ENCOUNTERS TRAVEL

*Your passport to adventure*

# Nepal & Bhutan Explorer

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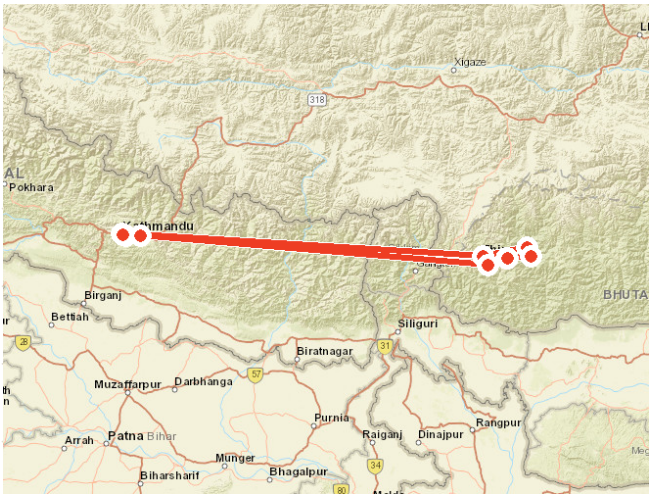
|---|---|
| COUNTRY(IES) | Bhutan , Nepal |
| TOUR TYPE | Private |
| TRANSPORT | A/C minibus/4x4 vehicles & flight |
| GROUP SIZE | Min: 1 \| Max: Any |
| DURATION | 12 days |
| STARTS | Kathmandu, Nepal |
| ENDS | Kathmandu, Nepal |
| MEALS | Breakfasts - 11, Lunches - 8, Dinners - 8 |




**HIGHLIGHTS**

Kathmandu's temples & stupas, Paro Dzong & National Museum, Thimphu weekend market, Dochu La Pass, Punakha & Wangduephodrang Dzongs, walk up to Taktshang monastery, Nepalese & Bhutanese food & culture, beautiful Himalayan scenery

## Itinerary

### DAY 1 Arrive in Nepal, welcome & transfer to hotel

We will be happy to help with flights into Nepal if you wish, and on your arrival our local representative will greet you and transfer you to your hotel in the centre of Kathmandu. We normally use the Shanker Hotel, which is built around a former royal palace and located in large quiet gardens close to the main touristic area of Thamel.

**ACTIVITIES**

- **Arrival 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 Kathmandu Airport → 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.

| OVERNIGHT | MEALS | EXTRAS |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Kathmandu hotel | None | Extra day in Kathmandu - pre-tour, Single room supplement (NPTMNB) |

## DAY 2 Kathmandu city tour

There is the option early this morning for a spectacular mountain viewing flight up around Everest.

After breakfast, and an introduction to your city guide, we take you on a tour of the fascinating, sprawling city of Kathmandu. We start by walking from your hotel, through the tourist centre of Thamel, and then through narrow winding streets, passing several street corner temples and stupas to Durbar Square. Here your guide will explain some Nepalese history as you explore the array of Hindu Temples and the old Royal Palace. We then head by car to the outskirts of the city and climb up the many steps leading to the immense Swayambhunath Stupa. Also known for good reason as the 'monkey temple', the stupa sits upon a hill overlooking Kathmandu and gives a spectacular view out over the city. The rest of the day is free for you to explore the city further (further sites can be visited during the tour if you wish).

### ACTIVITIES

- **Walk Thamel → 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.
- **Visit 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.
- **Visit Swayambunath Stupa – 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, visit Paro Dzong & Ta Dzong

We transfer you to the airport for the spectacular flight to Bhutan (try to sit on the left side of the plane for great views of Everest). When you arrive in Paro airport you'll know you've arrived somewhere special as the airport buildings have the same traditional architecture you’ll see throughout the country.

After an introductory lunch and check in to your hotel, you visit Ta Dzong, originally the Watch Tower for the Rinpung Dzong in Paro. Now the National Museum of the Kingdom it boasts a wide range of antique thangkha paintings, textiles, weapons & armour, household objects and natural and historic artifacts.

Next you walk to the nearby Rinpung Dzong or the 'fortress of the heap of jewels'. Dzongs are impressive buildings and host the seat of the district administration and the residence of the monastic school.

**ACTIVITIES**

- **Drive Kathmandu Hotel → 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 Kathmandu → 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.
- **Visit Ta Dzong – National Museum of Bhutan**
  Visit Ta Dzong, a former 17th-century watchtower that now houses the National Museum of Bhutan. Explore ancient artifacts, thangkas and exhibits that tell the story of Bhutan’s history and culture.
- **Walk Paro Dzong – Fortress Monastery Tour**
  Walk down to Paro Dzong, a dramatic fortress-monastery rising from the valley floor. Wander its courtyards and corridors to see how religion and administration have long been combined in Bhutanese dzongs.

| OVERNIGHT | MEALS |
| --- | --- |
| Paro hotel | Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner |

## DAY 4 Paro, drive to the Punakha Valley

Keen birdwatchers may do a pre-breakfast tour this morning and drive up to the Che Le La Pass for sunrise to look for the distinctive Blood Grouse and colourful Himalayan Monal.

After breakfast, you drive to the Punakha Valley (77km, approx. 3hrs). On the way, and after a winding climb through mixed forests, you'll stop at the Dochula Pass (3,050m) for tea/coffee and in clear weather, to enjoy spectacular views of the Eastern Himalayan range.

After descending past the new Botanic Gardens the road winds through beautiful forests and gradually opens out into the Punakha Valley where after lunch, you can take a short walk through fields at the bottom of the valley to Chimi Lhakhang, built by Lama Drukpa Kuenley or the Divine Madman. The temple is renowned for blessing barren women with fertility.

**ACTIVITIES**

- **Drive Paro → 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 Viewpoint**
  Stop at Dochu La Pass to admire its 108 memorial chortens and sweeping Himalayan views. Walk around the hilltop and enjoy the cool mountain air.

- **Hike to 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 Punakha Valley walk & sightseeing

You start this morning with a walk to Khamsum Yuelley Namgyel Chorten. This Chorten stands majestically on a strategic ridge above the Punakha valley and was visualised out of Buddhist treasure teachings by Thragthung Dudjom Lingpa. A pleasant walk down through fields full of chillie, bean & wheat crops takes us to the riverbank, from where you can either drive, or extend your walk through fields and forests downstream along the river towards Punakha.

After lunch you visit the spectacular Punakha Dzong, which lies between two rivers known as Phochu and Mochu. Symbolizing masculine and the feminine co-existence, their currents are of different colours and they unite at this spot.

### ACTIVITIES

- **Riverside Walk – 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.
- **Visit Punakha Dzong – 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.

| OVERNIGHT | MEALS |
| --- | --- |
| Punakha hotel | Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner |

## DAY 6 Wangdue Phodrang Dzong, drive to Thimphu

This morning, you visit Wangdue Phodrang Dzong, whose unrestored state is a distinct change from the Dzongs in Paro & Punakha, and really gives a feel for how these buildings with their joint monastic & administrative functions, have run things in Bhutan over the centuries. A walk through Wangdi's slightly ramshackle old streets follows before you drive up the valley, passing the site planned for a new rebuild of the whole town centre on the far side of the river.

Further interesting short hikes are also available in the valley, or you can have lunch and then head back over the Dochu La Pass to Thimphu.

### ACTIVITIES

- **Visit Wangdue Phodrang Dzong**
  The fortress-monastery that has watched over the Wangdue valley for centuries stands unrestored, offering a rawer impression than the polished dzongs elsewhere in Bhutan. Religion and administration have long shared one roof here.
- **Walk Through Wangdue Phodrang Old Town**
  The ramshackle old streets of Wangdi below the dzong are worth a wander. The town centre is due to be rebuilt across the river, making this a chance to see the original settlement before it changes.
- **Travel from Wangdue Phodrang to Thimphu via Dochu La Pass**
  The valley is followed up and over the Dochu La Pass towards Thimphu. On a clear day the high point of the road reveals a long line of Himalayan peaks.

| OVERNIGHT | MEALS |
| --- | --- |
| Thimphu hotel | Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner |

## DAY 7 Thimphu weekend market & sightseeing

One of the main highlights in Thimphu is its vast weekend market with its hundreds of different stalls selling a huge range of fresh vegetables, spices, and of course, chillies. There is also a handicrafts & clothing market here, and overall this is a great place to pick up some souvenirs as a memory of your time in Bhutan.

After visiting the market first thing in the morning, the rest of today is set aside for sightseeing tours and visits with your driver and guide. You have a wide choice of options and can discuss with your guide which are of most interest to you. Options include the national Takin research centre, the Memorial Chorten, the School of Arts & Crafts, the Folk Heritage Museum, the National Library, the National Institute of Traditional Medicine, a traditional hand-made paper factory, the Textile Museum, and Trashichhodzong which houses most of the government offices and the King's throne room. Lunch will be included during the day, and if there is an archery tournament taking place, a stop at the national stadium is well worthwhile.

Several short half-day hikes are also available around the valley. Displays of traditional folk dancing also run every day for those who are interested. In the evening you enjoy a Bhutanese meal at a hillside restaurant overlooking the city.

### ACTIVITIES

- **Visit 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.
- **Visit Takin Conservation Centre – 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.
- **Visit Memorial Chorten – 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.

- **Visit Folk Heritage Museum – 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 & 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.

| OVERNIGHT | MEALS |
| --- | --- |
| Thimphu hotel | Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner |

## DAY 8 Thimphu sightseeing, drive to Paro

You have more time this morning to do more sightseeing in and around Thimphu, or to do a short walk into the surrounding hills.

Sometime in the afternoon, we make the short drive of around 2 hours back to Paro.

### ACTIVITIES

- **Drive Thimphu → Paro**
  Leave Bhutan’s capital and drive back through the valley to Paro. Arrive at your hotel and prepare for the hike to Tiger’s Nest.

| OVERNIGHT | MEALS |
| --- | --- |
| Paro hotel | Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner |

## DAY 9 Taktshang Monastery walk, Paro sightseeing

You start early today for the 2-3 hour walk uphill to reach the Taktshang monastery, giddily perched on a sheer 800m rock face. Taktshang is probably Bhutan's most famous site, and means 'Tiger's Nest', as legend has it that Guru Padmasambhava flew to this spot on the back of a tigress in the eighth century. You'll break for lunch at the Taktshang Cafeteria about two thirds of the way up. Riding ponies can be arranged for most of the route if you wish.

In the afternoon you visit Drukgyel Dzong, the fort of the victorious Drukpas. Although gutted by a fire, this fort is renowned as the stand from which several Tibetan invasions were repulsed. You will also visit one of the oldest and most holy temples in Bhutan - the 7th century Kyichu Lhakhang. This was one of the 108 temples built in the Himalayas by the Tibetan King, Songtsen Gembo and embodies the arrival of Buddhism here.

In the evening you can have a final stroll through the streets of Paro, or enjoy a relaxing traditional hot stone bath to ease any tired limbs.

### ACTIVITIES

- **Hike to 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.
- **Visit Drukgyel Dzong Ruins – 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.
- **Visit Kyichu Lhakhang – 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.
- **Traditional Hot Stone Bath – Paro**
  Relax in a traditional Bhutanese hot stone bath after your hike. Heated river stones warm the water and help soothe tired muscles in a rustic wooden tub.

| OVERNIGHT | MEALS |
| --- | --- |
| Paro hotel | Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner |

## DAY 10 Fly to Kathmandu, Bhaktapur tour

After breakfast, you fly back to Kathmandu and visit the ancient centre of Bhaktapur. Formely a capital of the Kathmandu Valley, the pedestrianised centre of Bhaktapur is full of squares and temples, with some stunning wooden architecture. You have a guided tour here, as well as time to explore the bustling narrow and winding streets around the central squares.

After lunch we drive uphill to the village of Nagarkot on a ridge at the NE edge of the Kathmandu Valley. Accepted as probably the best of the valley's mountain views, you can see all the way from Kanchenjunga in the east, past the tiny (from here!) peak of Mt. Everest, to Dhaulgiri in the west. You can check the weather and the hotel will wake you if the morning is clear so you can see the sun rise over the distant Himalayas.

### ACTIVITIES

- **Fly Paro → Kathmandu**
  Fly from Paro back to Kathmandu, enjoying aerial views over the Himalayas. On arrival, continue toward the hills surrounding the Kathmandu Valley.
- **Visit Bhaktapur Ancient Centre**
  Explore Bhaktapur’s UNESCO-listed centre with its palaces, temples, and traditional wooden architecture. Learn about centuries-old craftsmanship and urban culture.
- **Drive Bhaktapur → Nagarkot**
  Drive from Bhaktapur to the hilltop village of Nagarkot. Arrive to sweeping views over the Kathmandu Valley.

| OVERNIGHT | MEALS |
| --- | --- |
| Nagarkot hotel | Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner |

DAY 11

## Valley walk, visit Pasupatinath & Boudhnath

After an early rise to enjoy the sunrise views, you have breakfast before walking downhill from Nagarkot, striking off up through some pine forest and then following a ridge which brings you down through tiny Chhetri villages with wonderful views to either side, to the beautiful Changu Narayan Temple. You can now either drive back to Kathmandu, or carry on walking and descend to the valley floor and the Manohara River, which you leave to pass the old Gokarna Safari Park to reach Boudhnath with its huge Stupa and strings of colourful, fluttering prayer flags. The walk today can be made as long or short as you would like it.

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

### ACTIVITIES

- **Sunrise View – 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.
- **Walk Nagarkot → Changu Narayan Temple**
  Walk downhill through forest and terraced farmland towards Changu Narayan. Visit one of Nepal's oldest and most important temples.
- **Visit Pashupatinath Temple – Kathmandu**
  Visit Pashupatinath, Nepal's most important Hindu temple. Observe ceremonies along the Bagmati River and learn about its spiritual significance.
- **Visit Boudhanath Stupa – 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, free time & airport transfer

Your time is free in Kathmandu today until we pick you up and transfer you to the airport for your flight home.

### ACTIVITIES

- **Free Time / Leisure – Kathmandu**
  Enjoy free time to rest after your flight or explore the lively lanes of Thamel. This evening you receive an informal briefing about the tour and local area.

- **Drive Kathmandu City Hotel → Kathmandu Airport**
  Transfer from your Kathmandu hotel to the airport. Say goodbye to Nepal as you head for your departure flight.

| OVERNIGHT | MEALS | EXTRAS |
| --- | --- | --- |
| N/A | Breakfast | Bardia National Park Extension, Trisuli white water rafting, Extra day in Kathmandu - post-tour |

### INCLUDED

- All accommodation as stated in the itinerary
- All transport in private AC vehicles with a local driver
- All transfers, including 24-hour airport arrival & departure transfer service
- Flights between Kathmandu and Paro with Druk Air
- Services of a local guide throughout the tour for all the sightseeing tours listed in the itinerary
- Entrance Fees to sites visited
- All meals as indicated in the itinerary
- Bhutan visa & tourism development fee

### EXCLUDED

- International Flights in and out of Nepal
- Nepal visa fee
- Travel Insurance (compulsory)
- Meals not indicated in the itinerary
- Drinks, snacks, tips and other personal expenses (e.g. laundry)
- Any other items not mentioned above

## Tour Options

Our tours are designed to include all that you need to enjoy a really special time in the destination you're visiting. However, we do also offer some extra options to complement the tour and add some additional sightseeing or activities, or some extra time at either end of the tour.

All accommodation based options (e.g. Single supplements, extra nights, cruise upgrades) should be booked and paid for in advance so that we can make the appropriate arrangements. Other options may either be booked and paid for in advance or while you are on the tour, though we recommend booking in advance to ensure there are no issues with availability.

Many options are priced the same throughout the year, but some may incur single or high season supplements , full details are given on the tour reservation form or on request.

*No additional options available for this tour.*

## 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.

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## 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.

## 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.

## 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).

## 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')

## 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.**

## 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

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## 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.

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## 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.

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## 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.

## 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.

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