

Himalayan Discovery

Country(ies): Nepal & Tibet

Tour type: Private

Transport: A/C 4x4 vehicle & flight

Group size: Min: 2 | Max: 0

Days: 12 Days

Start location: Lhasa, Tibet

End location: Kathmandu, Nepal

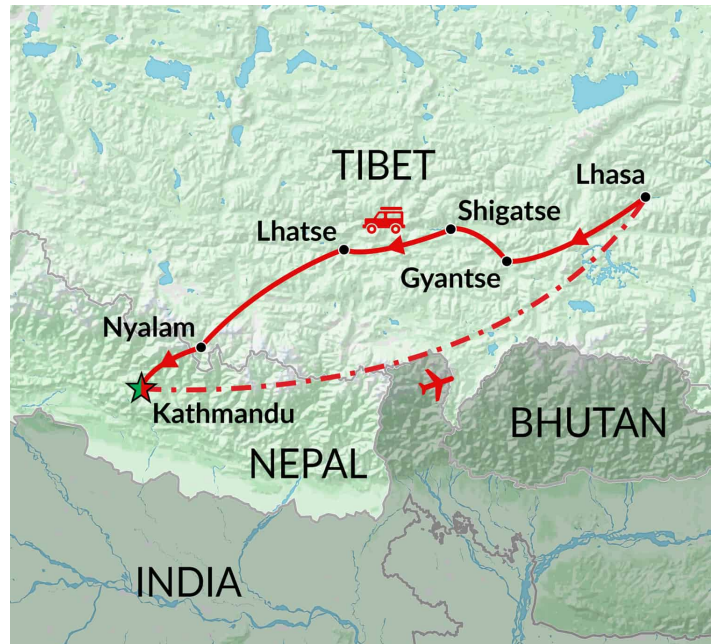
Departs On: Any day

Meals: Breakfasts - 11, Lunches - 0, Dinners - 0

Highlights:

Bustling Kathmandu, mystical Lhasa, famous Tashilhunpo Monastery, spectacular mountain scenery of the Himalayas, views of Mount Everest, the beauty of Nagarkot, wooden architecture of Durbar Square in Bhaktapur

Places Visited: Lhasa, Gyantse, Shigatse, Lhatse, Nyalam, Nargarkot & Kathmandu



Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive in Kathmandu, transfer to hotel

You arrive in Kathmandu today where we meet you at the airport and transfer you to your hotel. The rest of the day is free (depending on your arrival time, we may arrange a short introductory tour today).

OVERNIGHT: Kathmandu hotel

MEALS: None

EXTRAS: Extra day in Kathmandu - pre-tour || Single room supplement (TITMHD)

Day 2: Kathmandu, full day city tour

Today your rep will collect your passport and organise your Tibet visa with the Chinese Embassy. After this we will arrange for you to be taken on a guided tour of the fascinating, sprawling city of Kathmandu. We take you to visit Durbar Square with its splendid array of Hindu temples and the old Royal Palace. Next, we climb up the many steps leading to the immense Swayambhunath Stupa which sits upon a hill overlooking Kathmandu and gives a spectacular view over the city. You will also have plenty of time to visit the numerous little gift shops that line the maze-like streets. In the evening you have an opportunity to check out the numerous bars and restaurants, and soak up the unique nightlife that makes Kathmandu a magnet for travellers from all over the world.

OVERNIGHT: Kathmandu hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS: Everest Mountain Flight

Day 3: Fly to Lhasa, Tibet

After an early breakfast, we transfer you to the airport where you depart Kathmandu and fly to Lhasa in Tibet. On arrival, we meet you and transfer to your hotel in Lhasa.

OVERNIGHT: Lhasa hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS: None

Day 4: Lhasa, full day city tour

Today we have arranged for you to be taken on a guided tour of the fascinating city of Lhasa and you start the day with a visit to its cardinal landmark - Potala Palace. One of the great wonders of world architecture, it was the former winter home of the Dalai Lama and probably the image of Lhasa that most people have in their minds when they think of Tibet. Learn more about its eventful history as you explore the countless rooms of richly decorated rooms, halls and palaces as pilgrims bring silk scarves, coins and yak butter to the shrines as offerings.

We then visit the Barkhor. Perhaps similar to the Kathmandu area around Durbar Square and Freak St, monks sit cross-legged on the streets with alms bowls and the low murmur of prayers can be heard in the air while nearby stall owners offer jewel encrusted daggers with enthusiasm. Away from the square you can begin the Barkhor circuit including Mani Lhakhang (huge prayer wheel), Nangtse Shar (former jail and dungeons) before arriving at Jokhang Temple the spiritual centre of Tibet.

In contrast to the Potala, Jokhang Temple is buzzing with activity and pilgrims from every corner of Tibet arrive here to worship. The temple is the product of Han, Tibetan and Nepalese architectural styles and is, quite simply, the most revered religious structure in the whole of Tibet and a 'must' on any Lhasa/Tibet itinerary. The aroma of yak

butter mixed with incense, and the murmur of prayer drift throughout the temple whilst at the entrance, there are always prostrations being made by pilgrims. Inside the temple you pass statues of the four guardian kings before reaching the exposed inner courtyard, or Dukhang, and the former throne of the Dalai Lama. The inner prayer hall houses six large statues including Guru Rinpoche, Avalokiteshvara (sometimes referred to as the Bodhisattva and should be well known to any students of Tibetan Buddhism) and Jampa (Future Buddha). There is also a collection of chapels that encircles the statues and pilgrims walk around this courtyard (always in a clock-wise direction) visiting the various chapels along the way.

OVERNIGHT: Lhasa hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS: None

Day 5: Lhasa, full day city tour

We continue our tour of Lhasa with a visit to the Norbulingka, the former summer palace of the Dalai Lama which served both administrative and religious functions in the past. Norbulingka is divided into three areas: the palaces, government buildings and opera grounds which are considered the best public parkland in Tibet. During the summer and autumn months, the opera grounds become hubs of entertainment with dancing, singing, music and festivities, and also host the annual Sho Dun or 'Yoghurt Festival'.

We then travel to the Drepung Monastery, about 8 km west of central Lhasa and once the largest monastery in Tibet with over 10,000 monks. Enjoy a pleasant walk uphill to the monastery, to experience the solemn ambience inside the halls and chapels. From the hillside there are wonderful views of Lhasa and the distant mountains. Drepung is one of Lhasa's two great Gelugpa monasteries, the other is Sera. Around 5km north of central Lhasa, Sera may not be as grandiose as Drepung, but is more serene and surrounded by many small temples. Every day at 3pm (except on Sundays), the famous 'Buddhism Scriptures Debating' takes place in the courtyard as monks follow the teachings of the buddha to question everything they are told. They supplement their debating with a variety of gestures including clapping their hands, pushing their partners for answers and plucking their prayer beads.

OVERNIGHT: Lhasa hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS: None

Day 6: Lhasa to Gyantse

Today we depart for Lhasa. On the way we pass the summit of the Kamba-La Pass (4,974m) and several hundred metres below lies the stunning Yamdrok-Tso, a beautiful turquoise lake set amongst breathtaking scenery and one of Tibet's most sacred lakes. Far in the distance is the huge massif of Mt. Nojin Kangtsang (7,191m) After travelling through wide open meadowlands dotted with whitewashed villages, stunning views and crossing the Brahmaputra River, we arrive in Lhasa.

OVERNIGHT: Gyantse hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS: None

Day 7: Gyantse to Shigatse

After breakfast we visit the famous Tashilhunpo Monastery. One of the few monasteries that survived the Cultural Revolution, it is the traditional seat and burial site of the Panchen Lamas. Cobble streets wind around the aged buildings and circumnavigating the monastery is a one hour kora that takes you up into the hills behind the compound. The main attraction here is the 'Great White Wall' upon which are hung massive colourful thangkas during festivals. On the way to Gyantse, we visit Shalu Monastery, a short distance from Shigatse. It is a small monastery founded in 1040 by Chetsun Sherab Jungnay and over the centuries has been known as a centre of

learning and psychic training. Another well-known feature of the monastery is its mural paintings which, according to some Tibetan people, are the most ancient and beautiful in Tibet. The monastery was also the first of the major monasteries built by noble families of the Tsang Dynasty and it subsequently became an important centre of Buddhism in Tibet.

During the afternoon we arrive in Gyantse which is famous for the magnificent tiered Gyantse Kumbum, the largest chorten in Tibet and home to over 100,000 Buddhist images. The Gyantse Dzong dominates the skyline and is well worth visiting as is the sprawling compound of the Pelor Chode Monastery near the Kumbum. It is also worth spending a little time exploring the back streets to experience the old world charm of the town.

OVERNIGHT: Shigatse hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS: None

Day 8: Shigatse to Lhatse

After breakfast, we head for Shigatse, stopping en route to experience the holy atmosphere inside the ancient Sakya Monastery. One of the largest monasteries in Tibet and the ancestral temple of Sakyapa sect of Tibetan Buddhism, it was from here that the whole of Tibet was once governed and it's historic buildings were spared the destruction of the cultural revolution. The monastery is divided into two on either side of the zhongqu river. The hillside northern temple was built by khonchok gyelpo, the founder of sakyapa sect in 1073 but it has been largely deserted and very little remains of the original monastery structure. The more famous and impressive southern temple was constructed as a fortress-like complex in 1268 after Tibet was unified by the Yuan empire, and it has mongolian-style outer walls and murals by painters from Tibet, China, Nepal and India depicting wrathful and peaceful deities.

OVERNIGHT: Lhatse hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS: None

Day 9: Lhatse to Nyalam

After breakfast, we continue to follow the Bhote Kosi valley and after a two hour drive, we arrive at the Nyalam pass (3,800m) from where there are excellent mountain views of the Jugal Himal region including Mt. Dorje Lakpa (6,966m), Mt.Madiya (6,257m) and Mt. Phurbi Chhyachu (6,637m). Continue our journey via the Lalung La Pass (5,050m) with superb views of Mt.Xishapangma (8,012m), Mt. Cho Oyu (8,201m), and Mt Everest (8,848m) before reaching Lhatse.

OVERNIGHT: Nyalam hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS: None

Day 10: Nyalam to Nagarkot

After an early breakfast, we transfer you to the airport where you depart Lhasa and fly back to Kathmandu. On arrival, we meet you and transfer to the ancient centre of Bhaktapur. Formerly a capital of the Kathmandu Valley, the pedestrianised centre of Bhaktapur is full of squares and temples with some stunning wooden architecture. You have a tour here, as well as time to explore the narrow winding streets which bustle with life.

In the afternoon we leave Bhaktapur and make a short drive uphill to the village of Nagarkot, which sits on a ridge at the north-eastern edge of the Kathmandu Valley. Accepted as probably the best of the valley's mountain views, from the village lodges and hotels you can see all the way from Kanchenjunga in the east, past the tiny (from here!) peak of Mt. Everest, to Dhaulgiri in the west. A couple of kilometres walk from the village there is a lookout tower which affords an even more spectacular full 360 degrees panorama. Stunning clear views are all but guaranteed between mid-October and March, with more chance of cloud and haze before and after this period. You can check the

weather and the hotel will wake you if the morning is clear so that you can see the sun rise over the distant Himalayas.

OVERNIGHT: Nagarkot hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS: None

Day 11: Kathmandu valley

After waking early to enjoy the sunrise views, you have breakfast before walking downhill from Nagarkot. You start by walking through pine forest before following a ridge which brings you down through tiny Chhetri villages with wonderful views to either side, to the beautiful Changu Narayan Temple. From this temple at the end of the ridge, you can either drive back to Kathmandu or carry on walking and descend to the valley floor and the Manohara River. The walk today can be made as long or short as you would like it.

Before returning to the hotel, you have a tour of Pashupatinath, the most important Hindu temple in Nepal. Although non-Hindus are not allowed inside the temple itself, you can see into the temple complex from the holy riverbanks where there are bathing and cremation ghats. We also visit the huge Buddhist Boudhnath stupa. From here we drive you back to Kathmandu in the early evening.

OVERNIGHT: Kathmandu hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS: None

Day 12: Transfer to the airport for departure

Your time is free today until we transfer you to the airport for departure.

OVERNIGHT: N/A

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS: Bardia National Park Extension || Trisuli white water rafting || Extra day in Kathmandu - post-tour

Included

- Twin sharing accommodation with breakfast
- All necessary transportation by private 4 WD Toyota Landcruiser with driver
- Sightseeing tours as per the itinerary
- An English speaking guide
- Monastery entrance fees
- Tibet entry permit (obtained in Kathmandu)
- Kathmandu to Lhasa flight

Excluded

- International Flights to Nepal
- Nepal Visa Fees
- Travel Insurance (compulsory)
- Meals not indicated in the itinerary
- Entrance fees to sites not listed above
- Camera tickets at monument sites if applied
- Drinks, snacks, tips and other personal expenses (e.g. laundry)
- Any other items not mentioned above

Options

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.

1. Accommodation

We use good quality hotels rated at the local 3 and 4-star level on this tour. Accommodation is based on twin, triple or double en-suite rooms with air conditioning. Please visit the accommodation tab of this tour for examples of the hotels normally used on this tour. If you have any specific accommodation requests please let us know and we'll be happy to provide you with a customised quotation.

2. Transport

Private vehicles are used for all sightseeing tours and most of the journeys throughout the tour. A short international flights between Kathmandu and Lhasa is also included on this tour.

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. All transfers are also included during your time in Tibet.

4. Group Size/Tour Leaders/Guides

As we don't offer guaranteed group departures on this tour we can run the itinerary for however many people you happen to be travelling with, starting from 1 upwards. The prices given for this tour are based on a minimum of 2 passengers travelling, so if you have a different number of passengers in your group please contact us for a customised quotation.

In Nepal and Tibet we provide fully trained, local English-speaking guides for all of the sightseeing tours. At Encounters Travel we only use local guides and reps. We feel this gives you the best experience of the country and the sites you are seeing. Please check our website for more details and profiles of some of our most famous guides.

5. Entrance Fees

The tour price includes entrance fees to all the tourist sites mentioned in the itinerary. You will need to cover the cost of entrance to any other extra sites that you may wish to visit.

6. Tipping and Haggling

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 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, and US\$ 2-5 p/p/day for porters and drivers.

Haggling or bargaining is also prevalent throughout Nepal and Tibet, particularly in Kathmandu. 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).

7. 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.

8. 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.

9. Passports and Visas - Tibet

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.

All Encounters Travel tours to Tibet use Kathmandu as a hub to either travel overland or fly into Tibet and whilst in Kathmandu our local team will make arrangements for your Tibet Entry Permit. Our local office do require your passport in hand to be able to arrange this so you'll need at least 1 full day in Kathmandu before departing for Tibet to obtain the Visa. The Chinese/Tibet Embassy in Kathmandu is only open Monday to Friday and is closed on weekends and all public holidays so we'll need to consider this when planning your travel date. For most nationalities we include the cost of obtaining this visa in our tour prices - we'll advise you if this is not the case for your nationality.

Note: The Chinese authorities generally always close the Tibetan borders to tourists for the whole of March and re-open the country to visitors at the start of April. However, sometimes the borders are kept closed for longer or at other times during the year, very little if any advance notice being given. If you are not able to travel to Tibet for this reason then we will arrange a revised itinerary for you in Nepal or Bhutan for that section of your tour. We will arrange a partial refund or extra charge if the Nepal/Bhutan sections work out cheaper/more expensive than your original Tibet itinerary.

10. 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.

11. 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.

12. Money

Nepal

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). You can pay with US Dollars cash in some places but should not rely on this.

Tibet

The local currency in Tibet is the Chinese Yuan (RMB). Coins are not used in Tibet.

You can exchange money in Lhasa and in some of the better 3, 4 & 5 star hotels. Many of these in Lhasa will accept credit card payments though a 3-5% fee will normally be charged.

ATMs are available in Lhasa, Tsedang, Shigatse and some other smaller cities though there may only be one or two in each and those may not be working. So, outside of these three areas we recommend that you plan to have enough cash ready instead. Withdrawal limits of RMB 2000 normally apply.

13. 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.

14. Dates & Prices

This tour is designed as a sample tailor-made tour itinerary. As such we do not offer set group departure dates that you can join. Rather, the tour is available for you to do privately starting on any date of the year. Guideline seasonal prices are given below, based on 2 people travelling. If you would like to adjust the tour itinerary, or there will be more or less people travelling, please contact us and we will customise a price for you.

For many people planning a trip to Tibet, the weather will be a determining factor in choosing when to travel. Tibet is one of the toughest places in the world for people to live, and visiting there also has its challenges. In general, the months from April to October are the best time to visit, to avoid the extreme cold of the winter, when many roads in parts of the country are also blocked with heavy snow. The further north in the country you travel, the weather is cooler and the winter longer, resulting in a shorter peak season for visiting in the summer months.

The heaviest rains fall in the south between June and September, though mainly at night, and this is when the country looks at its best and most festivals are held.

The central areas of Tibet which are visited most by tourists, including Lhasa, Gyantse, Shigatse and Tsedang, generally have good mild weather between April and November, with by far the most rain in July and August.

Temperatures in the country vary widely, partly because of the thin air at this altitude which cannot retain or radiate much heat. As a result there are big differences in temperatures between day and night-time.

If you are combining a tour to Tibet with time in Nepal or China, then it is also worth taking account of the best time to visit those places. The overland route from Kathmandu in Nepal to Lhasa is generally in good condition all year round, though the winter weather causes some problems from December to February. August also often has problems with landslides caused by heavy rains.

Note: We generally do not take bookings for travel to Tibet during March as the Chinese authorities generally always close the Tibetan borders to tourists for the whole of March and re-open the country to visitors at the start of April. However, sometimes the borders are kept closed for longer or at other times during the year, very little if any advance notice being given.

Please speak with our reservations team who will be happy to help you in selecting an appropriate time for your tour.

15. 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.

16. 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](#).

17. 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.

18. 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 prejudice: 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).

19. 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

www.twitter.com/encounterstravl (yes, without the 'e')

20. 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.

21. 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).

Printed on: Monday 6th of May 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.
