

## Classic Nepal

**Country(ies):** Nepal

**Tour type:** Small Group

**Transport:** A/C minibus & 4x4 jeeps

**Group size:** Min: 2 | Max: 12

**Days:** 15 Days

**Start location:** Kathmandu, Nepal

**End location:** Kathmandu, Nepal

**Departs On:** Saturday

**Meals:** Breakfasts - 14, Lunches - 1, Dinners - 2

**Highlights:**

Kathmandu, mountain views from Nagarkot, Bhaktapur ancient centre, Trisuli river rafting option, Chitwan wildlife safaris, lakeside Pokhara, trekking to Poon Hill, hilltop village of Bandipur

**Places Visited:** Kathmandu, Chitwan NP, Bandipur, Pokhara, Poon Hill, Nagarkot & Bhaktapur



# Itinerary

## Day 1: Arrive in Kathmandu, transfer to hotel

We greet you on your arrival in Kathmandu airport today and transfer you to your hotel in the Thamel tourist district of the city. Our rep will help you settle in and familiarise you with the local area.

**OVERNIGHT:** Kathmandu hotel

**MEALS:** None

**EXTRAS:** Bardia National Park Extension || Single room supplement (NPSGCN) || Extra day in Kathmandu - pre-tour

## Day 2: Kathmandu walking tour, Swayambunath temple

Our tour starts today with a guided walk from our hotel in Thamel through small back streets full of numerous tiny shops, workshops, temples, and stupas to Durbar Square with its array of wooden and stone carved temples and palaces. After lunch at a rooftop restaurant overlooking the square, we drive to the important Swayambunath Stupa which sits on a hilltop overlooking the city, visible from miles around. Also known locally as the 'monkey temple', we'll see these nimble inhabitants scampering in and around the trees and temple.

**OVERNIGHT:** Kathmandu hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:** Everest Mountain Flight

## Day 3: Drive to Chitwan National Park, rafting option

This morning we drive out of the Kathmandu Valley and drive to Chitwan National Park in the lowland Terai region of Nepal that borders India (approx. 7-8 hours). This will be our first taste of rural Nepal, and we'll see terraced farmland, forested hills, and rushing rivers. An option is available today to spend a few hours white water rafting on the Trisuli river (requires advance booking). Those choosing this option will rejoin the group in Chitwan this evening). On arrival in Chitwan, we check into our lodge, and then take an early evening village walk to see how the local Tharu people live and work.

**OVERNIGHT:** Chitwan hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast, Dinner

**EXTRAS:** Trisuli white water rafting

## Day 4: Chitwan National Park wildlife safaris

We spend the whole day today exploring Chitwan National Park in search of the endangered Asian one-horned rhino, which Chitwan is famous for protecting. If you're very lucky you may also see a leopard, wild elephant or sloth bear, or even an elusive Bengal tiger, while the rhino, deer, monkeys, sloth bears, wild boar and numerous different birdlife are common sightings. Activities included are a jungle walk, river canoe trip and jeep safari.

**OVERNIGHT:** Chitwan hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**EXTRAS:** None

## Day 5: Chitwan to the hilltop village of Bandipur

Early this morning you can take a walk outside the park dedicated mainly to bird watching. After breakfast we then leave Chitwan and the Terai and drive to the ancient hilltop Newari trading village of Bandipur. The centre of Bandipur has been restored, and is vehicle free, with some lovely old buildings. You have time this afternoon to relax here, or take a walk or hike through the surrounding fields, villages and hills. Walks include a 2-hour downhill hike through fields and forest to Siddha Cave, one of the largest in Asia and full of impressive rock formations (bring a torch). You can hike back uphill to Bandipur from here or walk down to the highway for our vehicle to pick you up. A shorter walk from the town centre can take you uphill for around 30min to the Thani Mai Temple, which is well worth it for its views at sunset if the weather is clear. In fact the whole of Bandipur affords good mountain views.

**OVERNIGHT:** Bandipur hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:** None

## Day 6: Bandipur to Pokhara, afternoon tour

We leave Bandipur this morning and drive on to the lakeside town of Pokhara, which sits at the base of the Annapurna range of mountains and is the main access point for trekking and rafting in the area. We will visit various places around Pokhara this afternoon, including the Peace Pagoda, Tibetan refugee camp and Devi Falls.

**OVERNIGHT:** Pokhara hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:** None

## Day 7: Drive to Naya Pul, trek to Ghandruk

We drive through low hills and valleys via the village of Lumle to Nayapul. We start our trek through the Annapurna foothills here by walking to Birethanti (approx. 1-2 hours) before continuing on a path following the Modi Khola river which is fairly flat until you begin your long ascent from Shauli Bazaar to Ghandruk. The town of Ghandruk is an important settlement in the region and is the heart of the Annapurna Conservation Area Project, as well as home to thousands of serving and retired Gurkha soldiers. The total trekking for today is approximately 5-6 hours.

**OVERNIGHT:** Ghandruk trekking lodge

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:** Trekking Pack

## Day 8: Trekking from Ghandruk to Tadapani

The walk from Ghandruk to Tadapani passes through several types of forest, some with unusual trails of moss hanging down from the tree branches. The rhododendron forest here is considered one of the largest in the world, and is a spectacular sight in spring when the trees come into flower. Once you arrive in Tadapani you will be rewarded with spectacular views of Annapurna South, Hiunchuli and Machhapuchhare. The total trekking for today is approximately 4 hours, so you have plenty of time for photo stops and perhaps to visit the Old Gurung museum before you leave Ghandruk which displays traditional clothes and equipment used by the local Gurung people.

**OVERNIGHT:** Tadapani trekking lodge

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:** None

## Day 9: Trekking from Tadapani to Ghorepani

The trail between Tadapani and Ghorepani crosses several river valleys and winds its way through more rhododendron forests where monkeys are often seen. After leaving the mountain forests behind you can get some

clearer views before arriving in Bantanthi. You have time to rest for a while in Bantanthi before climbing through forests and following a grass and pine covered ridge to Ghorepani. The total trekking for today is approximately 4-5 hours.

**OVERNIGHT:** Ghorepani trekking lodge

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:** None

## **Day 10: Sunrise on Poon Hill, trekking from Ghorepani to Tirkhedunga**

We start early today and climb up to Poon Hill for great views of the Annapurna Range and Macchapuchare in particular. The rising mists over the foothills of the Himalayas stretching into the distance away from you are also a beautiful sight. After returning to the lodge for breakfast, we walk down to Tirkhedunga through oak and rhododendron forests via Nangethanti, Banthanti and a steep stepped descent from Ulleri. Today's trekking time is approximately 5-6 hours.

**OVERNIGHT:** Tirkhedunga trekking lodge

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:** None

## **Day 11: Finish trek, free time in Pokhara**

We finish trekking today by walking from Tirkhedunga back to Naya Pul with some more steep descents and beautiful scenery. After driving back into Pokhara the rest of the day is free to relax, take a boat out on the lake, or enjoy a relaxing meal and drink at one of the Lakeside area's many restaurants while reflecting on your trek. Today's trekking time is approximately 3 hours.

**OVERNIGHT:** Pokhara hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:** None

## **Day 12: Transfer from Pokhara to Kathmandu**

We leave the Annapurna region behind this morning and take a tourist bus back to Kathmandu (approx. 7-8 hours). An upgrade to a domestic flight is available on request. The remainder of the day and evening is free to settle back into busy city life again!

**OVERNIGHT:** Kathmandu hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:** None

## **Day 13: Bhaktapur ancient centre, Nagarkot**

This morning you have the option of taking a spectacular mountain viewing flight to see Everest and its surrounding peaks up close. Otherwise, the morning is free to check out the shops and markets in Kathmandu for some souvenirs. This afternoon we visit one of the other ancient cities in the Kathmandu valley, Bhaktapur. The centre of Bhaktapur has been designated a World Heritage Site, and hosts the best preserved ancient buildings and temples in the Kathmandu valley, with some great examples of traditional wooden architecture to be seen. Our tour here will really give you a taste for how life has been led in the valley for centuries, and you'll see several traditional crafts still taking place, including a whole square dedicated to pottery. Later, we head into the hills surrounding the valley and spend the night in the village of Nagarkot. The village is perched on a ridge and is known for having some of the best views in the Kathmandu Valley.

**OVERNIGHT:** Nagarkot hotel  
**MEALS:** Breakfast  
**EXTRAS:** Everest Mountain Flight

## Day 14: Walk to Changu Narayan temple, Pasupatinath and Boudhanath

This morning we hope for spectacular sunrise views from Nagarkot before walking downhill through the Tilkot Forest Reserve and along a ridge with classic terraced farmland on either side to the regions oldest Temple - Changu Narayan. We drive back from here to Kathmandu, stopping en-route at two of the cities most important, and contrasting religious pilgrimage sites - Pasupatinath temple (Hindu) and Boudhanath stupa (Buddhist). The evening is free for you to explore Kathmandu and Thamel one last time and enjoy a farewell meal together.

**OVERNIGHT:** Kathmandu hotel  
**MEALS:** Breakfast  
**EXTRAS:** None

## Day 15: Kathmandu, free time, transfer to airport

You have some free time in Kathmandu today until we transfer you to the airport for departure. Extensions to the tour are available to add more trekking, white water rafting or to visit Bardia National Park (the best place in Nepal to see tigers). First thing this morning there is also another option to take a spectacular mountain viewing flight up to see Mt. Everest (requires an evening international flight departure).

**OVERNIGHT:** N/A  
**MEALS:** Breakfast  
**EXTRAS:** Everest Mountain Flight || Bardia National Park Extension || Extra day in Kathmandu - post-tour

## Included

- All accommodation as stated in the itinerary
- Private car, minivan or minibus subject to group size
- All transfers, including 24-hour airport arrival & departure transfer service
- Tourist bus from Pokhara to Kathmandu
- Services of a local escort throughout the tour
- Specialist city guides and wildlife safari guides in Kathmandu, Bhakatpur and Chitwan.
- Trekking guide
- Trekking porters (provided with clothing, footwear and accommodation as per IPPG recommendations).
- All national park entry and activity fees
- Meals as indicated in the itinerary
- All entrance fees to sites visited in the itinerary

## Excluded

- International flights (available on request)
- Visa fees (available on arrival for most nationalities)
- Travel insurance (compulsory, available on request)
- Meals not indicated in the itinerary (budget around US\$60 for lunches & dinners on the trek)
- Drinks, snacks and other personal expenses (e.g. laundry)
- Tips for tour leader, guides and porters
- Any other items not mentioned above

# Options

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Our tours are designed to include all that you need to enjoy a really special time in the destination you're visiting.

However, we do also offer some extra options to complement the tour and add some additional sightseeing or activities, or some extra time at either end of the tour.

All accommodation based options (e.g. Single supplements, extra nights, cruise upgrades) should be booked and paid for in advance so that we can make the appropriate arrangements.

Other options may either be booked and paid for in advance or while you are on the tour, though we recommend booking in advance to ensure there are no issues with availability.

Many options are priced the same throughout the year, but some may incur single or high season supplements - full details are given on the tour reservation form or on request.

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## 1. Accommodation

### 1. Hotels in Kathmandu, Pokhara, Bandipur, Nagarkot

We use comfortable tourist class hotels in Kathmandu and Pokhara (approx. 3 star). The hotels in Bandipur and Nagarkot are at a slightly lower level but make up for it with some great mountain views.

### 2. Trekking with lodges

For this lodge-based trek, we will use a variety of Lodges and Teahouses. In recent years many new lodges have sprung up and many offer quite good facilities and amenities. However, in some areas the lodges can be run on a very simple basis where toilets and washing facilities are outside the building. We can't promise that you will always have full amenities all the time, so you should understand this before embarking on this trek.

Staying in lodges gives you more comfort overnight than camping, and also allows you to meet up with and talk with other trekkers and guides at the end of the day. It also allows us to put more back into the local economies than if we were bringing everything with us.

Rooms in lodges are normally based on same sex sharing of twin rooms (though couples will be able to share). Some sheets & blankets are provided but a sleeping bag is still required. We provide the option to hire a sleeping bag in our trekking pack option, though you may still wish to bring your own inner sleeping bag liner or sleep sheet if you wish. Warm showers are available for a small fee at most lodges, though these may be bucket showers higher up.

### 3. Safari lodges in Chitwan National Park

At Chitwan National Park, we use safari lodges with comfortable clean rooms and en-suite bathrooms. We normally use lodges in and around the village of Sauraha on the edge of the park, which increases the number of activities you can do while at the park.

Please check the Single Room Supplement option for details on room sharing options and charges for solo travellers on this tour.

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## 2. Transport

Private vehicles are used for all sightseeing tours and most of the journeys throughout the tour. A tourist coach is used for the journey back from Pokhara to Kathmandu. A variety of transport including jeeps & canoes is used when you visit Chitwan.

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## 3. Transfers

The tour includes a 24-hour airport meet & assist service in Kathmandu airport, your arrival and departure airport-hotel transfers and all other transfers.

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## 4. International Flights

We want to give you as much flexibility as possible when it comes to booking your holiday with us. So, to take account of people with varying travel plans, we don't include your international flights in the main tour price. We are however very happy to suggest flights to go with the tour. Please contact us with your preferred dates and departure airport and we'll give you a selection of airlines, times and fares to choose from.

Your airport arrival & departure transfers are included on the first and last days of the tour. Most of our Nepal tours start and finish at Kathmandu airport (KTM).

On tours that combine Nepal with Tibet, and/or Bhutan, the connecting flight(s) are generally not included in the price of your tour and will need to be purchased separately. Full details will be provided at the time of booking. If we arrange the flights then e-tickets will be sent to you in advance but will also be available in Kathmandu before you travel to the airport for the flight.

We do also sometimes advertise flight inclusive packages from selected airports. Where these are shown on our website, prices are correct at the time of quoting, but are subject to continued availability of the fare used. Prices will be reconfirmed at the time of booking, and we will also provide the flight times and airline details before tickets are issued.

Flight inclusive prices are based on the cheapest Economy ticket class available which is generally non-refundable and non-changeable unless the flight is cancelled for reasons such as Covid-19, in which case the airlines are more flexible. More flexible ticket options, as well as Premium Economy and Business Class tickets are available on request for an additional supplement. Any changes made to flight inclusive bookings will be subject to the airline rules on your ticket.

### **Flight CO2 Emissions:**

Traveling by air is an amazing way to explore the world, but flights also contribute to carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions that impact the environment. By considering the airline's CO2 emissions when you choose your flight, you can help minimize your travel footprint.

When selecting your international flights and airline, we do therefore recommend that you try and also take into account the flight CO2 emissions. Some airlines and flight search websites (eg. Google Flights, Skyscanner) do publish this information, so you can compare between your flight options and make an informed decision. Thankfully, many airlines are working towards sustainability efforts, and choosing a greener option allows you to contribute to positive change while still enjoying your incredible adventure.

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## **5. Internal Flights**

Please note that all Nepalese airlines operating domestic routes in the country are currently on the European Commission's list of airlines banned in the EU. This includes those running Everest viewing flights and flights to Lukla for the start of the Everest Base Camp trek.

Along with these Everest flights we may offer some other domestic flights on some of our tours, either as part of the itinerary or as an upgrade in place of a land transfer. Where this is the case we are careful to select airlines that have a good current reputation in Nepal.

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## **6. Group Size/Tour Leaders/Guides**

We are committed to being a small group operator, as we feel this gives everyone in the group the best chance to get to know their fellow travellers and to hear and make the most of their guide. There's no point in us providing



great guides if you've got to peer over 30-40 shoulders to see them! So, we won't ever put you in a 50-seater coach with 49 other people and just one guide. Instead, we set this Nepal group departures to have a maximum of 18 travellers. Average group sizes are 8-12, lower during the low season (December-February, June-September).

Fully trained English-speaking Nepalese trekking, rafting and safari guides are provided on this tour and many of our travellers consider them a highlight of their tour. We also provide a fully trained English-speaking guide for any sightseeing tours. A tour leader (often your trekking guide) will accompany you throughout the trip.

We support and follow international guidelines for the employment of any trekking porters we use, including those of the IPPG (International Porter Protection Group)

At Encounters Travel we only use local Nepali guides and reps. We feel this gives you the best experience of the country and the sites you are seeing.

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## 7. Trekking

The trekking times given above are approximate, and will vary depending on your fitness, and also importantly, on the speed you want to walk. We will normally set off early in the morning, and have plenty of breaks during the day, before finishing trekking in mid-late afternoon. Some days will be longer than others, and your guide will let you know when there is a long day ahead.

Acclimatisation days are added into all our itineraries where required, and these cannot be missed out (not necessary on this tour). You can however, slightly adjust the itinerary as you go along if you are struggling on a particular day, or you want to forge ahead. If travelling with a group, you should be prepared to walk at the speed of the slowest member.

Breakfast during your trek is included in the price of your tour. All other meals, drinks and snacks are not included however a good selection of meal choices is available at all of the trekking lodges we use. We suggest you budget approx. US\$60 to cover the extra cost of food and drink during your trek.

We have graded this trek as: **FAIR**:

*"A trek, where the terrain can vary considerably. Some days can be quite easy walking, but on others the going will be considerably harder. You must have confidence in your ability to be able to complete a day's walk even when the route becomes tough."*

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## 8. Rafting

It is a popular myth that white-water rafting is only for the young and super fit.

For all our rafting tours, you must be a competent swimmer and be unafraid of the water and to this end we are unable to accept bookings from non-swimmers. So, whether you are male or female, young or old, if you are prepared to honestly assess your physical abilities and accept the challenge then rafting is right for you.

You need to bring swimming gear, some trainers or sandals you don't mind getting wet, and a towel. We will provide wetsuits, and all the rafting equipment.

All the Nepalese rafting guides we use are fully trained and experienced on the river, and we carry a first aid kit and use safety kayakers. For the rafting option on this particular tour on the Trisuli River, there are Class II, III and IV rapids (Grades run from I to V), and you only need to be relatively fit. You don't need any previous rafting experience, and the start of your time on the river will be spent learning the skills and teamwork required. We consider the Trisuli river ideal for beginner rafters.

**Class II:** mild rapids, suitable for children and anyone seeking an enjoyable experience

**Class III:** larger rapids, requiring a little more skill but with little real danger

**Class IV:** powerful rapids, needing more advanced techniques

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## 9. Entrance Fees

All your entry fees and permits are included (to cover entry into the trekking conservation areas, and sites on the city tour).

In Chitwan, all National Park activity costs are included, to cover one of each of the following: Jungle Walk, Village Walk, River canoe trip, Elephant Ride or Jeep Safari.

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## 10. Health and Vaccinations

You should ensure you are fully insured for medical emergencies including emergency evacuation and repatriation.

Recommended vaccinations and other health protection measures vary according to the country you are visiting and where you are travelling from. We recommend you contact your GP/medical practitioner or a travel clinic for current information on vaccinations needed for your destination. You should ensure that you are up to date with vaccines and boosters recommended for your normal life at home, including for example, vaccines required for occupational risk of exposure, lifestyle risks and underlying medical conditions. In addition, additional courses or boosters normally recommended for the countries in this region are:

**Nepal:** Additional vaccinations: Diphtheria, Hepatitis A, Tetanus, Typhoid. [Malaria map](#). Yellow Fever certificate: Required if arriving from or having transitted through an infected area.

**Bhutan:** Additional vaccinations: Hepatitis A, Tetanus, Typhoid. [Malaria map](#). Yellow Fever certificate: Required if arriving from or having transitted through an infected area.

**Tibet:** Additional vaccinations: Hepatitis A, Tetanus, Typhoid. [Malaria map](#). Yellow Fever certificate: Required if arriving from or having transitted through an infected area.

**Malaria:** Vaccinations are not available against Malaria, which is a disease transmitted by mosquitoes that can be very serious and sometimes fatal. You should avoid mosquito bites by covering up bare skin with clothing such as long sleeves and long trousers and applying insect repellents to exposed skin. When necessary, sleep under a mosquito net. Mosquitoes are most active during and after sunset. You should consult with your GP/medical practitioner/travel clinic about the most appropriate malaria prophylactic medication to take for the regions you are visiting. In general the lowland regions Bhutan are considered malarial zones, while higher altitudes including central Bhutan including Paro, Thimphu, Punakha and Bumthang are not. Nepal is considered mainly low risk with prophylactics not normally required.

**Yellow Fever:** This disease is spread by infected mosquitoes that bite during the day. A Yellow Fever Certificate of vaccination may be required as a condition of entry depending on which country you are arriving from, or that you have travelled or transitted through recently (including connecting flights with stopovers of over 12 hours). You can view this [US CDC information](#) about where the virus is present and follow the links to further information detailing which countries need you to have a Yellow Fever vaccination as part of their entry requirements. Please ensure you have this certificate with you and to hand if necessary. Please inform us of any pre-existing conditions such as diabetes or asthma and any prescription medicine you may be taking. We also need to know about any food allergies or physical disabilities that you may have.

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## 11. Passports and Visas - Nepal

Passports should be valid for at least six months after your departure from the country. Please do not bring an

almost full or almost expired passport. Visa arrangements are the responsibility of the traveller, and requirements are subject to change by the local authorities.

Many nationals can obtain their Nepalese visa in Kathmandu airport upon arrival (including UK, EU, US, CA, AU, NZ, SA citizens). The costs for a single entry visa are currently:

- up to 15 days - US\$ 25
- 16 to 30 days - US\$ 40
- 31 to 90 days - US\$ 100

An additional \$20 fee is charged to convert these into a multiple entry visa which will be needed for any tours returning to Nepal after visiting Bhutan or Tibet.

The visa is obtained in the immigration area at the point where your passport is stamped. Forms to fill in are available in this immigration hall and may also be given out on your flight (if so, do fill them in before you land as it will reduce your queuing time). You will also need to fill in an arrivals card. Once your paperwork is completed, head to the immigration desk and hand over your forms, 2 passport photos, your visa fee and passport. The visa fees are set in US Dollars, but you can also pay in other currencies, but don't rely on getting given change.

**Passport Photos:** You will need two passport photos for your Nepal visa if you are obtaining it on arrival. If you are doing any trekking, rafting or visiting a National Park (i.e. on many of our tours), you should bring extras, as some of the permits we may need to get require these. Please bring at least 4 passport photos with you - they will always come in useful later if you don't need them all.

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## 12. Time

The time in India and Sri Lanka is GMT plus 5 1/2 hours.

The time in Nepal is GMT plus 5 3/4 hours.

The time in Bhutan is GMT plus 6 hours.

The time in Tibet is GMT plus 8 hours.

Daylight saving adjustments are not applied.

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## 13. Voltage

In Nepal, India and Sri Lanka, sockets are mainly two round pronged and 230 volts (Type C,D,M). In Bhutan a range of different sockets can be found, including two and three round pronged and three flat pronged (Type D,F,G).

Universal adaptors are available in most airport shops if you don't have one already. Standard UK-European adapters will work fine, though sometimes they may feel a little loose in the sockets. All hotel rooms have electrical sockets where you can re-charge cameras, phones etc. Hair dryers are sometimes available on request from the hotel reception if not in your room already but cannot be guaranteed.

If you have US appliances (110 volts) you will need a voltage converter as well as a plug adapter.

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## 14. Money

The local currency in Nepal is the Nepalese Rupee (NRs). There are a banks and several ATMs in Kathmandu where you can use a debit/credit card to withdraw cash (Visa, Mastercard), but these are not generally available out of Kathmandu or Pokhara. There are numerous money change shops in the main towns. Travellers cheques can be changed in some banks in Kathmandu and Pokhara, but not elsewhere.

You should ensure you have all the Nepalese rupees you think you will need before you leave for any trekking or visiting any more remote areas (including Bardia National Park). Try to obtain as many small denomination notes as possible, as higher value notes can be very hard to change in remote areas. You can pay with US Dollars cash in some places but should not rely on this.

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## 15. What to take

**Luggage:** Whatever you're doing in Nepal, Tibet or Bhutan, you'll find that large rigid wheeled suitcases are cumbersome - you may be able to wheel them inside the airport and your hotel, but due to the condition of roads and pavements that's often about it. As many of our tours involve a degree of adventurous activity, we strongly advise you to bring a more practical bag for these i.e. a rucksack or holdall. These are easier for both your porters, and yourself to carry around. Suitcases are OK for our cultural tours in Nepal, Tibet and Bhutan though, but please aim to bring small or medium sized ones rather than very large. If you are trekking or rafting, or doing a lot of travel throughout the country, then as little as possible is the basic message. A rucksack or holdall (50-70 liter approx.) for your main luggage, and a daypack for you to use during the day should be plenty. While rafting we only take essential kit on board the rafts, and your main luggage will travel by bus to the take-out point. While trekking your porters (Nepal) or ponies (Bhutan) will carry your main luggage, leaving you with just a daypack with things you'll need during the day. You can also leave some luggage locked safely in the pre-trek hotel if you wish. We recommend that couples plan to leave one main bag behind, and pool their remaining luggage in their other bag for the porter to carry.

**Luggage limits:** Most international airlines allow 20-23kg per person of hold luggage. Domestic flights often have smaller allowances around 15kg. As airline rules vary we recommend that you take no more than 20kg of luggage if your tour just includes international flights, and no more than 15kg if there are any domestic flights included in your itinerary. Please ask us for details if you are unsure. Any excess baggage fees will be your responsibility to cover. Most airlines allow between 5kg and 10kg for hand luggage so we suggest that you take no more than 5kg unless you have confirmed that your airline(s) will allow more than this.

If you are trekking with us, we ask that you keep the weight of your main bag that the porter will carry to a maximum of 12.5kg. This then allows the porter to carry up to 2 bags, and a maximum of 25kg (the International Porter Protection group's advised limit for Nepal is 30kg, which then leaves a little more weight for their own kit). This weight allowance includes your sleeping bag if you are hiring it from us and not carrying it with you to Nepal. If you are doing an Everest trek and flying from Kathmandu to Lukla, then flight luggage limits are 10kg for your main bag and 5kg for hand luggage - total 15kg. You can re-arrange that after you arrive in Lukla. Please keep to these limits as while you can pay for extra weight, it may be held back until the next flight which may then be delayed or cancelled.

Treks in Bhutan follow the same weight limits for your ponies.

You may leave other luggage securely locked in your hotel during the trek. If you are travelling as a couple then we suggest you leave one main bag in Kathmandu and share the other main bag that the porter will then carry.

**Clothing & Climate:** Nepal and Bhutan have a climate that ranges widely depending on when you visit, and where you are visiting.

- Autumn - late Sep-Nov: The weather is good and very warm, with lots of sunshine, getting quite hot during the day in lowland regions. It will still be cold at night at higher altitudes if you are trekking. Shorts & T-shirts are fine while you are walking, but you should still bring warmer clothes for the evenings. There is a good chance of rain in September and early October, so bring a waterproof.

- Winter - Dec-Feb: It will be pleasant in lowland regions with very little rain, but will be cooler at night. Long trousers and shirts are advised during the day, and you will need warm clothes in the evenings. If you are trekking, then it will be cold during the day, and extremely cold at night, particularly at higher altitudes. Several warm layers are recommended so you can regulate your comfort as you walk, including a waterproof, even if only to protect from cold

winds. We include thick down jackets in our optional trekking packs for comfort in the evenings at higher altitudes.

- Spring - Mar-May: The weather is very pleasant during the spring, and again shorts & t-shirts are fine while you are walking. There is a higher chance of rain as the season progresses, so a thin waterproof is recommended in case. It gets very hot and humid in the lowlands from May onwards.

- Monsoon - Jun-mid Sep: It will be hot and sticky during these months, with lots of rain, so come prepared accordingly if you are visiting during these months - gaiters are highly recommended if you are trekking to keep out leeches.

A huge variety of cheap trekking gear is available in Kathmandu (fleeces, waterproofs etc.) and buying some here can save you carrying it with you, and support the local economy. However, you should definitely bring your own walking boots.

Modesty rates highly in Nepal and Bhutan especially for women, so please ensure all clothes are loose fitting and not too revealing. You'll find the Bhutanese dress fairly smartly or in national dress, so you will stand out even more if you look scruffy.

### **Whilst rafting:**

**On the raft:** Shorts, Tevas (sandals) or trainers, baseball style cap to keep the sun off your face, sunglasses with a strap to keep them on your head, swimwear, sarong for women, sun-cream, lip balm, water bottle, several t-shirts.

Note: All footwear on a raft should be rubber soled, and of the type that will not come off easily.

**Off the raft:** Long trousers, warm sleeping bag (provided, but you may want to bring a sheet sleeping bag as well), petzel type head torch, warm jacket/fleece, dry shoes, boots, warm socks, towel, warm long sleeved shirt, toiletries.

**Cameras:** You can take cameras on the raft, and we endeavour to keep that sort of kit dry in waterproof bags. But there is always an element of risk of getting the camera wet.

**What you shouldn't take on the raft:** All the rest of your kit and you're your valuables. We will make arrangements for their transport to your take-out point.

### **Whilst trekking:**

**Suggested Clothing and equipment:** Strong hiking boots or walking shoes that you have broken in; Good sized rucksack or holdall; 3 to 4-season sleeping bag (only if you want to use your own rather than the one provided in our optional trekking pack); silk or cotton sleeping bag liner; lightweight waterproof and windproof jacket; (waterproof gaiters, waterproof over trousers - these are only necessary on some treks in some seasons - contact us for further info if required); 3 or 4 t-shirts; small day pack; several pairs of light socks; 2 pairs of heavier woollen socks; underwear including thermals; warm hat and gloves; swimwear; pair of lightweight trousers; pair of shorts; 1 fleece or warm jumper and 1 sweatshirt. Also, sunglasses, torch and batteries, toiletries (include a lighter to burn toilet paper), bring biodegradable shampoo & soap, towel, blister kit, money belt and any personal medication you might require. Remember, Lots of layers are the key to staying warm and comfortable. Also, keeping your feet comfortable and healthy makes a huge difference to how you enjoy your trek. So, bring waterproof boots/walking shoes and plenty of pairs of socks so you can change them regularly.

**Day Packs and Main luggage:** You will want a sturdy and comfortable daypack to carry your day-to-day items with you while you are walking (clothes you may change in and out of regularly, drinks, snacks, camera). You will also need a sturdy holdall or backpack for your main luggage. Your porters or ponies will carry this for you, so suitcases are not appropriate. They may leave earlier than you, and may not walk with you throughout the entire day, so bear in mind that you won't have access to this luggage all the time - you need to ensure you are carrying everything you require during the days walk in your daypack. You can leave luggage behind in storage at your hotel so you don't need to take everything with you on the trek.

### **Whilst in the game parks:**

You should bring long trousers and long-sleeved shirts for jungle walks and travel within the park. Please ensure these are of drab colours to avoid drawing attention. Sunglasses and sun-hats are advisable for hot and bright days. Mosquito repellent is highly recommended. Binoculars are extremely useful at any of Nepal's National Parks, and are not generally available for hire locally. Don't forget fast film for those jungle shots and moving animals/birds. A

good cleaning kit is essential as these items are unavailable once at the park. It is also better to take quality film, either from home or Kathmandu into the parks, and to ensure you have a spare fully charged battery and memory card.

**All tours:** We recommend that you bring a sun hat, sunscreen, sunglasses, a basic first aid kit, toiletries, money belt, small torch, camera & charger.

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## 16. Dates & Prices

We run regular small-group departures on this tour throughout the year. All departures are guaranteed to run with a minimum of 2 travellers. Departure dates and prices are listed on our website and in our brochures. Please check the website for the most up-to-date prices and any special offers available.

Note: We do include some departure dates during the main monsoon season (late June to mid-September). During this period not all activities may be available in Chitwan, and you should travel prepared for muddy trails and rain during the trek. Despite the probability of some heavy rain showers, visiting Nepal during the monsoon season can be a very pleasurable and different experience to the rest of the year, with everything looking very lush and far fewer tourists around, particularly on the trekking routes.

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## 17. Booking & Payment

If you would like to book a place on this tour, please complete the online reservation form on our website (via the Dates & Prices tab on the tour page). You may make a deposit or full payment online, or just hold a reservation if you prefer (full payments are due 8 weeks before departure). We will then contact you with more details about how to complete your booking. Payments may be made by debit or credit card (subject to a card processing fee), or by making a bank transfer, or posting us a cheque/bank draft. Full details will be provided in your booking confirmation email. Please [contact us](#) if you would like any more information or have any questions before making a booking.

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## 18. Follow Us Online

You can stay in touch with us online by following us on Facebook and Twitter. We post updates on relevant travel news in our destination countries, special offers and discounts and other interesting travel related news and information.

[www.facebook.com/encounterstravel](http://www.facebook.com/encounterstravel)

[www.twitter.com/encounterstravl](http://www.twitter.com/encounterstravl) (yes, without the 'e')

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## 19. Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is compulsory on all of our tours and needs to cover personal accident & liability, medical expenses and repatriation, travel delay & abandonment. We also strongly recommend that you take out cover against cancellation and lost/stolen baggage. Personal medical insurance does not normally provide sufficient cover and is generally not suitable for travel on our tours. You will not be able to join your tour if you have not provided us with details of your insurance or if you arrive without cover in place (no refunds will be due in this event). [More information...](#)

You may arrange your own insurance, or you can take advantage of a comprehensive policy that we can arrange for you through Endsleigh Insurance which has been designed to be suitable for our tours. The policy is available to travellers of all nationalities and you do not need to live in the UK to take out the policy. For full details of cover provided, prices and to apply for one of our policies, please complete [travel insurance application form](#).

Note: Any country that borders the Mediterranean is considered as 'Europe' for the purposes of travel insurance (including Turkey, Israel, Egypt and Morocco). If you are doing a tour that visits one country in 'Europe' and one that

is 'Worldwide' (for example, an Egypt and Jordan tour), then you need a 'Worldwide' policy. When completing the form you should enter your travel dates including any extra days involved in overnight flights or connecting travel between your home and the tour. Our policies are not able to cover any extra time or activities other than your tour and options booked with us and your travel to & from home.

Note - to comply with insurance sales regulations, our travel insurance policies are only available to customers booking directly with us. If you have booked through a travel agent you will need to arrange your own insurance.

If your tour includes car hire, or if you plan to arrange a hot air balloon flight locally or do some scuba diving during your tour, you should check the small print in your policy to make sure these are covered (these are covered in our policy). Please also check the maximum altitude that you will be reaching and that full cover including emergency evacuation is provided up to this altitude.

If you are taking expensive camera gear or other electronic equipment with you then please check the coverage and the fine print of your policy to ensure that you have sufficient cover.

*IMPORTANT: We must have your travel insurance details (policy number and type of insurance) before you depart or you may not be allowed to join the tour. If you haven't told us already, please let us know the details when you can. You should take a paper copy of your insurance policy with you as you may be asked to show this at the start of the tour.*

## **Covid-19**

**Before purchasing any travel insurance, please check the coverage provided for situations related to Covid-19, and for the rules about government travel advice. Your normal policy may not be suitable. Details about our own policies cover levels are given [on our website](#).**

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## **20. Financial Security**

We are a UK registered company and are committed to providing our customers with financial protection to provide peace of mind and to allow you to book with confidence.

We have therefore partnered with Trust My Travel Ltd., which provides financial protection services to over 2000 partners around the world. Funds paid to us by our customers are protected via an Insurance policy held by Trust My Travel. Each traveller and the description of services sold is declared against Trust My Travel's insurance policy directly against our financial failure. In the event of our insolvency, you will be refunded for any unfulfilled products and/or repatriation to the UK (where applicable). Please see [our website](#) or [booking conditions](#) for more information.

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## **21. Responsible Tourism**

It is impossible not to have an impact on the local environment, cultures and eco-systems when you travel. However, it is very possible to try and ensure that these impacts are as limited, or positive as possible. We are committed to ensuring that we try to leave our host countries in a better state than we found them and encourage and assist our travellers to help us with this.

The following are a few simple tips that require very little effort on your part but which will help ensure that any effect you have on the locations you visit is positive rather than negative.

- Don't prejudge: Things in different countries will almost certainly be different. That doesn't make them worse or inferior, just different.
- Communicate: Don't expect locals to speak your language. Take the trouble to learn a few words or phrases of the local language. Don't worry about sounding silly. Most locals are patient and accommodating and appreciate you making the effort to communicate in their language.
- Conserve energy: Be careful not to waste valuable resources. Use local resources sparingly. Switch off lights, air-conditioning and fans when you leave the hotel room and don't waste water. Remove superfluous packaging. Many countries have far less efficient waste disposal systems than ours. Remove packaging from

newly acquired items before leaving home.

- Don't litter: No matter how untidy or dirty the country you're travelling in may look to you, avoid littering, as there is no need to add to the environment's stress. Many of the countries we visit have a tough challenge dealing with rubbish and waste. Please consider taking home as much plastic waste as you can (e.g. water bottles).
- Choose environmentally friendly products: By using environmentally friendly (bio degradable) sun creams, shampoos and detergents you can help reduce pollution.
- Respect local customs and traditions: As you are a guest in these countries, you should also comply with the local customs. If you are friendly and well mannered, the locals will reciprocate and it will only enhance your experience. It's important to follow dress and behaviour guidelines especially when visiting religious or sacred sites (your tour leader will advise you how best to do this).
- If a client commits an illegal act the client may be excluded from the tour and Encounters Travel shall cease to have responsibility to/for them. No refund will be given for any unused services.

All porters are employed and equipped following guidelines set by the International Porter Protection Group (IPPG).

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## 22. Before you travel

It is important when considering and preparing to travel anywhere in the world that you have a good understanding of the country you are visiting, its laws and customs, and the possible risks and situations that may occur. This includes specific risks related to your itinerary (eg. does it involve water & can you swim, are you fit enough for the activities included), as well as more general risks such as terrorism and natural disasters.

General details and links to more information about health risks, visa requirements, money, and travel insurance are given in these tour notes. We recommend that you re-read all these before your departure as well as the small print of your travel insurance policy so you know exactly what is covered and what is not.

You should take copies of your important travel documents with you and ideally also store them online securely as a backup. Make sure that you have given us your emergency contact details and told that person where and when you are travelling. Ensure you take enough money with you and that you have access to emergency funds.

Finally, you should read through and stay updated with the current [official government travel advice](#) for your destination. We are registered partners with the UK Foreign Office's ['Travel Aware' campaign](#) which provides further useful and invaluable information.



## 23. Tipping - Nepal

While an accepted part of the culture and customs in Nepal, tipping is always optional, and any amounts paid should reflect excellent service. Tipping in Tibet and Bhutan is less prevalent though it is still normal practice to tip your guide and driver at the end of the tour.

We support and follow international guidelines for the employment of any trekking porters we use, including those of the IPPG (International Porter Protection Group). We therefore pay all our porters a higher than average wage, but an additional tip is still normal practice at the end of your trek.

It is normal and accepted for people to tip differently, and you should not feel under any pressure to tip any particular amount. We are often asked for advice on common amounts however, and suggest that you consider around US\$ 5-10 per person per day for guides, US\$ 3-7 p/p/day for assistant guides or tour leaders, and US\$ 2-5 p/p/day for porters and drivers.

Haggling or bargaining is also prevalent throughout Nepal and Tibet, particularly in Kathmandu, and is still done in markets in Bhutan though to a lesser extent in other shops. More often than not the start price is at least double the actual price the vendor will be happy to accept. Do not take offence, but be prepared to bargain if you want to, consider your budget (and what you'd be happy to pay for things at home), pay fairly and enjoy this as part of the experience. Note: if you do offer a price, then you are expected to purchase – do not start bargaining unless you really want to buy.

While you are out in rural/hill areas, we recommend that you should stick to published price lists and pay fair prices for local food, accommodation and services, as this aids local economies (bear in mind that when you are trekking, nearly everything you eat or buy will have been carried there by porters or donkeys).

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**Printed on:** Monday 29th of April 2024

**Note:** Please [download an up-to-date copy](#) of these tour notes shortly before you travel as itineraries and information does change from time to time.

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