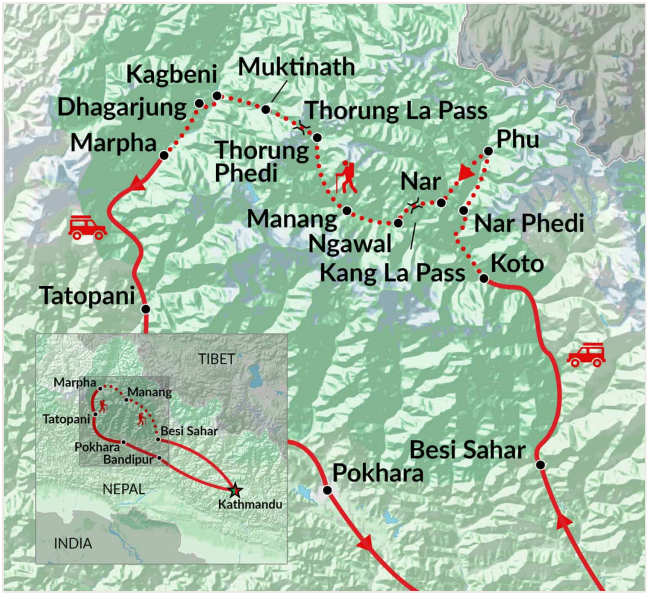
ENCOUNTERS TRAVEL

Your passport to adventure

Annapurna Circuit & Nar Phu Valley

COUNTRY(IES)	Nepal
TOUR TYPE	Small Group
TRANSPORT	A/C minibus
GROUP SIZE	Min: 2 | Max: 12
DURATION	21 days
STARTS	Kathmandu, Nepal
ENDS	Kathmandu, Nepal
MEALS	Breakfasts - 4, Lunches - 0, Dinners - 0

TOUR ROUTE MAP **21 Days**



ROUTE: **Kathmandu** (Start) → **Besisahar** → **Koto** → **Meta** → **Phu** → **Nar Phedi** → **Ngawal** → **Manang** → **Tanki Manang** → **Phedi** → **Muktinath** → **Kagbeni** → **Marpha** → **Tatopani** → **Pokhara** → **Kathmandu** (End)

HIGHLIGHTS

Kathmandu, trekking in the Annapurnas, remote Nar & Phu Valleys, Tibetan mountain culture, cross 2 high passes (Kang La & Thorung La), majestic high mountain views

Itinerary

DAY 1 **Arrive in Kathmandu, transfer to hotel**

This arrival experience marks the beginning of the journey in Nepal with a smooth transition into the capital. Arrival at Tribhuvan International Airport is followed by a drive to your hotel in Kathmandu, offering first impressions of the city's streets and neighbourhoods. After settling in, a pre-tour briefing provides an overview of the itinerary and practical information for the days ahead. The sequence allows time to recover from travel while gaining orientation to the journey. Together, it creates a clear and well-structured start to the Kathmandu experience.

ACTIVITIES

- **Arrive at Tribhuvan International Airport**
  You arrive at Tribhuvan International Airport where a representative greets you and assists with your transfer.
- **Drive from Kathmandu Airport to Kathmandu City Hotel**
  Transfer from Kathmandu Airport to your hotel in the Thamel district. Settle in and get your first feel for the bustling streets of Kathmandu.
- **Pre in Tour Briefing – Kathmandu**
  Receive an overview of your upcoming wildlife safari tour from your local team. The briefing prepares you for the cultural and natural highlights ahead.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Kathmandu hotel	None

DAY 2 Free day in Kathmandu. Optional City Tour is available

Spend the day at leisure in Kathmandu, with the freedom to revisit favourite places or discover parts of the city independently. Historic streets, religious sites, markets, cafés and shopping areas provide a wide range of possibilities depending on your interests, while those wanting a quieter day can simply relax and recover before further travel or planned activities.

ACTIVITIES

- **Free Time in Kathmandu**
  Enjoy free time in Kathmandu to relax at your hotel, browse the lively lanes and shops of Thamel, or explore the surrounding area independently at your own pace.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Kathmandu hotel	Breakfast

DAY 3 From Kathmandu (1400m) drive to Besi Sahar (850m)

This journey travels west from Kathmandu to the town of Besi Sahar, the traditional gateway to the Annapurna region. The drive follows river valleys and rural highways, passing through changing landscapes of farmland, hills, and small settlements. As the route leaves the capital behind, the pace slows and the surroundings become increasingly rural. The journey reflects a transition from urban Nepal to trekking regions beyond the main tourist centres. Arrival in Besi Sahar marks the starting point for further exploration into the Annapurna foothills.

ACTIVITIES

- **Drive from Kathmandu to Besi Sahar**
  You leave Kathmandu by road, heading west towards Pokhara before turning north into the hills. The journey follows river valleys and gives distant views of snowcapped peaks as you arrive in Besi Sahar.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Besisahar trekking lodge	Breakfast

DAY 4 Jeep from Besi Sahar to Koto (2600m)

Travel by road from Besi Sahar to Koto through valleys, rural settlements and increasingly steep mountain terrain. The surroundings change gradually from lower farmland to forested slopes as the route climbs deeper into the Annapurna region. Reaching Koto places you at a more remote staging point for the trekking country ahead.

ACTIVITIES

- **Drive from Besi Sahar to Koto**
  You travel by jeep up the Marsyangdi valley from Besi Sahar to Koto. The track winds through steep-sided gorges and small villages, taking you deeper into the Annapurna region to the start of your trek.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Koto trekking lodge	None

DAY 5 Trek from Koto to Meta (3560m)

This trekking day begins the ascent into the more remote upper valleys beyond Koto, marking a clear shift into higher mountain terrain. The trail follows river gorges and forested paths, gradually climbing as the landscape becomes more rugged and isolated. Small settlements and seasonal lodges punctuate the route, reflecting the sparse habitation of the region. The walk introduces a stronger sense of altitude and remoteness compared to lower trekking areas. Arrival in Meta places you within a quieter mountain setting along the route deeper into the Himalayas.

ACTIVITIES

- **Trek from Koto to Meta**
  You begin trekking from Koto, following the Soti Khola through pine and rhododendron forest. Suspension bridges and steady climbs lead you via Dharmasala up to Meta with first big views of Annapurna II and Lamjung Himal.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Meta trekking lodge	None

DAY 6 Trek from Meta to Phu (4080m)

This trekking day continues deeper into the remote upper valleys of the Annapurna region, leading toward the isolated village of Phu. The route climbs steadily through high mountain terrain, passing narrow gorges, open

slopes, and seasonal herder shelters. As the trail progresses, the landscape becomes increasingly stark and expansive, reflecting the region's limited access and high elevation. The walk offers a strong sense of remoteness and traditional mountain life. Arrival in Phu reveals a historic village known for its preserved culture and dramatic mountain setting.

ACTIVITIES

- **Trek from Meta to Phu**
  You trek from Meta further into the remote Nar and Phu region, passing colourful chortens and isolated hamlets. Towards Phu, a line of chortens and a bridge mark your approach to this traditional Tibetan-influenced village.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Phu trekking lodge	None

DAY 7 Day to acclimatise in Phu, optional hike to Himlung Himal base camp

This experience allows unstructured time in the remote village of Phu, offering space to rest and acclimatise in a high-altitude setting. Free time can be spent exploring the village's stone houses, monasteries, and surrounding landscape at a relaxed pace. The slower rhythm provides insight into daily life in one of Nepal's most isolated settlements. Time without scheduled activity supports recovery after trekking days and adjustment to altitude. Together, the pause highlights the cultural depth and quiet atmosphere of Phu.

ACTIVITIES

- **Free Time in Phu**
  You spend an acclimatisation day in Phu, with time to wander the narrow lanes and watch village life. If you wish, you can take a further hike towards Himlung Himal base camp for extra views and exercise.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Phu trekking lodge	None

DAY 8 Trek from Phu to Nar Phedi (3490m)

This trekking day traces the route out of Phu village toward Nar Phedi, continuing through the remote upper valleys of the Annapurna region. The trail descends gradually from Phu, following rugged paths carved into the mountainside with expansive views across barren slopes and river gorges. The landscape reflects the stark, high-altitude character of this isolated area, with minimal settlements along the way. The walk maintains a steady pace as it transitions between valleys. Arrival at Nar Phedi places you near an important monastic site in a quiet mountain setting.

ACTIVITIES

- **Trek from Phu to Nar Phedi**
  You retrace part of your route from Phu before turning towards Nar Phedi Monastery. Modest but comfortable

rooms and an evening prayer session with the novice monks make for a memorable overnight stay.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Nar Phedi monastery	None

DAY 9 Trek from Nar Phedi to Nar (4110m)

This trekking day follows the ascent from Nar Phedi to the traditional village of Nar, continuing through the remote Nar Phu region. The trail climbs steadily across open mountain slopes, with wide views over rugged terrain and surrounding peaks. As elevation increases, the landscape reflects the dry, high-altitude character typical of this isolated area. The walk offers a strong sense of remoteness and cultural continuity shaped by centuries of mountain life. Arrival in Nar reveals a historic village known for its stone architecture and dramatic setting.

ACTIVITIES

- **Trek from Nar Phedi to Nar**
  You climb on a winding path from Nar Phedi towards Nar village, with views of Kang Garu if the weather is clear. On arrival you find a lively village square surrounded by fields and mountain scenery.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Nar trekking lodge	None

DAY 10 Trek to Ngawal (3660m) via the Kang La Pass (5320m)

This experience follows a demanding high-mountain route across Kang La Pass, linking the remote Nar Phu region with the Manang Valley. The trek from Nar climbs steadily through exposed terrain toward the pass, surrounded by wide alpine views and rugged Himalayan scenery. Reaching Kang La Pass marks a significant high point, offering expansive perspectives over surrounding peaks and valleys. The descent toward Ngawal leads into a more settled landscape, with gradual changes in terrain and vegetation. Together, the day represents a dramatic transition between two distinct mountain regions of the Annapurna area.

ACTIVITIES

- **Trek from Nar to Ngawal via Kang La Pass**
  You start early from Nar and ascend gradually through yak pastures towards the high Kang La Pass. From the pass you enjoy superb views of Annapurna II, Tilicho Peak and Gangapurna before a steep descent on scree to Ngawal on the main circuit.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Ngawal trekking lodge	None

DAY 11

Trek to Manang (3500m)

This trekking day follows a scenic route through the upper Manang Valley, linking the village of Ngawal with the regional hub of Manang. The trail contours along open hillsides, offering wide views across the valley and surrounding peaks. As the walk progresses, the landscape reflects the dry, high-altitude character of this part of the Annapurna region. Approaching Manang, signs of settlement and trekking infrastructure become more apparent. Arrival in Manang brings you to an important acclimatisation stop and cultural centre of the valley.

ACTIVITIES

- **Trek from Ngawal to Manang**
  You trek along the valley, passing through Braka village and its monastery before continuing to Manang. The town has several lodges and small shops, making it a comfortable stop on the circuit.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Braka or Manang trekking lodge	None

DAY 12

Trek to Yak Kharka (4050m) or Churi Lethar (4200m)

This trekking day continues the gradual ascent through the upper Manang Valley, moving deeper into high-altitude terrain. The trail from Manang follows open alpine paths with wide views across dry hillsides and surrounding peaks. As elevation increases, vegetation thins and the landscape takes on a more rugged, exposed character. The steady pace supports acclimatisation while maintaining a clear sense of progression toward higher mountain passes. Arrival in Yak Kharka places you in a sparse alpine setting used traditionally for seasonal grazing.

ACTIVITIES

- **Trek from Manang to Yak Kharka**
  You leave Manang following the Jargeng Khola, gaining height steadily past scattered houses and grazing areas. The day ends at Yak Kharka, where wide views of peaks such as the Glacier Dome open up around you.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Yakkharka or Churi Lethar trekking lodge	None

DAY 13

Trek to Thorong Phedi (4525m)

This trekking day continues the climb toward one of the highest crossing points in the Annapurna region, moving steadily from Yak Kharka to Thorong Phedi. The trail follows open alpine terrain with wide views across dry valleys and surrounding peaks. As elevation increases, the environment becomes more exposed and sparsely vegetated,

reflecting the high-mountain setting. The walk is paced to support acclimatisation ahead of the pass crossing. Arrival at Thorong Phedi positions you at the base of Thorong La, preparing for the following day’s ascent.

ACTIVITIES

- **Trek from Yak Kharka to Thorong Phedi**
  You continue climbing through Churi Lethar and cross the Jargeng Khola on your way to Thorong Phedi. The walking is shorter but the altitude is higher, so you take it slowly in preparation for the big pass tomorrow.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Thorong Phedi trekking lodge	None

DAY 14 — Cross the Thorung La Pass (5416m) to Muktinath (3802m)

This experience follows one of the most iconic high-mountain crossings in Nepal, linking the Manang Valley with the Mustang region. The trek begins before dawn from Thorong Phedi, climbing steadily toward Thorung La Pass, one of the highest trekking passes in the Himalayas. Reaching the pass offers expansive views across snow-covered peaks and vast mountain landscapes. The long descent toward Muktinath leads into a drier, more open terrain with a distinct cultural shift. Arrival in Muktinath marks a significant milestone, combining dramatic geography with one of Nepal’s most important pilgrimage sites.

ACTIVITIES

- **Trek from Thorong Phedi to Muktinath via Thorung La Pass**
  You make a very early start for the long, steady ascent to the Thorung La Pass at 5,416m, enjoying huge views from the top. A steep descent then brings you down to the pilgrimage town of Muktinath, home to an “eternal flame” and temple complex.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Muktinath trekking lodge	None

DAY 15 — Trek to Kagbeni (2850m) or Ekle Bhatti (2740m)

After the long hard day crossing the Thorung La yesterday you've a choice today. You can either take the quicker and easier route downhill from Muktinath, following the road along several sections of the route to Kagbeni (2850m), or take a longer more scenic trek avoiding the road. This alternative route takes you through the dramatic village of Jarkot (3500m) and across the Lubra Pass (3772m) before a long descent into the Kali Gandaki Valley and the village of Ekle Bhatti (2740m). You could spend the night here or walk a little further up the valley to Kagbeni, which is a beautiful village in Lower Mustang. Either way you should enjoy great views of Dhaulgiri (8167m) across the valley. If you get to Kagbeni early, its worth crossing the valley and exploring the traditional villages of Chhyongkhar, Jhong and Purang, which are all culturally part of Mustang.

ACTIVITIES

- **Trek from Muktinath to Kagbeni**
  You head downhill from Muktinath into the Kali Gandaki valley, either following the road or a quieter scenic trail. The day finishes in or near Kagbeni, a characterful Lower Mustang village with fine views of Dhaulagiri.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Kagbeni or Ekle Bhatti trekking lodge	None

DAY 16 Trek to Dhagarjung village (3200m)

You could finish the trek today and take a jeep back down towards Pokhara. However, this itinerary adds another couple of days here to make the most of your time high in the mountains, and to see more of how the more barren scenery contrasts with that on the Manang side of the Thorung La. This itinerary's route therefore leaves the main Annapurna Circuit path (and road) again today to head into the hills on the western side of the Kali Gandaki valley. There are several routes to choose from to get from Kagbeni or Elke Bhattia to Dhagarjung village, and you can discuss which to take with your guide, depending on how long you would like to make your day's walk. Trekking time - 3-5 hours.

ACTIVITIES

- **Trek from Kagbeni to Dhagarjung**
  You leave the main circuit again and climb into the hills on the western side of the Kali Gandaki valley. Different route options lead you through high, more barren scenery to the small village of Dhagarjung.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Dhagarjung trekking lodge	None

DAY 17 Trek to Marpha (2670m) via the Windy Pass (3472m)

This trekking day follows a scenic route through the lower Mustang region, crossing the exposed Windy Pass before descending toward the village of Marpha. The trail from Dhagarjung climbs gradually through open terrain shaped by wind and erosion, offering wide views across the Kali Gandaki valley. Reaching Windy Pass marks a natural transition point before the route drops into greener surroundings. As the landscape softens, orchards and cultivated fields begin to appear, signalling the approach to Marpha. Arrival in the village introduces a contrasting setting known for its traditional houses and apple-growing heritage.

ACTIVITIES

- **Trek from Dhagarjung to Marpha via Windy Pass**
  Your final trekking day crosses the Windy Pass of Bhatase Bhanjyang before descending towards Jomsom. Instead of staying there, you continue to Marpha, an attractive stone-built village that has preserved its

traditional architecture.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Marpha trekking lodge	None

DAY 18

Jeep to Tatopani (1190m), afternoon in the hot springs

This journey descends from the high valleys of Mustang into the warmer lowlands of Tatopani, marking a clear shift in climate and landscape. The drive from Marpha follows the Kali Gandaki corridor, passing through changing scenery as dry mountain terrain gives way to greener valleys. Arrival in Tatopani introduces a more relaxed atmosphere after days in higher altitude regions. Free time allows space to rest, explore the village, or enjoy the natural hot springs for which the area is known. Together, the experience offers a restorative pause as the journey continues toward lower elevations.

ACTIVITIES

- **Drive from Marpha to Tatopani**
  You give your legs a rest and travel by shared jeep or bus down the Kali Gandaki valley from Marpha to Tatopani. The road passes villages such as Kalopani and Ghasa as you drop back into lower, warmer country.
- **Free Time in Tatopani**
  You have the afternoon free in Tatopani, where the natural hot springs offer welcome relief after many days of trekking. Relaxing in the warm pools by the river is a highlight of the lower valley.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Tatopani trekking lodge	None

DAY 19

Drive from Tatopani to Pokhara. Free afternoon

This journey returns from the lowland valleys to the lakeside city of Pokhara, marking a transition back to urban comforts after time in the mountains. The drive from Tatopani follows river corridors and hillside roads, revealing greener landscapes as elevation decreases. Arrival in Pokhara reintroduces a relaxed pace framed by lake views and mountain backdrops. Free time allows you to unwind, explore the city independently, or enjoy the lakeside setting. Together, the experience offers a gentle re-entry into city life at the end of the trekking route.

ACTIVITIES

- **Drive from Tatopani to Pokhara**
  You continue by road from Tatopani to the lakeside town of Pokhara. The mountains frame the horizon as you arrive at bustling Lakeside beside Phewa Lake.
- **Free Time in Pokhara**
  Relax in Pokhara with free time by the lake. Enjoy the cafés, shops and peaceful lakeside setting.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Pokhara hotel	None

DAY 20

Leave Pokhara and drive to Kathmandu

Travel from Pokhara to Kathmandu by road and watch the surroundings change from mountain foothills and river corridors to the denser urban landscape of the capital. The drive is the main organised part of the day. Once back in Kathmandu, the remaining time is free, allowing you to recover from the journey or make your own plans around the city without additional scheduled activities.

ACTIVITIES

- **Drive from Pokhara to Kathmandu**
  Travel by tourist bus from Pokhara to Kathmandu. Follow winding roads and rivers as you leave the Annapurna region.
- **Free Time in Kathmandu**
  Enjoy free time in Kathmandu to relax at your hotel, browse the lively lanes and shops of Thamel, or explore the surrounding area independently at your own pace.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Kathmandu hotel	Breakfast

DAY 21

Free time in Kathmandu. Departure airport transfer

This segment in Kathmandu offers a relaxed introduction and conclusion to your Nepal journey, blending leisure time with essential travel logistics. Travellers can unwind after arrival or explore the vibrant Thamel district, known for its lively streets, shops, and local atmosphere. An informal briefing provides helpful insights into the tour and surrounding area, ensuring a smooth start. As the journey concludes, organised transfers and airport procedures are handled efficiently for a stress-free departure. This experience balances cultural immersion with practical travel coordination in Nepal’s capital.

ACTIVITIES

- **Free Time in Kathmandu**
  Enjoy free time in Kathmandu to relax at your hotel, browse the lively lanes and shops of Thamel, or explore the surrounding area independently at your own pace.
- **Drive from Kathmandu City Hotel to Kathmandu Airport**
  Transfer from your Kathmandu hotel to the airport. Say goodbye to Nepal as you head for your departure flight.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
N/A	Breakfast

INCLUDED

- All accommodation (4 nights in 3-star hotels, 16 nights in trekking lodges)
- 24-hour airport arrival & departure transfer service
- Private car for journeys to Besi Sahar and back from Pokhara
- Shared jeep from Besi Sahar to Koto and Jomsom/Marpha to Pokhara
- Services of a trekking guide and porter(s) throughout the trek
- Breakfast at Kathmandu and Pokhara hotels
- Insurance for porters and guides
- Trekking area permissions/permits
- Trekking Pack Hire (Down Jacket, Sleeping Bag and Walking Poles)

EXCLUDED

- International flights (available on request)
- Visa fees (available on arrival for most nationalities)
- Travel insurance (compulsory, get a quote here)
- Meals not indicated in the itinerary
- Drinks, snacks and other personal expenses (e.g. laundry)
- Tips for guides and porters
- Sleeping bag (available for hire in Kathmandu as part of a trekking pack)
- Any other items not mentioned above

Tour 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.

Everest Mountain Flight

Min numbers: 1

This short but spectacular flight takes you from Kathmandu up towards and around Everest and the surrounding high peaks and Tibetan plateau. The planes have good sized clear windows, and window seats are guaranteed. The flight takes around 1 hour and we aim to book one of the first flights of the morning when the views tend to be better and the flights are less liable to delays or cancellations. Transfers to and from your hotel are included. If the flight does not run due to poor weather, we will aim to reschedule it for later in your tour. If that is not possible then you will be refunded.

Panauti Community Homestay Extension - 1 Night post-tour

Min numbers: 1

Immerse yourself deeper into the rich tapestry of Nepalese life with a one-night post-tour extension to the heartwarming Panauti Community Homestay. Embark on an insightful village tour, where you'll witness the rhythms of daily life, interact with friendly locals, and gain a profound understanding of their customs and traditions. Delve into the culinary heart of the community as you participate in a hands-on cooking experience, learning to prepare authentic Nepalese dishes using fresh, local ingredients.

Extra day in Kathmandu - post-tour

Min numbers: 1

This option adds an extra day to the end of your tour, staying in the same hotel as the main tour itself (subject to availability). Your airport departure transfer is still included. Prices shown are per person and based on two people sharing.

Note: Single room and peak season supplements apply.

Extra day in Kathmandu - pre-tour

Min numbers: 1

This option adds an extra day to the start of your tour, staying in the same hotel as the main tour itself (subject to availability). Your airport arrival transfer is still included. Prices shown are per person and based on two people sharing.

Note: Single room and peak season supplements apply.

Important Notes

1 Accommodation

This tour uses a variety of accommodation from comfortable boutique style hotels to basic trekking lodges.

Hotels in Kathmandu & Pokhara

We use a comfortable boutique style hotels in Kathmandu and Pokhara (approx. 3 star), set in the Thamel and Lakeside parts of each city which are most popular with tourists and have easy walking distance to plenty of cafes, shops, restaurants and trekking equipment shops.

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, especially on the main Annapurna Circuit route. However, in some areas including the Nar & Phu Valleys, 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.

One night is spent staying in facilities similar to a simple trekking lodge at the Nar Phedi monastery, and one night in a simple, friendly hotel in Bandipur.

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2 Meals

Hotels in Kathmandu, Pokhara & Bandipur

Breakfasts only are provided in these hotels. Kathmandu and Pokhara in particular have a wealth of restaurants serving excellent food from all over the world, so you will never be short of ideas or places to eat within a short walk of the hotel.

Trekking with lodges

Three meals per day are included on the trek, covering one main item from the lodge menu plus tea/coffee for breakfast and dinner, and a more basic lunch. This provides a hearty breakfast and dinner, but you may add to these if you wish (eg. for deserts or snacks), paying the lodges directly. You'll find that the lodges along the route provide a surprisingly good selection of food and drink. In places the menu may be limited but the food is always nourishing and wholesome. To protect the limited resources available in remoter trekking areas (particularly with regard to fuel) we politely suggest that you either eat the same items as the guide / porters, or as the rest of your party, and not to order too many different items from the menu.

Water & Drinks

It is very important that you drink lots of water and remain well hydrated during this, and any trek. We also recommend you refrain from drinking much alcohol during the trek. This all helps your general wellbeing and to protect against the symptoms of altitude sickness. You can buy bottled water at most of the lodges along the route and tap water is also available but should be treated. However, we strongly recommend against buying bottled water as plastic waste is a perenniel problem in the Himalayas and other trekking areas. We therefore recommend that you carry your own water bottle (or two) and refill it each day at the lodges you pass or from springs or streams your guide suggests are OK to use. Any water collected this way should be treated either with a water filter or with purification tablets. Water bottles with built in filters are readily available these days and are excellent for trekking with. Purification filters and tablets are available to buy in trekking shops in Kathmandu and Pokhara if you don't want to bring them with you. You can also get cheap powdered flavourings to remove the taste of purification tablets.

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3 Group Size / Tour Leaders / Guides

Group size

This is a private tour, so your 'group' will just be whoever you are booking and travelling with, plus your guide and porter(s).

Guides

Fully trained English-speaking Nepalese trekking guides are provided on this tour and many of our travellers consider them a highlight of their tour. For parties of 1-6 travellers we provide one trekking guide plus porters, and for groups of 7 to 12, two guides are provided plus porters.

Porters

This is a supported trek, and we provide porters to carry your main bag. All you will need to carry is a small day-pack containing your water bottle/camera/snacks/clothes you may take on and off during the day. You can leave a bag with some of your luggage locked securely in the hotel in Kathmandu.

We support and follow international guidelines for the employment of any trekking porters we use, including those of Tourism Concern and the IPPG (International Porter Protection Group). Insurance is provided for all porters.

Generally we use one porter per 2 trekkers though this will vary slightly on occasion depending on the make up of your party.

If there are two people travelling, then our normal arrangements are for one guide and one porter. You could bring two main pieces of luggage with you, leaving one behind in Kathmandu and sharing your kit in the other main bag for the porter to carry. Our strict maximum weight limit for porters in Nepal is 30kg. Please therefore plan to take a maximum of 15kg per person on the trek that you would like the porter to carry.

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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4 Transport

We use private cars or minibuses for all the main transfers & journeys on this tour, including from Kathmandu to Besi Sahar, and Pokhara to Bandipur and back to Kathmandu.

Jeeps, which may be shared with other travellers, are used for the rough gravel roads from Besi Sahar to Kotor, and down from Marpha/Jomsom to Tatopani and Beni.

An upgrade to a domestic flight back from Jomsom to Pokhara is available on request either in advance or during the trek (subject to availability).

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5 Transfers

This tour include a 24-hour airport arrival and departure transfer service at Kathmandu airport and all other transfers. There will be a collection of people waiting on the far side of an airport service road immediately in front of you as you exit Kathmandu airport. Please look out for an Encounters Travel signboard to find our representative. You may well be pestered for tips by porters who try to carry your luggage. We suggest you either be firm and insist on carrying your own luggage, or if you want assistance, wait until you have met our representative and then let him arrange the porter for you. You will need to have some money ready for a small tip

(eg. up to NRs 50 or a single US Dollar bill).

Your airport transfers are only included on the first and last day of the time you have booked with us. If you make your own arrangements for additional accommodation at either the beginning or the end of the tour then you will need to arrange your own airport transfers on these days.

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6 Trekking

The trekking times given in the daily itinerary 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-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. 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 - as long as this does not change the profile of the way you are gaining altitude from day to day. This must be done in consultation with your guide and be based on lodge availability. If travelling in a group of people, you should be prepared to walk at the speed of the slowest member.

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

“A serious trek, where we would expect you to have had previous trekking experience and to prepare in advance. You should be very confident of your trekking ability and be prepared to walk some long days perhaps on a steep climb (or descent). You may also have to walk difficult terrain or at high altitude for a number of days. This is definitely the kind of trek where you are more likely to experience extremes of altitude and/or weather.”

You will need to prepare in advance for this trek and we will provide you with a simple training guide. We will also ask you to complete a simple questionnaire about your fitness which will help us to advise you on how best to prepare.

Due to the nature of the trek we set a minimum age of 15 on this tour. If you have a family with younger children then please contact us and we will be able to offer options for alternative trekking routes.

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7 Trekking seasons

Winter - December to February

It can get extremely cold higher up during the winter, and large dumps of snow can also cause delays and block the high passes. For this reason we avoid trekking during these months.

Spring - late February to May

This is a great time to trek, with the weather getting gradually warmer, and rhododendrons in flower.

Monsoon season - June to September

The monsoon rains start around mid-June and continue through July and August and into September. While it is possible to trek during these months, we avoid them on this route because the trails particularly at lower elevations can get muddy and slippery and hiking through prolonged periods of heavy rain isn't that enjoyable. There is also a higher risk of landslides blocking the trails and potentially causing injury.

Peak season - October-November

October and November are peak season for trekking in Nepal, with good weather and mainly clear skies, though you will often still get some afternoon showers if the monsoon is running a bit late. This is the busiest time on the mountain and flights into Nepal can also fill up and get expensive earlier.

The notes above are a rough guide and the weather does vary throughout each season and from year to year. The monsoon rains can start earlier and also drag on into October, and cloud cover can be variable too. However, taking a balance of the numbers of people on the trails and the weather & visibility, our preferred months to trek this route are October-November, March and April.

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8 Acclimatisation and Altitude Sickness

The tour reaches an altitude of over 5000m on several occasions and we therefore plan the daily walking schedule to ensure that you acclimatise gradually and to take account of the effects that spending time at high altitude can have on you. The speed that we gain altitude is therefore restricted and you may not push on ahead even if you think it has been an easy, short day, if you are feeling fine at the time or if you want to shorten the overall trek.

Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS) can develop at any altitude over 2000 meters. The early symptoms are headache, extreme fatigue, and loss of appetite. Some people become breathless at rest. AMS is the result of fluid accumulating in parts of the body where it does not belong: in the brain, in the lungs, or both. When mild symptoms develop, it is a signal that you must stay at that altitude or descend until symptoms have gone away. Never ascend with any symptoms of AMS!

Most people reaching altitudes above 3000m and certainly above 3500m will experience some breathlessness, mild headaches, and poor sleep patterns. Other common symptoms include lack of appetite, increased urination (though you should be drinking a lot so should expect this anyway), strange dreams, tightness in the chest and fatigue. However, few people get very severe symptoms or go on to develop acute altitude sickness (AMS) which requires medical treatment.

If you are male and/or unfit/unhealthy and/or older (60s, 70s, 80s) then you are more likely to be affected than if you are female and/or fit & healthy and/or younger. However, there is no hard and fast rule and there are plenty of exceptions to these generalisations.

To try and minimise the effects of altitude, we recommend that you:

- Ensure you keep warm
- Don’t take any baths or showers for your first couple of days at altitude
- Don’t smoke
- Eat more fruit & vegetables than normal
- Breathe deeply but normally – don’t be tempted to gasp and hyperventilate
- Drink lots of water (several litres) before you leave low altitude, and carry on drinking a lot of water while at high altitude.
- Don’t rush – walk slowly and don’t exert yourselves. Taking things easy and slowly really helps prevent mountain sickness
- Don’t drink alcohol

- Tell each other and your guide how you are feeling as time goes on (this helps others spot if symptoms are becoming severe)

People with serious heart disease should not visit high altitudes, and people with light heart troubles should check with their doctor and follow their advice, as should people with high or low blood pressure.

More severe symptoms that may require medical treatment or an early descent to a lower altitude include severe and persistent headaches, nausea & vomiting, disorientation and loss of co-ordination, irrational behaviour. If you do experience any of these, make sure you tell each other and your guide straight away.

Trekking and Altitude Sickness

If you are trekking with us then you should keep your guide informed at all times of any symptoms you may be developing, especially headaches and breathlessness while at rest. You may need to spend a night or two at the same altitude before continuing your trek. All our trekking tours have acclimatisation days or specially designed schedules to help with this. Usually within one or two days you will feel well and can continue your trek. On private tours, your guide will adjust your itinerary to try and ensure the normal route can be achieved, though this may not always be possible. On group tours, the group may delay their ascent if the itinerary allows, or a porter or second guide may remain with you until the group descends and rejoins you.

If you are resting at the same altitude and your symptoms are becoming worse, then it is necessary to descend. Worsening symptoms of AMS including increasing tiredness, severe headache, vomiting, and loss of coordination. These are signs of High Altitude Cerebral Edema (or HACE). HACE can lead to unconsciousness and death within 12 hours if progressive symptoms are ignored. Increasing shortness of breath, cough, and tiredness are signs of High Altitude Pulmonary Edema or HAPE. HAPE can also be rapidly fatal if ignored.

A person suffering from AMS may not have clear thinking and may have to be forced to descend. You accept that our guides have the final decision on whether you should descend and that ignoring their advice constitutes your choice to leave the tour. Even if someone is willing to descent they should never be allowed to descend alone and one of our porters or a second guide will accompany you. Keep descending until the person shows some sign of improvement, usually after 300-500 meters of descent. Even if the diagnosis is not clear, but might be AMS, you should descend. You can always re-ascend when you feel better.

It is best to start descending while the person who is ill can still walk. In Nepal, if the person can no longer walk, a yak or horse might be obtained. Porters can often be found to carry a sick person down. Do not wait for a helicopter. If you choose to administer oxygen or medications do not delay the descent to watch for improvement.

In summary, if you are not doing well at altitude, most likely you have some mild symptoms of AMS. Rest at the same altitude until you feel well. If you are getting worse at the same altitude, descend to at least the last point at which you felt well. If you are not sure of the diagnosis, err on the side of being too cautious. Remember severe altitude sickness is entirely preventable if you follow these guidelines.

Costs for changing itineraries:

If you are not able to complete your trek or tour for any reason and choose to return back down early, then you may be liable to pay for extra accommodation and transport costs (see our booking conditions for full details). We try to be as flexible and helpful as possible in these cases, and will aim to arrange some lower altitude trekking or other tours during the time you would have spent at higher altitude. You must ensure that you have travel insurance that will cover you for any extra costs incurred due to symptoms or treatment or altitude sickness, and

that your policy will cover you for helicopter evacuation to the altitudes reached on your tour.

More useful information on altitude sickness

9 Fees & Permits

All your entry fees and permits are included in the price of the tour to cover entry into the trekking conservation areas, and sites on any optional day tours added to the tour.

This trek passes through a restricted trekking area (Nar & Phu Valleys) for which advance permits are required. We will need to receive a scanned copy of your passport at least 2 weeks prior to arrival in order to ensure that permits are ready for you to start the trek.

10 Dates & Prices

We offer private departures on this tour starting on any day throughout the available seasons. Prices are given on our website for each season and are based on a minimum of 2 people travelling together. Customised pricing is available on request for solo travellers and for larger parties.

11 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.

12 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.

13 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.

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.

14 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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15 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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16 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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17 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

https://x.com/encounterstravl (yes, without the 'e')

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18 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).

Considering travel insurance for your trip? World Nomads Travel Insurance offers coverage for more than 150 adventure activities as well as emergency medical, lost luggage, trip cancellation and more.

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.

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19 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.

travel aware
gov.uk/travelaware

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20 Reduce Plastic Waste with Water-to-Go Filter bottles

Traveling responsibly means minimizing plastic waste, but staying hydrated on the go is essential. At Encounters Travel we are committed to reducing single-use plastics, which is why we've partnered with Water-to-Go. Their portable filtration system removes over 99.9% of contaminants from any non-saltwater source, turning even questionable water sources into safe drinking water.

Given that tap water is un-safe to drink in many of the countries in which we operate, we recommend purchasing a Water-to-Go bottle prior to departure. This will help you avoid the use of single use plastic bottles and keep you hydrated on the go.

Save big! Get a huge 25% off your Water-to-Go bottle and other Water-to-Go products (such as filters, lids, and carriers). Use code **ENCOUNTERS25** at checkout (valid in the UK, USA and Canada).

How Water-to-Go Technology works:

- Their reusable, BPA free water bottles contain their own unique 3-in-1 filtration technology effectively providing clean safe drinking water from any non-salt water source around the world.

- Three different (1 traditional and 2 nano) technologies are combined in one filter cartridge to remove up to 99.9999% of microbiological contaminants in water.

The three technologies used in a Water-to-Go filter are:

- Mechanical filtration – A tiny pore size, so small contaminants can't fit through.
- Electrical – A positive charge reduces the pore size even further and attracts contaminants like a magnet, trapping them inside the filter.
- Activated Carbon – Unlike most carbon based filters, instead of using adhesives to glue the carbon particles together, (which vastly reduces the carbon's efficiency) it is contained within the membrane, helping to reduce contaminants whilst eliminating bad tastes and odours. Try filtering water from your tap at home and taste the difference!

Water-to-Go filter bottles deliver safe, healthy water worldwide

- Water-to-Go filters remove bacteria, viruses, waterborne disease, protozoa, heavy metals such as lead as well as harmful chemicals.
- Their filters remove Chlorine and Fluoride from tap water.
- The filter will eliminate harmful contaminants from the water but allow beneficial minerals such as sodium and magnesium to pass through leaving you with the healthiest water possible.
- Water-to-Go filters have been independently tested against internationally recognised standards by industry specialists including The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (UK), BCS Laboratories (USA), Bangalore Test House (India) and IMI (China).

Use Water-to-Go products and you'll be healthier, wealthier and helping to make the world a better place!

- Depending on filter size, each Water-to-Go filter is able to replace 260 or 400 single-use plastic water bottles!
- They ensure you have access to safe water anywhere in the world without ever having to buy environmentally damaging bottled water.
- Their water bottles deliver safe, clean drinking water at just 5p per litre.
- The filter membrane is biodegradable and the shrouds are recyclable.
- The water bottles are used and approved by everyone from backpackers to commuters, gym users to expecting mums. Perfect for everyday, outdoor and travel.

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21 Private & Tailor-made Tours

While our group departures offer a fantastic way to explore with like-minded travellers, we understand that some guests prefer a more exclusive experience. Most of our group tours can be booked on a private basis, allowing you to enjoy the same expert-led routes with your own dedicated party. The primary advantage of choosing a private arrangement is the flexibility it provides; we can easily customise the itinerary to include your preferred style of accommodation or adjust the pace to suit your needs. Private tours can be run on the same start days as our group tours, or on other dates. However, some activities within our trips are restricted to particular days of the week - we

will advise you on anything like this that we need to work around. Pricing will be based on the number of travellers in your party, and any customisations you may like to make.

For those seeking something truly unique, our specialist sales team is available to collaborate with you on a completely tailor-made tour, designed from the ground up to match your specific interests, accommodation level and requirements.

To request a quotation for a private or tailor-made tour, please contact us.

22 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).

23 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: Diptheria, 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.

India: Additional vaccinations: Diptheria, Hepatitis A, Tetanus, Typhoid. Malaria map. Yellow Fever certificate: Yellow fever rules for India are quite complicated and lengthy. Please read the WHO guidance.

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 vacinnation 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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24 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. Full details of current visa on arrival procedures are given on the Nepal immigration department website.

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 multi entry visa are currently:

- up to 15 days - US$ 30
- 16 to 30 days - US$ 50
- 31 to 90 days - US$ 125

The visa is obtained in the immigration area at the point where your passport is stamped. Forms to fill in are available at kiosks in the 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 may also need to fill in an arrivals card. Once your paperwork is completed, head to the payment/bank desks to pay and get a receipt, and then to the immigration desk and hand

over your forms, your payment receipt 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.

To reduce queuing time you can also complete most of this process online in advance. First fill in the Visa on arrival form on the government website, and take a photo or print out your completed application form. You can only do this within 15 days of arrival, or you will need to repeat the process. You can then either pay online or pay on arrival at the airport. When you get to the airport, show your printed/photographed form, and the payment receipt if you have paid, and your visa will be issued and stamped into your passport.

Passport Photos: If you are doing any trekking, rafting or visiting a National Park you may be asked for passport photos, as some of the permits we may need to get require these. So please bring at least 2 standard passport photos with you just in case - they will always come in useful later if you don't need them.

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25 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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26 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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27 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.
