:21,880

Let's drop.

444

00:36:21,880 --> 00:36:22,360

Yeah?

445

00:36:22,360 --> 00:36:22,840

Here you go.

446

00:36:25,960 --> 00:36:26,440

What?

447

00:36:26,440 --> 00:36:27,400

Next, it's Mark's turn.

448

00:36:27,960 --> 00:36:28,760

And then mine.

449

00:36:30,360 --> 00:36:31,320

You make it, Mark?

450

00:36:31,320 --> 00:36:31,800

I'm good.

451

00:36:31,800 --> 00:36:32,920

Okay, I'm coming up.

452

00:36:38,920 --> 00:36:40,360

This is one crazy ladder.

453

00:36:42,920 --> 00:36:43,720

Almost there.

454

00:36:47,400 --> 00:36:48,440

Okay, here we go.

455

00:36:48,600 --> 00:36:49,400

Oh, wow.

456

00:36:51,000 --> 00:36:52,280

This is extraordinary.

457

00:37:18,440 --> 00:37:21,720

I climb into a sky cave to learn what secrets are hiding inside.

458

00:37:24,200 --> 00:37:25,000

Okay, here we go.

459

00:37:29,720 --> 00:37:30,600

Oh, wow.

460

00:37:32,600 --> 00:37:36,520

Climbing in, I see that the small opening in the cliff was just the beginning.

461

00:37:37,240 --> 00:37:40,120

A low passage leads to a sun-soaked chamber.

462

00:37:40,600 --> 00:37:44,360

And on the walls, painted art for more than 500 years ago.

463

00:37:45,000 --> 00:37:45,640

Look at that.

464

00:37:46,600 --> 00:37:48,440

Absolutely stunning art.

465

00:37:50,120 --> 00:37:51,640

I was not expecting this.

466

00:37:52,360 --> 00:37:53,080

Oh, my word.

467

00:37:54,920 --> 00:37:56,680

This was worth the walk up, I hope not.

468

00:37:56,680 --> 00:37:57,480

Oh, my God.

469

00:37:57,480 --> 00:37:58,120

Big time.

470

00:37:58,120 --> 00:37:59,480

That is incredible.

471

00:38:00,040 --> 00:38:05,000

From floor to ceiling, the walls are covered with meticulously painted Buddhist imagery.

472

00:38:05,000 --> 00:38:08,920

And within that art, clues to help understand the cave itself.

473

00:38:08,920 --> 00:38:13,400

Makes this unique is that there's artistic designs in different hands.

474

00:38:13,400 --> 00:38:18,520

So in other words, a number of different individuals came here and painted this on the walls of this cave.

475

00:38:18,520 --> 00:38:19,560

It's this refuge.

476

00:38:19,560 --> 00:38:20,280

They come here.

477

00:38:20,280 --> 00:38:21,960

They bring their art styles with them.

478

00:38:21,960 --> 00:38:23,720

They paint them on the walls of these caves.

479

00:38:24,280 --> 00:38:27,000

What's really fascinating is that when you look at each of these panels,

480

00:38:27,000 --> 00:38:29,960

not all of them, but when you begin to look at the panels more carefully,

481

00:38:29,960 --> 00:38:34,840

what you find is there's a variety of different artistic styles that are represented on this wall.

482

00:38:34,840 --> 00:38:35,320

Okay.

483

00:38:35,320 --> 00:38:41,240

So you take a look at this individual here with the, you know, the staring black eyes looking right

out at you.

484

00:38:41,320 --> 00:38:45,160

There's an identical image found in a monastery in Ladakh,

485

00:38:45,160 --> 00:38:47,560

which is in northwestern India.

486

00:38:47,560 --> 00:38:49,800

That's part of the Tibetan cultural region.

487

00:38:50,600 --> 00:38:52,680

Only one of two images like that in the world.

488

00:38:52,680 --> 00:38:53,480

That's correct.

489

00:38:53,480 --> 00:38:54,040

Wow.

490

00:38:54,040 --> 00:38:56,280

But that tells you the strength and power of this place.

491

00:38:56,920 --> 00:38:59,720

The existence of work by different ancient artists,

492

00:38:59,720 --> 00:39:02,680

as well as the same painting in two different places,

493

00:39:02,680 --> 00:39:07,720

means that people traveled hundreds of miles by foot to this cave as a destination.

494

00:39:07,720 --> 00:39:10,920

And over how many years do you think this cave was used like this?

495

00:39:10,920 --> 00:39:13,800

You know, I would guess it, two or three hundred years would be my guess.

496

00:39:13,800 --> 00:39:15,560

Of people just continuously coming in.

497

00:39:16,840 --> 00:39:21,560

So this cave and perhaps others in the Mustang were a destination for Buddhist pilgrims

498

00:39:21,560 --> 00:39:23,800

to meditate and to create art.

499

00:39:23,800 --> 00:39:28,440

This is a place of culture, but sadly it is vanishing before our very eyes.

500

00:39:30,920 --> 00:39:32,360

The people wanted to come here.

501

00:39:32,360 --> 00:39:33,240

Exactly.

502

00:39:33,240 --> 00:39:34,440

That is amazing.

503

00:39:35,080 --> 00:39:38,360

And really you can see that it is all kind of disassembling.

504

00:39:38,360 --> 00:39:39,880

This was all plastered.

505

00:39:39,880 --> 00:39:40,280

Yes.

506

00:39:40,280 --> 00:39:40,760

And painted.

507

00:39:41,800 --> 00:39:45,640

There might have been a whole nother motif of art on here that has fallen away.

508

00:39:47,320 --> 00:39:50,600

They're going to be reclaimed, I would think, at some point by the environment.

509

00:39:51,160 --> 00:39:54,120

You know, preservation is a real challenge up here, even though it's dry.

510

00:39:54,920 --> 00:39:59,880

It's still wet enough that, you know, water begins to seep in cracks, the paint peels off.

511

00:39:59,880 --> 00:40:00,280

Right.

512

00:40:00,280 --> 00:40:01,000

There it is gone.

513

00:40:01,720 --> 00:40:05,160

In a hundred years it is almost certain this place will be gone.

514

00:40:05,160 --> 00:40:09,800

Perhaps like Shambhala itself, one day these caves will be thought of as a myth.

515

00:40:09,800 --> 00:40:11,800

So I count myself lucky to have seen them.

516

00:40:12,920 --> 00:40:14,680

Mark, this was amazing.

517

00:40:15,560 --> 00:40:19,720

We carefully moved back through the narrow cave entrance and down the ladder to continue our

518

00:40:19,720 --> 00:40:20,440

investigation.

519

00:40:22,200 --> 00:40:27,160

We're trying to spot never before excavated rock structures that we were alerted to by the locals

520

00:40:27,160 --> 00:40:28,360

in the village below.

521

00:40:28,360 --> 00:40:31,320

The locals tell us there's something interesting over there, so let's go take a look and see

522

00:40:31,320 --> 00:40:32,680

what that interesting thing might be.

523

00:40:32,680 --> 00:40:33,240

Yeah, for sure.

524

00:40:33,240 --> 00:40:33,800

Let's check it out.

525

00:40:34,920 --> 00:40:37,320

We carefully hike across the sheer ridge.

526

00:40:37,320 --> 00:40:38,920

There's little room for error here.

527

00:40:39,800 --> 00:40:40,360

Watch your step.

528

00:40:43,560 --> 00:40:46,360

Once across, we look for a way to the top of the rise.

529

00:40:49,320 --> 00:40:50,280

Bring the ladder here.

530

00:40:51,400 --> 00:40:54,040

Well, if you're afraid of heights, here's a pro tip for you.

531

00:40:54,040 --> 00:40:58,920

Don't ever lean a homemade ladder up against a crumbling rock tower at the edge of a cliff.

532

00:41:01,800 --> 00:41:02,520

Wall's crumbling.

533

00:41:04,280 --> 00:41:04,840

Be careful.

534

00:41:05,480 --> 00:41:06,680

Back up, back up, back up.

535

00:41:06,680 --> 00:41:07,160

You okay?

536

00:41:09,960 --> 00:41:11,320

So, what do we got?

537

00:41:11,320 --> 00:41:15,640

When you have small chambers like this, there are only one of two things usually put inside,

538

00:41:15,640 --> 00:41:18,280

something stored or human burials.

539

00:41:18,280 --> 00:41:21,080

So, looking inside, guess what we got?

540

00:41:23,320 --> 00:41:24,120

Oh my god.

541

00:41:25,400 --> 00:41:27,400

Next time on Expedition Unknown.

542

00:41:30,760 --> 00:41:32,280

So, nobody's been up inside them before?

543

00:41:32,280 --> 00:41:33,960

No, this is uncharted territory for us.

544

00:41:34,920 --> 00:41:38,360

My search for Shangri-La turns into a struggle for survival.

545

00:41:40,440 --> 00:41:41,080

Along the way down.

546

00:41:42,040 --> 00:41:43,240

Oh my god, look at this.

547

00:41:43,960 --> 00:41:45,720

That is discovery.

548

00:41:46,360 --> 00:41:52,520

At high scale new heights, holy f\*\*\*ing in an attempt to find heaven on earth.

549

00:41:52,520 --> 00:41:53,000

There it is.

550

00:41:53,000 --> 00:41:53,720

You can see it.

551

00:41:53,720 --> 00:41:54,200

You see it?