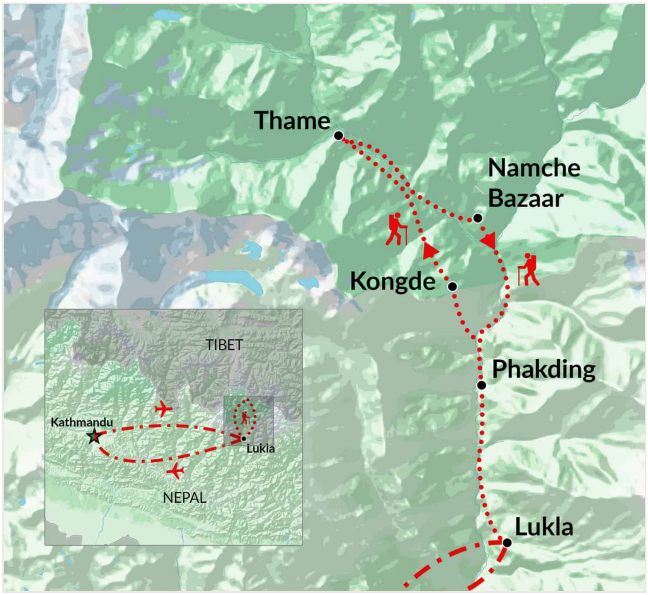
Luxury Everest Trek

COUNTRY(IES)	Nepal
TOUR TYPE	Private
TRANSPORT	A/C car/minibus & flight
GROUP SIZE	Min: 2 | Max: 0
DURATION	13 days
STARTS	Kathmandu, Nepal
ENDS	Kathmandu, Nepal
MEALS	Breakfasts - 12, Lunches - 9, Dinners - 9



HIGHLIGHTS

Kathmandu, luxury Yeti Mountain Home lodges, amazing Everest views, Namche Bazaar, Sherpa village of Thame, remote trekking to Kongde, trekking guide & porters

Itinerary

DAY 1 Arrive in Kathmandu, transfer to hotel

We greet you at the airport and transfer you to your boutique hotel in the centre of Kathmandu. You'll meet your trekking guide this evening for a pre-trek briefing discussion of the days ahead. You'll then have some free time to check out the numerous little gift shops and trekking shops that line the mazelike streets of Thamel, picking up any final snacks and equipment you may want for the trek. In the evening you have an opportunity to tryout the numerous, restaurants and bars, and soak up the unique nightlife that makes Kathmandu a magnet for travellers from all over the world.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Kathmandu boutique hotel	None

DAY 2 Fly to Lukla (2840m) and trek to Phakding (2610m)

We'll pick you up early from your hotel this morning for the flight up to Lukla (2840m). This is an exciting flight into one of the world's most famous landing strips. On arrival you have a look around Lukla, meet your porter(s) and subject to the final flight timing, stop for some lunch, before starting to trek towards Phakding. This is an easy first day's walk, starting off downhill into a forested valley before climbing slightly to Dungde (2630m) and then descending again to Ghat (2530m) in the base of the valley where you join the Dudh Kosi (Kosi = river). From there it's a short walk up the river to the Yeti Mountain Home lodge in Phakding (2610m). Here you'll be made welcome and settle in for your first night in the mountains.

Trekking time - approx. 3 hours

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Yeti Mountain Home lodge - Phakding	Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

DAY 3 Trek to Namche Bazaar (3440m)

After a hearty breakfast, you leave the lodge behind and start the day's hiking, following the Dudh Khosi througn pine forest northwards through Benkar, Chumowa and Jorsale to a fork in the river. Along the way you'll cross several of Nepal's famous long and high cable suspension bridges. You follow the left fork (of the Kyajo Khola) making the steep winding ascent up to Namche Bazaar (3,446m), the administrative centre for Khumbu. If the weather is clear you will get your first views of Everest on the way. Namche Bazaar has a long history as a trading centre, though trade has changed considerably from its heyday of exchanging salt for grain to its main role now as a base for trekkers heading up towards Everest and the Gokyo Valley. There are lots of trekking shops selling gear and clothing and lots of cafes and other shops. You can even enjoy a massage and spa treatments in your lodge here. The Yeti Mountain Home lodge in Namche has a great location above the town with excellent views across the valley to Thamserku (6632m) and the Kongde mountain range.

Trekking time - 5-6 hours

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Yeti Mountain Home lodge - Namche Bazaar	Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

DAY 4 Acclimatisation day in Namche Bazaar

You spend today day acclimatising to the altitude, which gives you the opportunity to explore the town and its surroundings and to soak up the views. Well worth a visit are both the Sagarmatha National Parks Visitor Centre, with a splendid display of Himalayan fauna and flora and Sherpa culture, and the Sherpa Culture Museum in Chhorkung, a short walk away. This has some fascinating exhibits covering all the Sherpa Everest summiteers and some beatiful photos on sale. The views from around Namche Bazaar can be very good, and (subject to weather)

you get your first good sightings of Kwangde, Everest, Nuptse, Lotse and Ama Dablam, and others! There are also several interesting and scenic day walks you can do if you wish. These include a good half day hike to the traditional villages of Khumjung and Kunde.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Yeti Mountain Home lodge - Namche Bazaar	Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

DAY 5 Trek to Thame (3820m)

You leave Namche Bazaar this morning, and also leave the main trekking route up to Everest Base Camp and the Gokyo Lakes behind. Instead you follow an important ancient salt trading and pilgrimage route to Tibet, also used by the few trekkers heading for the Renjo La Pass. It should take around 2 or 3 hours to reach the village of Thamo, passing through juniper and pine forests. A break for lunch is welcome here, and your guide can talk to you about Ang Rita Sherpa, one of the region's most famous Sherpa mountaineers who was born here and who has summited Everest 10 times without oxygen.

The remainder of our hike to Thame (3800m) follows the Bhote Khosi river past rapids and gorges. Thame is an important village in the Khundu and renowned as the home of Apa Sherpa, an 21-time summitteer and Tensing Norgay, the first man to reach the top of Everest with Sir Edmund Hillary. There is also an old gompa (monastery) here worth checking out (about an hour's walk). The Yeti Mountain Home lodge in Thame sits in the base of the valley, overlooked by snowy peaks.

Trekking time - 5-6 hours

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Yeti Mountain Home lodge - Thame	Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

DAY 6 Acclimatisation and day hikes from Thame

You'll spend a second night in Thame tonight, which gives the opportunity to explore the area around the village a bit more. The steep walk up to the impressive Nyingmapa Gompa, built in the 16th century is very rewarding, especially if your visit coincides with either the Dumchi or Mani Rimdu festivals. Other walks from here include the challenging Sunder Peak which at 5361m will prove too high for most, especially those without mountaineering experience and equipment for the final stretch. A tough but rewarding walk up to the ridge can still be had up though, and the route up to 4800m is non-technical and provides great views of Kongde, Everest, Makalu, Cho Oyo, Thamserku and more.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Yeti Mountain Home lodge - Thame	Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

DAY 7 Trek to Kongde (4250m)

You leave Thame this morning and follow the southern bank of the Bhote Khosi back downstream before climbing away from the river on a little walked path up through rhododendron, pine and bamboo forests towards Kongde (4250m). The best time of year to see the rhododendrons in bloom varies and seems to be getting earlier, but you should see lots of flowers in February and March with the season tailing off by April. You're well off the normal trekking routes here and will see few, if any other trekkers. This is a harder day's walking and the easier pace and acclimatisation of the previous days should prove invaluable in making this an enjoyable day. Your ascent continues until you reach the glacier of Kongde Peak with amazing views of Everest, Lhotse and Ama Dablam. This is a new, well built trail, created especially to access the Yeti Mountain Home Lodge. It does include one short section with cables for handrails for safety. Your guide and porter will be available to assist if necessary.
The Yeti Mountain Home Lodge in Kongde sits at 4250m and really is a spectacular location and experience. You can see your earlier stop of Namche Bazaar across the valley, with the high peaks of Everest, Lhotse, Ama Dablam and Thamserku in the background. After your long climb a hot shower is welcome, followed by a glass of wine and more excellent food. You'll remember your stay here for ever!
Trekking time - 6-7 hours

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Yeti Mountain Home lodge - Kongde	Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

DAY 8 Optional hike to Farak Ri (5000m) Free time

Today is left free for you to make the most of your beautiful surroundings. For those feeling energetic still, there is the option of an early start to walk up to the top of Farak Ri, a smidgeon under 5000m. The walk to the top should take 2-3 hours, and the early morning views from here are fantastic, taking in 4 of the 6 highest peaks in the world - Everest, Lhotse, Makalu and Cho Oyu.
After returning to the lodge, there will be lunch served on the terrace and the afternoon free to chat with your fellow guests and guides, to relax by yourself or to take some more walks around the area. In the evening another delicious dinner is served.
Trekking time - approx. 4 hours for Farak Ri

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Yeti Mountain Home lodge - Kongde	Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

DAY 9 Trek to Phakding (2610m)

You'll leave the lodge at Kongde reluctantly this morning, taking the trail steeply down towards the Dudh Kosi. You'll be losing around 1600m in altitude today, so it will be tough on your knees and trekking poles are highly

recommended. You're still on a trail used by hardly any trekkers and will pass several smallholdings and Sherpa settlements with great views down the valley towards Lukla providing an excellent excuse for photo stops and to rest your legs. After reaching the bottom of the valley its a short walk downstream, back on busier paths, to the Yeti Mountain Home lodge at Phakding where you can put your feet up for a welcome easy afternoon.

If you wish, you could shorten the trek by a day and push on this afternoon for the 3 hour ascent up to Lukla, ready to fly home tomorrow morning. This itinerary takes things a little easier though.

Trekking time - 4-5 hours

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Lukla trekking lodge	Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

DAY 10 Trek to Lukla (2840m)

You can take it easy today as there is only around 3 hours hiking to do today, though the majority of it is uphill as you ascend back up to Lukla ready to fly back to Kathmandu tomorrow. Lukla is a busy little town, especially in the mornings when all the flights arrive and depart, but much quieter in the afternoons, with a steady stream of tired trekkers arriving back after their various hikes in the mountains. You'll have the afternoon free to catch up on any diary entries or to organise your photos while relaxing in the comfort of the Yeti Mountain Home lodge here.

Trekking time - approx. 3 hours

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Yeti Mountain Home lodge - Lukla	Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

DAY 11 Fly from Lukla to Kathmandu. Free time

Your time in the mountains comes to an end today, and you take one of the morning flights down from Lukla and back to Kathmandu. The rest of the day is free to explore the city with several half day tour options available on request. One option is to visit the ancient centre of Bhaktapur which is located close to the airport, before checking into your hotel.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Kathmandu boutique hotel	Breakfast

DAY 12 — Kathmandu. Free day (to allow for delays to the Lukla flight)

Today is a free day to spend relaxing and recovering from your exertions. We also leave it free in case there have been any delays on your trek, or to the flight back from Lukla. These flights are extremely dependent on good, clear weather, and it is not at all unusual for them to be delayed or cancelled. We therefore feel it is very important to always build a free day in at the end of trekking tours like this to protect against this eventuality.

You may want to spend more time exploring Kathmandu and its surroundings; there are plenty of things to see and do. Perhaps some last minute shopping for presents will fill your last day in Kathmandu.

We offer several options today, including tours to the nearby ancient areas of Patan and Bhaktapur or further afield in the Kathmandu Valley. Longer extensions could add some safari activities in Chitwan or Bardia National Parks, or try some exciting rafting on the Bhote Khosi or Trisuli rivers.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
N/A	Breakfast

DAY 13 — Kathmandu. Free time. Departure airport transfer

Your time is free in Kathmandu today until we pick you up and transfer you to the airport for departure. Extensions are available to try some white water rafting, add some more cultural sightseeing and touring or to visit one of Nepal's wildlife reserves.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
N/A	Breakfast

INCLUDED

- All accommodation (3 nights in Kathmandu boutique hotel, 9 nights in luxury trekking lodges)
- 24-hour airport arrival & departure transfer service
- Domestic flights from Kathmandu/Lukla/Kathmandu
- Services of a trekking guide and porter(s) throughout the trek
- Insurance for porters and guides
- Trekking area permissions/permits
- Meals as indicated in the itinerary (breakfasts in Kathmandu, all meals on trek)

EXCLUDED

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

Notes

During busy periods, flights to Lukla may depart from Ramechhap instead of Kathmandu. This is a shorter flight, less prone to weather delays, but does require an early start and a 4-hour drive from Kathmandu to Ramechhap airport. We will advise you before departure if your flight will depart from Kathmandu or Ramechhap. If this is the case there will be an additional fee of US$50 per vehicle payable in Kathmandu for each journey.

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.

No additional options available for this tour.

Important Notes

1 **Accommodation**

This tour is specifically designed to provide a higher level of accommodation than our standard trekking trips. A boutique style hotel at around the 4-star level is used in Kathmandu, and then a selection of Yeti Mountain Home lodges are used during the trek. We consider these to be the best appointed and most comfortable lodges available in the Khumbu region.

The lodges all have excellent mountain views and are home to between 12 and 20 well equipped and comfortable rooms offering either king-size or twin beds. Electric mattresses and all bedding are provided though you may still wish to bring a sleeping bag for extra warmth especially during the winter season (sleeping bags are available for hire in Kathmandu before you start the trek). A thermos of hot boiled water is served in each room. Some lodges have WiFi access, as well as small libraries and even spa facilities in Namche Bazaar.

2 International Flights

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

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

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

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

Flight CO2 Emissions:

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

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

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3 Money

The local currency in Nepal is the Nepalese Rupee (NRs). There are a banks and several ATMs in Kathmandu where you can use a debit/credit card to withdraw cash (Visa, Mastercard), but these are not generally available out of Kathmandu or Pokhara. There are numerous money change shops in the main towns. Travellers cheques can be changed in some banks in Kathmandu and Pokhara, but not elsewhere.
You should ensure you have all the Nepalese rupees you think you will need before you leave for any trekking or visiting any more remote areas (including Bardia National Park). Try to obtain as many small denomination notes as possible, as higher value notes can be very hard to change in remote areas. You can pay with US Dollars cash in some places but should not rely on this.

4 Internal Flights

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

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

Flight CO2 Emissions:

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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.

5 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.

6 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.

7 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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8 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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9 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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10 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

11 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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12 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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13 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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14 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.

15 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.

16 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.

17 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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18 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.