ENCOUNTERS TRAVEL

Your passport to adventure

Annapurna Circuit & Nar Phu Valley

Country(ies): Nepal

Tour type: Small Group

Transport: A/C minibus

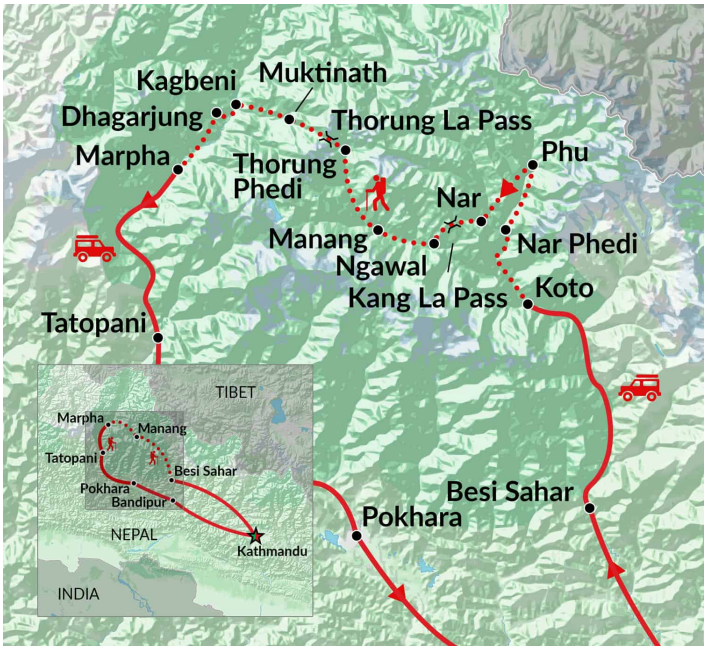
Group size: Min: 2 | Max: 12

Days: 21 days

Start Location: Kathmandu, Nepal

End Location: Kathmandu, Nepal

Meals: Breakfasts - 4, Lunches - 0, Dinners - 0



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

We greet you at the airport and transfer you to your hotel in the centre of Kathmandu, where our Encounters Travel rep welcomes you, helps you settle in, and explains the agenda for the rest of your tour.

OVERNIGHT: Kathmandu hotel
MEALS: None
EXTRAS:

Day 2: Free day in Kathmandu. Optional City Tour is available

You'll have a free day in Kathmandu today to explore at leisure or join our optional city tour. Whilst you explore the city, our local team will take your passports to obtain the permits required to enter the restricted Nar and Phu Valleys.

Optional Kathmandu Tour:
We begin with an exciting Rickshaw ride through the backstreets of Thamel, to Durbar Square. We'll pass through small back streets full of numerous tiny shops, workshops, temples, and stupas to Durbar Square with its array of wooden and stone carved temples and palaces, where we'll have plenty of time to walk around and explore. After lunch at a rooftop restaurant overlooking the square, we drive to the important Swayambunath Stupa which sits on a hilltop overlooking the city, visible from miles around. Also known locally as the 'monkey temple', we'll see these nimble inhabitants scampering in and around the trees and temple.

OVERNIGHT: Kathmandu hotel
MEALS: Breakfast
EXTRAS:

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

Ye leave Kathmandu early today and head West along the main road towards Pokhara. You will travel in a private car/minibus and, once clear of the city's surrounding hills, you may be rewarded with a wonderful panorama of snowcapped peaks as you wind your way down to the Trisuli River valley. White water rafters can often be glimpsed enjoying the rapids far below. The journey will also give you your first glimpse of Manaslu, far away to the north. After you arrive at Dumre, you head north to Besi-Sahar (823m) where you spend the night. The drive today is approximately 6 hours in total.

OVERNIGHT: Besisahar trekking lodge
MEALS: Breakfast
EXTRAS:

Day 4: Jeep from Besi Sahar to Koto (2600m)

After spending last night in Besi Sahar we'll follow the newly constructed road and start heading up through the Marsyangdi valley to Koto where we'll begin our trek tomorrow. The classic full Annapurna Circuit trekking route starts from Besi Sahar itself, but since the road has been built we find it a better experience to drive the first section and then to start hiking from further up where we can then spend more time in remote, less visited areas such as the Nar and Phu Valleys, well away from the new road. Our drive will be in a jeep which may be shared with other trekkers. Approx. 4 hours drive in total today.

OVERNIGHT: Koto trekking lodge

MEALS: None

EXTRAS:

Day 5: Trek from Koto to Meta (3560m)

We'll be making an early start today as we have a lot of ground to cover on our journey from Koto to Meta. We begin our day hiking along the banks of the Soti Khola, passing through pine and rhododendron Forests and crossing suspension bridges before we make our way to Dharmasala, our mid-way point. We then have a steep ascent towards Meta village where you will be rewarded with views of Annapurna II and Lamjung Himal. Trekking time - 7-8 hours.

OVERNIGHT: Meta trekking lodge

MEALS: None

EXTRAS:

Day 6: Trek from Meta to Phu (4080m)

The remote Nar and Phu Valleys are famous for their Tibetan culture and that's exactly what you'll experience today. We'll make our way out of Meta this morning and pass by colourful Tibetan Chortens and through interesting villages. We'll also get good views along the way of the Nar Phedi Monastery which we'll visit (and stay at) on day 8. As we get closer to Phu, you'll cross over a bridge and pass by a line of Chortens which greet you on approach to the village. These valleys remain little visited by tourists and the trekking experience here is excellent. Trekking time - approx. 7 hours.

OVERNIGHT: Phu trekking lodge

MEALS: None

EXTRAS:

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

As we increase our altitude the risk of experiencing altitude sickness increases and we have therefore built in an acclimatisation day today in Phu which can be used for an additional hike to Himlung Himal base camp or exploring the local village. Phu village itself is very interesting and a good way to spend today is by exploring the narrow streets of the village, seeing the locals carrying out their day to day tasks such as processing mustard seeds for oil and spinning wool. You should also definitely make time to visit the Tashi Lakhang Monastery, which is thought to have been the last monastery constructed by the revered Karmapa Rinpoche. For those looking to further exert themselves, there is a good day hike from here through a scenic glacial valley to Himlung Himal

base camp (trekking time 4-5 hours).

OVERNIGHT: Phu trekking lodge
MEALS: None
EXTRAS:

Day 8: Trek from Phu to Nar Phedi (3490m)

Today we'll begin retracing our route back towards Meta, however we'll divert off route to Nar Phedi Monastery where you'll be spending the night. Rooms are the monastery are modest but clean and comfortable. In the evening you'll be able to join the novice monks for their evening prayer before joining a communal meal. Trekking time - approx. 6 hours.

OVERNIGHT: Nar Phedi monastery
MEALS: None
EXTRAS:

Day 9: Trek from Nar Phedi to Nar (4110m)

Despite gaining altitude again, we have an easier day today and should arrive at our destination, Nar village at around lunch time. As we say goodbye to Nar Phedi we'll begin our ascent towards Nar following a winding path, which, if the weather is clear, rewards you with views of the snow-capped peak of Kang Garu in the distance. Every now and then you will come across a traditional chorten lining the route.
Once you arrive in Nar Village, you will notice that it's livelier than Phu, with the village square being where most of the activity takes place. The village is located in a natural bowl and is surrounded by farmland and beautiful mountain views in the distance. Trekking time - approx. 4 hours.

OVERNIGHT: Nar trekking lodge
MEALS: None
EXTRAS:

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

Today will be one of the longest and hardest days you'll have on this trek, so we'll be making an early start, shortly after sunrise. As we leave Nar Village, we'll head towards the Kang La Pass on a pleasant path which takes us through farms and yak grazing lands. Once on top of the Pass you'll want to pause for a moment to appreciate the beautiful views of Annapurna II, Tilicho Peak and Gangapurna. After passing over the Kang La Pass (5320m) we'll have a steep descent to Ngawal which will take us through some sections of scree which will need to be carefully navigated. As Ngawal is back on the main Annapurna Circuit route, you'll see a noticeable difference from the traditional villages you've just visited. The lodges here are larger, with more facilities, some may even have Wifi. Trekking time - approx. 7-8 hours.

OVERNIGHT: Ngawal trekking lodge
MEALS: None
EXTRAS:

Day 11: Trek to Manang (3500m)

We have a relatively easy day today which will firstly see us trekking along the Marsyangdi River for around an hour before entering Braka Village to explore the monasteries here. After time in Braka, we'll push on and trek the remainder of the distance to Manang. Manang is by no means a large town, however you will find a good selection of guest houses here and even some trekking supply shops.Trekking time – 4 to 5 hours.

OVERNIGHT: Braka or Manang trekking lodge
MEALS: None
EXTRAS:

Day 12: Trek to Yak Kharka (4050m) or Churi Lethar (4200m)

On leaving Manang, the trail follows the Jargeng Khola, a tributary of the bigger Marsyangdi Khola. You continue to gain altitude as you travel through small villages eventually arriving at Yak Kharka (3,950m). Excellent views abound, especially of the Glacier Dome. If you're feeling good, you may push on to Churi Lethar today.
Approx. Trekking time – 3.5 to 4.5 hours.

OVERNIGHT: Yakkharka or Churi Lethar trekking lodge
MEALS: None
EXTRAS:

Day 13: Trek to Thorong Phedi (4525m)

Pressing on from Yak Kharka, you trek through the tiny cluster of buildings at Churi Lethar. You then cross the Jargeng Khola and it's just a bit further to Thorung Phedi. This is second fairly short day's walking, but you are gaining altitude still and taking this steadily is sensible, especially as there is a long hard day tomorrow. Trekking time – approx. 3 hours.

OVERNIGHT: Thorong Phedi trekking lodge
MEALS: None
EXTRAS:

Day 14: Cross the Thorung La Pass (5416m) to Muktinath (3802m)

You must leave early today as you have a long, slow, and steep ascent ahead and you need to lose considerable altitude again after crossing the high pass before you can rest for the night. Leaving early also helps to ensure better weather as the views are spectacular and you should be travelling slowly enough to fully appreciate them. Your guide will check reports on the weather and snow conditions on the Pass before you set off.
After a tough, steady walk in the high altitude, around late morning you reach the highest point of this trek, the Thorung La Pass at 5,416m, and you cross from the Marsyangdi Khola to the Kali Gandaki river valleys. Not many people ever get the chance to trek at such heights and you really feel the privilege and the altitude.

As you descend it becomes very steep in places, and hard on the knees, but the views and the beautiful Hanging Meadow on the way down are more than enough to compensate. You can rest your legs and be proud of your

accomplishment when you arrive in Muktinath (3,802m) having covered over 2,400m in height today. There is an “eternal flame” here as flames burn on water where a spring and natural gas exit the ground together. This is housed just above the town in the temple complex. Muktinath has long been a pilgrimage site for Hindus and Buddhists alike because of this remarkable occurrence.
Trekking time – approx. 7 hours.

OVERNIGHT: Muktinath trekking lodge

MEALS: None

EXTRAS:

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.

OVERNIGHT: Kagbeni or Ekle Bhatti trekking lodge

MEALS: None

EXTRAS:

Day 16: Trek to Dhagarjung village (3200m)

You could finish the trek today and take a jeep back down towards Pokhara. However, we like to add 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.

OVERNIGHT: Dhagarjung trekking lodge

MEALS: None

EXTRAS:

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

Your final day's trekking today takes you over one last pass, the 'Windy Pass' of Bhatase Bhanjyang at 3472m before you descend back into the valley floor at Jomsom. There is an airport here and there is an option to fly back from Jomsom to Pokhara if you'd like to shorten the tour. This should ideally be booked in advance, but may be available locally too. Our route crosses the valley again to avoid the road and continues to descend through Thini and on to the welcoming village of Marpha (2680m) which we much prefer as a place to stay than Jomsom.

Unlike some villages on the route, Marpha has worked hard to preserve its unique heritage and architecture, with stone built houses nestling against the cliffs.

OVERNIGHT: Marpha trekking lodge
MEALS: None
EXTRAS:

Day 18: Jeep to Tatopani (1190m), afternoon in the hot springs

You'll be able to give your legs a rest today as we drive the remainder of the journey. Early morning, we'll take a bus or shared jeep further down the Kali Gandaki valley through Kalopani (2530m) and Ghasa (2010m) and on down to Tatopani (1190m). This drive should take around 3 1/2 hours. In the afternoon, the hot springs can provide a welcome relief from the past few weeks walking. Only the good food on offer is enough to drag some out of the steaming pools. The brave can alternate the hot water with quick dips in the ice cold river which rushes alongside.

OVERNIGHT: Tatopani trekking lodge
MEALS: None
EXTRAS:

Day 19: Drive from Tatopani to Pokhara. Free afternoon

Your final drive out of the mountains leg takes you the remainder of the way from Tatopani by shared jeep or bus to the lakeside town of Pokhara. The city is enchanting, and dominated by views of the Annapurnas and in particular of Machhapuchhare. The Lakeside area (around Phewa Lake) is delightful and throngs with travellers in the evenings. Alternatively if you would like to extend your time in the Annapurnas we can arrange a trek extension up from Tatopani to Ghorepani to the famous view point of Poon Hill, from where you descend again before returning to Pokhara - please contact us for details and pricing.

OVERNIGHT: Pokhara hotel
MEALS: None
EXTRAS:

Day 20: Leave Pokhara and drive to Kathmandu

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

OVERNIGHT: Kathmandu hotel
MEALS: Breakfast
EXTRAS:

Day 21: Free time in Kathmandu. Departure airport transfer

You'll have some free time in Kathmandu today until we transfer you to the airport for departure. Extensions are available if you'd like to do some other trekking, try some white water rafting, or add a visit to one of Nepal's national parks.

OVERNIGHT: N/A

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS:

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, available on request)
- 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

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.

Single room supplement (NPTMAC)

Min numbers: 1

The tour price is based on 2 people sharing twin/double rooms. This option books a single room in all the accommodation throughout the tour. If you are a single traveller and would be happy to share a room, let us know and we will see if we can pair you up with another single traveller of the same sex. If a room share is not available when you book then we will add the single room supplement to your booking and it will be payable with your balance payment unless we have arranged a room share for you by then. If a room share is arranged after you have paid the supplement then we will refund it to you. Room shares are arranged in order of booking.

Note: Single supplement prices may vary seasonally.

Subject to availability, solo travellers may need to share a same-sex twin room in the trekking lodges.

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.

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

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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.

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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.

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.