ENCOUNTERS TRAVEL

Your passport to adventure

Himalayan Kingdoms

COUNTRY(IES)	Bhutan , Nepal
TOUR TYPE	Small Group
TRANSPORT	A/C minibus/people-carrier
GROUP SIZE	Min: 2 | Max: 12
DURATION	12 days
STARTS	Kathmandu, Nepal
ENDS	Kathmandu, Nepal
MEALS	Breakfasts - 11, Lunches - 6, Dinners - 7

TOUR ROUTE MAP **12 Days**



ROUTE: **Kathmandu** (Start) → **Paro** → **Khamsum Yulley Namgyal Chorten** → **Phobjikha Valley** → **Thimphu** → **Taktsang Gompa Tiger S Nest Temple Hiking Trailhead** → **Paro** → **Kathmandu** → **Nagarkot** → **Kathmandu** (End)

HIGHLIGHTS

Kathmandu's temples & stupas, Explore Temples and Dzongs of Paro, Witness the art of incense making, Cross the Dochu La Pass, Learn about local life at a village homestay, Explore the Phobjikha Valley and the capital city of Thimphu, Nepalese &

Itinerary

DAY 1 Arrive in Kathmandu, transfer to your hotel

Land at Kathmandu Airport and travel to your hotel in the city. Once checked in, the remainder of the time is free with no organised sightseeing scheduled. You can recover from the journey or take a short independent walk nearby, making this a relaxed first introduction to Kathmandu before the more structured cultural visits and regional travel begin.

ACTIVITIES

- **Arrive at Kathmandu Airport**
  Arrive at Kathmandu Airport where our representative greets you and assists with formalities. Begin your journey in Nepal's vibrant capital city.

- **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.
- **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	EXTRAS
Kathmandu hotel	None	Extra day in Kathmandu - pre-tour, Single Room Supplement (NPSGHK)

DAY 2 Thamel Rickshaw Ride. Walk around Durbar Square, visit Swayambunath Stupa

Begin with a rickshaw experience through Thamel and then make your way towards Kathmandu Durbar Square to explore the old royal centre and its traditional architecture. Continue uphill to Swayambhunath and visit one of the valley’s most important Buddhist sites. The day moves naturally from contemporary city streets to royal heritage and finally a hilltop religious complex overlooking Kathmandu.

ACTIVITIES

- **Thamel Rickshaw Ride in Kathmandu**
  Take a rickshaw ride through the backstreets of Thamel and nearby neighbourhoods. Pass tiny shops, stupas and workshops as you experience everyday city life up close.
- **Walk from Thamel to Kathmandu Durbar Square**
  Walk from Thamel to historic Kathmandu Durbar Square through narrow alleys filled with shrines and courtyards. This route introduces you to Kathmandu's oldest quarters.
- **Explore Kathmandu Durbar Square**
  Explore Kathmandu Durbar Square with its intricately carved temples and royal palaces. Learn about Newari architecture and the history of the ancient kingdom.
- **Explore Swayambunath Stupa in Monkey Temple**
  Visit Swayambunath Stupa on a hill overlooking Kathmandu. Spin prayer wheels and enjoy sweeping views while watching the resident monkeys.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS	EXTRAS
Kathmandu hotel	Breakfast	Everest Mountain Flight

DAY 3

Fly to Bhutan. Kuzuzangpo La! and welcome to Bhutan. Afternoon sightseeing to Ta Dzong, Paro Dzong

Transfer from your Kathmandu hotel to the airport and prepare for the scheduled flight to Paro. No sightseeing is included during the departure period, with the focus on making the connection smoothly. The flight carries you from Nepal into Bhutan and links two important Himalayan capitals, bringing the Kathmandu section of your travels to a close before arrival in the Paro Valley.

ACTIVITIES

- **Drive from Kathmandu Hotel to Kathmandu Airport**
  Transfer from your hotel to Kathmandu Airport for your onward flight. Your tour ends with assistance at the terminal for check-in and departure.
- **Fly from Kathmandu to Paro**
  Fly from Kathmandu across the Himalaya to Paro in Bhutan. On a clear day you may see snow-capped peaks stretching along the horizon.

Arrival in Paro and Cultural Introduction

Fly into Paro and transfer to your hotel before beginning your first cultural visits in Bhutan. Explore Ta Dzong and Paro Dzong, two important landmarks that introduce the country's religious, administrative and architectural traditions, then visit the Nado Poizokhang Incense Factory to see how locally rooted techniques are used to produce incense associated with Bhutanese spiritual and domestic life.

ACTIVITIES

- **Arrive at Paro International Airport**
  Arrive at Paro International Airport surrounded by dramatic Himalayan peaks. Begin your Bhutan adventure as you take in views of one of the world's most scenic airport approaches.
- **Drive from Paro Airport to Paro Hotel**
  Transfer from Paro Airport to your hotel in the Paro Valley. Settle in and get your first taste of Bhutan's warm hospitality.
- **Paro Ta Dzong and Paro Dzong Sightseeing Tour**
  Visit Ta Dzong, the former watchtower now housing Bhutan's National Museum, to learn about the country's history and arts. Continue to Paro Dzong to walk its courtyards and see how monastic and administrative life share the fortress.
- **Explore Nado Poizokhang Incense Factory in Paro**
  Visit the Nado Poizokhang Incense Factory to learn the traditional art of incense making. Watch artisans blend herbs like juniper and sandalwood and hand-roll sticks used in temples across Bhutan.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS	EXTRAS
Paro hotel	Breakfast,Dinner	Kathmandu-Paro-Kathmandu flights

DAY 4 Journey over the scenic Dochu La Pass, visit the fertility-blessing Chimi Lhakhang Temple.

The drive from Paro climbs to Dochu La Pass, where 108 chortens stand in a high mountain setting with Himalayan views in suitable conditions. The route then descends towards the warmer Punakha Valley. A hike through rural surroundings leads to Chimi Lhakhang, bringing together mountain travel, Buddhist heritage and village landscapes during the journey across western Bhutan.

ACTIVITIES

- **Drive from Paro to Punakha via Dochu La Pass**
  Drive from Paro towards Punakha via the scenic Dochu La Pass. Enjoy changing views from forested hillsides to high mountain panoramas along the winding road.
- **Visit Dochu La Pass and 108 Chortens**
  Stop at Dochu La Pass, home to 108 chortens commemorating Bhutanese soldiers. Take in sweeping views of the Himalayas and soak up the peaceful atmosphere at this high mountain shrine.
- **Hike to See Chimi Lhakhang Fertility Temple**
  Hike through fields and village paths to reach Chimi Lhakhang, the temple of the “Divine Madman.” Learn about its fertility blessings and the playful legends that surround this unique pilgrimage site.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Punakha hotel	Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

DAY 5 Walk to Khamsum Yuelley Namgyel Chorten, visit Punakha Dzong and settle in to your Phobjikha Valley homestay

Walk towards Khamsum Yuelley Namgyel Chorten before visiting Punakha Dzong and then travelling onwards to Phobjikha Valley. The day starts among riverside fields and one of Bhutan’s major historic fortresses before climbing into cooler highland scenery. A homestay in Gangtey provides the final focus and introduces local family life after the cultural visits and substantial drive from Punakha.

ACTIVITIES

- **Riverside Walk in Mo Chhu to Khamsum Yuelley Namgyel Chorten**
  Follow a scenic trail along the Mo Chhu River and through terraced fields to Khamsum Yuelley Namgyel Chorten. Enjoy mountain views and glimpses of rural life as you climb to the hilltop shrine.
- **Explore Punakha Dzong in Confluence Fortress**
  Explore Punakha Dzong, a spectacular fortress at the confluence of the Pho Chhu and Mo Chhu rivers. Wander its halls and courtyards to admire intricate woodwork, temples and river views.
- **Drive from Punakha to Phobjikha Valley (Gangtey)**
  Drive from Punakha into the broad glacial bowl of the Phobjikha Valley. Pass traditional villages and forested slopes as you ascend to the remote Gangtey region.

- **Enjoy a Gangtey Village Homestay Cultural Experience**
  Check in to a traditional homestay in Gangtey Village and meet your host family. Share stories over home-cooked meals and experience everyday Bhutanese life in a rural valley.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Gangtey Village homestay	Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

DAY 6 Explore Phobjikha Valley on a nature walk, visit the revered Gangtey Monastery, and experience authentic Bhutanese life with your host family.

Spend the day in Phobjikha Valley with a nature walk followed by a visit to Gangtey Monastery. Black-necked cranes may be present during their seasonal migration, but sightings depend on timing and natural conditions. Later, join a local family and learn more about everyday life in the area. The combination of wetland scenery, religious heritage and community interaction provides several different perspectives on the valley.

ACTIVITIES

- **Phobjikha Valley Nature Walk in Crane Habitat**
  Take a gentle nature walk through the Phobjikha Valley, home to black-necked cranes in season. Enjoy rolling meadows, farmhouses and streams in one of Bhutan's most beautiful landscapes.
- **Explore Gangtey Monastery in Hilltop Monastic Complex**
  Visit Gangtey Monastery, a 17th-century gompa overlooking the Phobjikha Valley. Explore its temples, murals and courtyards while learning about the spiritual life of the resident monks.
- **Village Life Experience in Gangtey Host Family**
  Spend time with your Gangtey host family to see how traditional farming households live. Learn about local customs, seasonal work and daily routines in this remote highland community.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Gangtey Village homestay	Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

DAY 7 Head to Bhutan's modern Capital Thimphu, via Wangdue Phodrang Dzong

Travel from Phobjikha Valley towards Thimphu and stop in the Wangdue Phodrang area to visit Rinchengang Village. The settlement provides a closer look at traditional stonework and rural Bhutanese life, while the surrounding drive passes through changing mountain and river scenery. Afterwards, continue to Thimphu, leaving the quieter valleys behind and returning to the country’s principal city.

ACTIVITIES

- **Drive from Phobjikha Valley to Thimphu via Wangdue Phodrang**
  Travel back across Dochu La Pass toward Thimphu, stopping near Wangdue Phodrang for views of the dzong and surrounding villages. Continue through forested valleys into the capital.
- **Explore Rinchengang Village in Traditional Stonework Settlement**
  Visit Rinchengang Village, known for its traditional stone masonry. Walk among closely clustered houses on a small hillock overlooking Wangdue Phodrang Dzong.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Thimphu hotel	Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

DAY 8 Exploring Thimphu, visit the Memorial Chorten, Folk Heritage Museum, School of Arts & Crafts & Takin Research Centre. Witness the art of incense making

Spend the day visiting several important cultural sites in Thimphu, beginning with the Memorial Chorten and Folk Heritage Museum before continuing to the School of Arts and Crafts and local artisan workshops. The Takin Conservation Centre and nunnery add ecological and spiritual perspectives, while the Weekend Market shows everyday trade. An archery demonstration at the national stadium completes the scheduled activities.

ACTIVITIES

- **Explore Memorial Chorten in Thimphu**
  Visit the Memorial Chorten, a whitewashed stupa built in memory of Bhutan's third king. Join local worshippers as they spin prayer wheels and walk clockwise around the shrine.
- **Explore Folk Heritage Museum in Thimphu**
  Explore the Folk Heritage Museum to see how Bhutanese families lived in traditional farmhouses. Exhibits and reconstructed rooms bring rural life and customs vividly to life.
- **Visit School of Arts and Crafts – Zorig Chusum**
  Visit the National Institute for Zorig Chusum where students train in Bhutan's 13 traditional arts. Watch young artisans practice painting, woodcarving, weaving and other heritage skills.
- **Explore Local Artisans' Workshop in Thimphu**
  Stop at a local workshop to observe artisans creating thangkas, textiles or basketry. See how long-practiced techniques are being preserved for future generations.
- **Explore Takin Conservation Centre in Thimphu**
  Visit the Takin research centre to see Bhutan's unusual national animal. Learn about the takin's biology and the efforts being made to protect this rare species.
- **Explore Thangthong Dewachen Dupthop Nunnery in Thimphu**
  Visit Thangthong Dewachen Dupthop Nunnery to glimpse the lives of Buddhist nuns. Experience a quieter side of monastic life and enjoy views back over Thimphu Valley.
- **Explore Thimphu Weekend Market**
  Stroll through Thimphu's weekend market where villagers sell produce and handicrafts. Browse stalls for local

snacks, textiles and souvenirs while mingling with residents.

- **Archery Demonstration at National Stadium in Thimphu**
  If timing allows, visit the national stadium to watch an archery match. See Bhutan's national sport in action and learn about its importance in festivals and celebrations.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Thimphu hotel	Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

DAY 9 Hike to Taktsang Monastery (Tiger's Nest). Drukgyel Dzong and Kyichu Lhakhang. Optional Hot Stone bath

Spend the first part of the day hiking to Taktsang Monastery before continuing to Drukgyel Dzong and Kyichu Lhakhang. The monastery provides the major active and spiritual focus, while the later visits add historical and early Buddhist context within the Paro Valley. The combination of walking and heritage sightseeing keeps the day centred on three important sites without adding activities beyond those stated.

ACTIVITIES

- **Hike to See Taktsang Monastery – Tiger's Nest**
  Hike through pine forest and up a steep mountain path to Taktsang Monastery, the famous Tiger's Nest. Marvel at this cliff-side complex and enjoy sweeping views over the Paro Valley.
- **Explore Drukgyel Dzong Ruins in Paro Valley**
  Explore the ruins of Drukgyel Dzong, a former fortress guarding the valley's approach routes. Walk among its remaining walls and imagine the battles and victories of earlier times.
- **Explore Kyichu Lhakhang in Ancient Temple**
  Visit Kyichu Lhakhang, one of Bhutan's oldest temples dating back to the 7th century. Step inside to see ancient statues, murals and butter lamps in a deeply atmospheric shrine.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Paro hotel	Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

DAY 10 Fly to Nepal and head to Nagarkot in the Kathmandu Valley

Travel from Paro to Kathmandu on the scheduled flight and conclude the Bhutan portion of your travels. The departure from Paro provides one final view of the valley and surrounding mountains before you cross back towards Nepal. As this is a transfer-focused period, there are no additional activities attached, allowing the day to remain centred on the air journey.

ACTIVITIES

- **Fly from Paro to Kathmandu**
  Fly from Paro back to Kathmandu, enjoying aerial views over the Himalayas. On arrival, continue toward the hills surrounding the Kathmandu Valley.

Arrival in Nepal and Transfer to Nagarkot

Drive from Kathmandu Airport to Nagarkot after arrival in Nepal, leaving the busy valley floor and heading into the surrounding hills. The journey provides a clear change in scenery as roads climb through greener countryside towards the hilltop destination, giving you time to settle into a more peaceful setting before the next planned activities.

ACTIVITIES

- **Drive from Kathmandu Airport to Nagarkot**
  Drive from the airport to Nagarkot, a hilltop village known for sweeping Himalayan panoramas. Settle into your accommodation with time to enjoy the mountain scenery.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS	EXTRAS
Nagarkot hotel	Breakfast	Kathmandu-Paro-Kathmandu flights

DAY 11 — Sunrise Mountain Views. Bhaktapur ancient centre with Pottery Class, Pasupatinath & Boudhanath

Watch the morning light spread across the landscape from Nagarkot before travelling to Bhaktapur for time in the old royal centre and a hands-on pottery session. Continue towards Kathmandu and visit Pashupatinath and Boudhanath, representing major Hindu and Buddhist traditions within the valley. The day moves from mountain views to historic urban heritage and active religious sites, with each stop showing a different aspect of Nepalese culture.

ACTIVITIES

- **Sunrise View in Nagarkot**
  Watch the sunrise from Nagarkot's ridge-top viewpoints, famous for sweeping Himalayan vistas. On clear mornings, peaks such as Langtang and even Everest are faintly visible.
- **Explore Bhaktapur Durbar Square**
  Explore Bhaktapur's ancient city centre, known for its palaces, courtyards, and traditional wooden architecture. The area is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a cultural highlight of the valley.
- **Pottery Class in Bhaktapur Pottery Square**
  Take part in a pottery class using traditional wheels and techniques. Learn from skilled artisans in Bhaktapur's famous Pottery Square.
- **Explore Pashupatinath Temple in Kathmandu**
  Visit Pashupatinath, Nepal's most important Hindu temple. Observe ceremonies along the Bagmati River and learn about its spiritual significance.

- **Explore Boudhanath Stupa in Kathmandu**
  Explore the massive Boudhanath Stupa, a major centre of Tibetan Buddhism. Walk around the stupa with pilgrims and monks.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Kathmandu hotel	Breakfast

DAY 12 — Kathmandu, tour ends with airport transfer

Spend your final hours in Kathmandu at leisure before travelling from the hotel to the airport. No organised sightseeing is included in the standard departure period, although additional Nepal extensions may be arranged separately for those who want more time in the country. Possible options include rafting, further trekking, Kathmandu Valley activities and visits to Chitwan or Bardia, while the included service ends with the airport transfer.

ACTIVITIES

- **Drive from Kathmandu Hotel to Kathmandu Airport**
  Transfer from your hotel to Kathmandu Airport for your onward flight. Your tour ends with assistance at the terminal for check-in and departure.
- **Depart from Kathmandu Airport**
  Check in for your international flight at Kathmandu Airport. Complete departure procedures before your onward journey.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS	EXTRAS
N/A	Breakfast	Extra day in Kathmandu - post-tour

INCLUDED

- All accommodation in comfortable mid-range hotels
- All transport in private AC vehicles with a local driver
- All transfers, including 24-hour airport arrival & departure transfer service
- Services of a local guide throughout your time in Bhutan
- Services of a tour leader in Nepal and specialist city guide for Kathmandu tours
- All meals as indicated in the itinerary
- Bhutan visa fee (worth US$40)
- Bhutan government Sustainable Development Fee (worth US$100/ night)
- A wealth of local experiences

EXCLUDED

- International Flights in and out of Nepal
- Return flights between Kathmandu and Paro (see Tour Notes)
- Nepal multi-entry visa fee ($45)
- Travel insurance (compulsory, get a quote here)
- Meals not indicated in the itinerary
- Drinks, snacks, tips and other personal expenses (e.g. laundry)
- Any other items not mentioned above
- Entrance Fees to sites visited (Budget approx. $100 p/p)

Notes

Several of our departures on this tour take place during festivals in Bhutan. These festivals, or Tsechus, are a fantastic time to visit the country, with parades and masked dances taking place in and around the Dzongs. On these dates we may adjust the itinerary slightly to make the most of being there during the festival. We also encourage you to book early on these dates as flights in and out of Bhutan can sell out well in advance at these times.

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.

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.

Hot Stone Bath - Paro

Min numbers: 1

After a long day of trekking to the breathtaking Tiger's Nest Monastery, your legs might be feeling a bit weary. What better way to soothe those tired muscles and embrace the local culture than with a traditional Bhutanese hot stone bath?

Imagine sinking into a steaming wooden tub filled with mineral-rich water, heated to perfection by glowing river stones. As you soak, the warmth penetrates deep into your body, easing away any aches and pains. The addition of fragrant herbs like artemisia adds a therapeutic touch, promoting relaxation and rejuvenation.

This ancient practice, known as Dotsho, is more than just a bath – it's a holistic experience that connects you to the Bhutanese way of life. It's the perfect way to unwind after a day of adventure

Thangka Painting Workshop

Min numbers: 1

Immerse yourself in the vibrant world of Bhutanese art with a Thangka painting workshop.

Under the guidance of a master artist, learn the intricate techniques and symbolism behind these sacred works of art. Create your own unique Thangka, a beautiful and meaningful souvenir to treasure long after your journey through Bhutan.

Workshops typically take place in Thimphu, the capital city, but may be held in other picturesque locations throughout your tour, depending on the artist's availability.

Important Notes

1 **Accommodation**

The accommodation on this tour is in comfortable mid-range tourist class hotels, mainly boutique style, and at the high end of the Nepalese 3-star level, and the Bhutanese 4-star level.

Like all aspects of tourism in Bhutan, hotels used for tourists are strictly regulated and inspected and all must reach a good standard to obtain their license to cater for tourists. So, you should expect good clean rooms, en-suite bathrooms, and some traditional Bhutanese styling in the building’s architecture and design.

Please check the Accommodation section on the tour page on our website for the hotels that we currently use most on this tour. These are given as a guide only and may be exchanged some dates for alternative properties of a similar standard. We will advise you of your first hotel in Kathmandu a few weeks before departure when we send out your final confirmation voucher and arrival instructions. We do not normally advise details of all the other hotels used throughout the tour. If you have specific requirements for individual hotels, please request a private/tailor-made tour.

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

2 Money

Nepal

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

You should ensure you have all the Nepalese rupees you think you will need before you leave for any trekking or visiting any more remote areas (including Bardia National Park). You can pay with US Dollars cash in some places but should not rely on this.

Bhutan

The local currency in Bhutan is the Ngultrum (Ng), which is pegged to the Indian Rupee. Indian rupees are accepted widely (except 500 or 1000 rupee notes which are not accepted) so if you are entering Bhutan from India you don't need to dispose of your Indian currency before departure.

All your meals, plus mineral water & tea/coffee during mealtimes are included in the price of your tour. You will only need to carry spending money to cover souvenirs, small offerings at temples & monasteries, alcoholic or soft drinks in your hotel or other bottled drinks during the day. There are only a few ATMs in the country (including Paro & Thimphu) where you can withdraw local currency (Visa, Mastercard) so we recommend bringing some cash in US Dollars, Euros, GB Pounds, or Indian Rupees with you that you can exchange into local currency on arrival. You can tip your guide & driver with any currency.

Tibet

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

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

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

3 Transfers

Your airport transfers are only included on the first and last day of the set tour itinerary, plus on any additional days if you book your hotel room 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.

Transfers are also included on the days within the tour when you are transferring to and from the airport for flights during the itinerary.

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4 International flights including Nepal/Bhutan

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 to Nepal in the main tour price. We are however very happy to make suggestions for flights to go with your tour and can provide you with list of possible airlines and flight times from your preferred departure point to fit with the tour.

The return flight between Kathmandu (KTM) and Paro (PHB) is also not included in our tour prices. This makes the whole tour more cost effective for our travellers as it means we do not to account for agency commissions or discounts on top of the fixed flight price.
You can book this flight independently through the Druk Air website or we may be able to book it for you, subject to your location and local regulations (UK residents will need to book the flights themselves). There is often only one flight per day and therefore everyone on the tour will therefore usually be using the same flight. All transfers are included at each end.
An option is available to add onto the tour to book these flights.

We do also sometimes advertise flight inclusive packages from selected airports. Where these are shown on our website, prices are correct at the time of quoting, but are subject to continued availability of the fare used. Prices will be reconfirmed at the time of booking, and we will also provide the flight times and airline details before tickets are issued.
Flight inclusive prices are based on the cheapest Economy ticket class available which is generally non-refundable and non-changeable unless the flight is cancelled for reasons such as Covid-19, in which case the airlines are more flexible. More flexible ticket options, as well as Premium Economy and Business Class tickets are available on request for an additional supplement. Any changes made to flight inclusive bookings will be subject to the airline rules on your ticket.

Flight CO2 Emissions:

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

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

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5 Transport

The transport used on this tour will be an air conditioned car, STV, modern people-carrier, minivan or minibus, subject to the final number of people in your group or in your party. We always aim to have some free seats so you can spread out a little. You should expect vehicles in Bhutan to be a little better quality than those in Nepal.

Please see the note on International Flights for more information on the connecting flights between Kathmandu and Paro.

6 Group Size / Tour Leaders / Guides

We are committed to running small groups on our trips in Nepal and Bhutan, as we feel this gives everyone in the group the best chance to get to know their fellow travellers and to hear and make the most of their guide. It also allows us to be more creative with the itinerary and do things which would not be possible with larger groups. So, we set our group departures on this tour to have a maximum of 12 travellers.

In Nepal our local representatives will be on hand to provide your airport transfers and accompany you on other journeys through the tour. A professional guide will be arranged for your city tours in Kathmandu and Bhaktapur.

In Bhutan, fully trained English-speaking Bhutanese guides are provided to escort you throughout the tour and many of our travellers consider them a highlight of their tour.

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

7 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.

8 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.

9 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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10 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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11 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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12 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

13 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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14 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.

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15 Tipping - Nepal

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

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

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

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

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

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16 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.

17 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.

18 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.

19 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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20 What to take

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

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

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

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

- Autumn - late Sep-Nov: The weather is good and very warm, with lots of sunshine, getting quite hot during the day in lowland regions. It will still be cold at night at higher altitudes if you are trekking. Shorts & T-shirts are fine while you are walking, but you should still bring warmer clothes for the evenings. There is a good chance of rain in September and early October, so bring a waterproof.
- Winter - Dec-Feb: It will be pleasant in lowland regions with very little rain, but will be cooler at night. Long trousers and shirts are advised during the day, and you will need warm clothes in the evenings. If you are trekking, then it will be cold during the day, and extremely cold at night, particularly at higher altitudes. Several warm layers are recommended so you can regulate your comfort as you walk, including a waterproof, even if only to protect from cold winds. We include thick down jackets in our optional trekking packs for comfort in the evenings at higher altitudes.
- Spring - Mar-May: The weather is very pleasant during the spring, and again shorts & t-shirts are fine while you are walking. There is a higher chance of rain as the season progresses, so a thin waterproof is recommended in case. It gets very hot and humid in the lowlands from May onwards.
- Monsoon - Jun-mid Sep: It will be hot and sticky during these months, with lots of rain, so come prepared accordingly if you are visiting during these months - gaiters are highly recommended if you are trekking to keep out leeches.

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

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

Whilst rafting:

On the raft: Shorts, Tevas (sandals) or trainers, baseball style cap to keep the sun off your face, sunglasses with a strap to keep them on your head, swimwear, sarong for women, sun-cream, lip balm, water bottle, several t-shirts. Note: All footwear on a raft should be rubber soled, and of the type that will not come off easily.

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

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

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

Whilst trekking:

Suggested Clothing and equipment: Strong hiking boots or walking shoes that you have broken in; Good sized rucksack or holdall; 3 to 4-season sleeping bag (only if you want to use your own rather than the one provided in our optional trekking pack); silk or cotton sleeping bag liner; lightweight waterproof and windproof jacket;

(waterproof gaiters, waterproof over trousers - these are only necessary on some treks in some seasons - contact us for further info if required); 3 or 4 t-shirts; small day pack; several pairs of light socks; 2 pairs of heavier woollen socks; underwear including thermals; warm hat and gloves; swimwear; pair of lightweight trousers; pair of shorts; 1 fleece or warm jumper and 1 sweatshirt. Also, sunglasses, torch and batteries, toiletries (include a lighter to burn toilet paper), bring biodegradable shampoo & soap, towel, blister kit, money belt and any personal medication you might require. Remember, Lots of layers are the key to staying warm and comfortable. Also, keeping your feet comfortable and healthy makes a huge difference to how you enjoy your trek. So, bring waterproof boots/walking shoes and plenty of pairs of socks so you can change them regularly.

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

Whilst in the game parks:

You should bring long trousers and long-sleeved shirts for jungle walks and travel within the park. Please ensure these are of drab colours to avoid drawing attention. Sunglasses and sun-hats are advisable for hot and bright days. Mosquito repellent is highly recommended. Binoculars are extremely useful at any of Nepal's National Parks, and are not generally available for hire locally. Don't forget fast film for those jungle shots and moving animals/birds. A good cleaning kit is essential as these items are unavailable once at the park. It is also better to take quality film, either from home or Kathmandu into the parks, and to ensure you have a spare fully charged battery and memory card.

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

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21 Tipping - Bhutan

While an accepted part of the tourist industry in Bhutan (i.e. guides, drivers and hotel staff), tipping elsewhere is generally discouraged and unnecessary. Any amounts you do tip should always reflect the level of service provided.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 can give the following guidelines...

1-2 persons travelling:

US$8-15 pp per day for your guide & US$4-7 pp per day for your driver.

3-8 persons travelling:

US$5-10 pp per day for your guide & US$3-5 pp per day for your driver.

9-12 persons travelling:

US$4-8 pp per day for your guide & US$3-5 pp per day for your driver.

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22 Passports and Visas - Bhutan

We will arrange your Bhutan for you in advance of your arrival. You will need to provide us with:

- a scanned colour copy of your passport identity page (with your photo and personal details). This cannot be a photo showing fingers holding the passport. If you don't have a scanner, then place the passport completely flat and open on a white A4 piece of paper and take a photo of the whole piece of paper with the passport in the middle. That should suffice.
- a scanned colour passport photo (digital versions are available from most passport photo machines or shops doing passport photos now)
- a copy of your travel insurance policy certificate

Please send these to us as soon as possible after booking or at least 2 months before your arrival. The visa will normally be issued by the Bhutanese authorities around 10 days before your arrival and we will then email it to you. You will need to print the visa out and show it to the Druk Air staff when you check in. No payment is required from you for the visa at this stage or when you arrive in Bhutan - all costs are included in your tour price. .

If you are connecting the tour with Nepal, then Nepal visas are available for most nationalities on arrival in Kathmandu airport for a fee of US$25 for single entry, with an extra $20 charged for a multiple entry visa which will be required for most of our Nepal and Bhutan combination tours. This covers up to 15 days in Nepal (from first arrival to last departure). Single entry visas are also available for $40 (16-30 days) or $100 (31-90 days), again with an extra $20 fee to convert these to multiple entry.

If you are connecting the tour with time in India, then you will need to obtain an Indian visa in advance - these are not available on arrival in Indian airports. We recommend you allow a minimum of 4 weeks to apply for this visa.

If you are connecting the tour with time in Thailand, then many nationalities can arrange a free tourist visa on arrival in Bangkok airport.

Please contact us if you have any questions about visa requirements for your travel plans and nationality.
