ENCOUNTERS TRAVEL

*Your passport to adventure*

# Plantations & Hill Stations

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|---|---|
| COUNTRY(IES) | India |
| TOUR TYPE | Private |
| TRANSPORT | AC car/minibus & flights |
| GROUP SIZE | Min: 1 \| Max: 0 |
| DURATION | 14 days |
| STARTS | Delhi, India |
| ENDS | Delhi, India |
| MEALS | Breakfasts - 12, Lunches - 4, Dinners - 4 |

**HIGHLIGHTS**

Old and New Delhi, Kalimpong hill station, Buhhdis Rumtek Monastery, beautiful Tsomgo Lake, stunning mountain views around Pelling, the famous Glenburn Tea Estate & Darjeeling hill railway, views of Mount Kanchenjunga

## Itinerary

### DAY 1 Arrive in Delhi and transfer to hotel

You arrive in Delhi today where we meet you at the airport and transfer you to your hotel. Depending on what time you arrive, we can arrange a short introductory tour of the city today or you can just settle into the hotel and relax after your journey.

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

## DAY 2 Delhi city tour

After breakfast, we have arranged a full day tour of India's enigmatic capital city for you. Vibrant, bustling Old Delhi, with its labyrinth of medieval streets, important mosques and Moghul architecture is an invigorating mix of historical and cultural influences, and our tour includes visits to the imposing Red Fort, the mosque of Jama Masjid and the Raj Ghat cremation site of Mahatma Gandhi. We also have time for a short stroll through the bazaars of Chandni Chowk where rickshaws, hawkers, cows and crowds all compete for space in the narrow lanes lined with crumbling Haveli facades.

This afternoon our tour continues to the wide leafy avenues of New Delhi. Designed by the British architect Sir Edwin Luytens, it is full of imperial architecture, stately monuments and large open spaces, and stands in complete contrast to the hustle and bustle of the old city. Visit Humayun's Tomb, India Gate, Parliament House, Qutb Minar and the Lotus Temple before returning to your hotel to reflect on a fascinating day (Note – this day should not be a Monday as many of the sites are closed).

| OVERNIGHT | MEALS |
| --- | --- |
| Delhi hotel | Breakfast |

## DAY 3 Fly to Bagdogra, travel to Kalimpong

After breakfast, we transfer you to the airport for your flight to Bagdogra in the West Bengal hills. On arrival, you are met by our representative and transferred to the hill station of Kalimpong 80km away (approx 3 hours). Nestled in the foothills of the Himalaya above the Teesta River and within sight of Khanchendzonga the third highest mountain in the world at 8598 metres, the town is often overlooked by visitors due to the close proximity of Darjeeling. However, with its Buddhist temples surrounded by dense forests, streams and beautiful green hills it provides a wonderful setting in which to relax and unwind after the hustle and bustle of Delhi.

| OVERNIGHT | MEALS |
| --- | --- |
| Kalimpong hotel | Breakfast |

## DAY 4 Kalimpong, morning tour

This morning you visit Durpin Dara Hill, high above Kalimpong for a spectacular view along the Eastern Himalayan mountain range including the peak of Mount Khanchendzonga. Yet more spectacular views of snow peaks can be enjoyed at Deolo View Point. Kalimpong is a major flower exporter and produces much of India’s gladioli and orchid varieties and there is the opportunity to visit a flower nursery here before visiting the ancient Thongsa Gompa (Bhutan Monastery). Surrounded by 219 small prayer wheels, the old monastery was founded in 1692 before being rebuilt in the 19th century after the Gurkhas rampaged across Sikkim. Visitors are allowed to attend the prayer services by Buddhist monks and there are a number of colourful frescoes on the walls to admire. The afternoon is

free for you to explore Kalimpong’s downtown market.

| OVERNIGHT | MEALS |
| --- | --- |
| Kalimpong hotel | Breakfast |

## DAY 5 Kalimpong to Gangtok via Rumtek Monastery

After breakfast we depart for Gangtok, the capital and largest town in Sikkim, stopping en route to visit the Rumtek Monastery. Spiritually the monastery has huge significance as the seat of Buddhism's Kagyu (Black Hat) sect. The main monastery building was constructed between 1961 and 1966 and the giant throne inside awaits the crowning of current Kagyu spiritual leader, the 17th Karmapa. The young lama fled from Tibet in 2000 but currently remains in Dharamsala as Indian authorities are believed to have prevented him from officially taking his seat at Rumtek for fear of upsetting the Chinese. At the back of the monastery a set of stairs lead up to the Golden Stupa which holds the ashes of the 16th Karmapa in a jewel-studded reliquary which pilgrims pay their respects.

In the afternoon we visit the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology which was established in 1958 to promote research into Tibetan culture and Mahayana Buddhism. Housed in a building built in traditional Tibetan style, the institute contains one of the largest collections of Buddhist books and manuscripts in the world together with statues, thangkas and sacred objects. Nearby is the Do-Drul Chorten, a large white pagoda surrounded by dormitories accommodating novice monks.

If there is time, we will also visit the Flower Exhibition Centre, a modestly sized tropical greenhouse full of exotic plants and is worth a visit, particularly in March when the orchids are in bloom.

| OVERNIGHT | MEALS |
| --- | --- |
| Gangtok hotel | Breakfast |

## DAY 6 Gangtok, Tsomgo Lake

Today we travel along the former Silk Route to visit Tsomgo Lake (pronounced Changu), a scenic glacial lake surrounded by beautiful scenery. The lake is considered holy by the Sikkimese and is fed from meltwater from the surrounding mountains which taper down to its shores and often reflected in the still waters. Lamas used to study the colour of the lake water to forecast the future and it is said that if the waters had a dark tinge, it foreshadowed a year of trouble and unrest in Sikkim.

The journey to the lake also passes the Kyongnosla Waterfall which has a clutch of shops and teahouses where you can stop and warm yourself with a piping hot cup of chai.

| OVERNIGHT | MEALS |
| --- | --- |
| Gangtok hotel | Breakfast |

## DAY 7 Gangtok to Pelling, tour Pelling

After breakfast we depart for Pelling (approx 5 hours) on a scenic journey past hills, waterfalls, rivers and steep valleys set against a backdrop of Himalayan peaks. Upon arrival in the afternoon, you can choose to relax and admire the sight of the mighty Khangchendzonga or, if you prefer, join an excursion to a number of interesting sights around Pelling.

Rabdentse was the former royal capital of Sikkim before it was destroyed by repeated Nepalese and Burmese invasions throughout the 19th century. As a result, only the ruins of the palace's north and south wings can be seen together with a number of well preserved chortens where members of the royal family would offer incense to the deities. The Pemayangtse Gompa was a former royal monastery and translates as 'Perfect Sublime Lotus'. Founded in 1705, it is one of Sikkim’s oldest and most significant gompas and is magnificently situated on a hilltop overlooking the ruins of Rabdentse. The gompa's atmospheric compound is ringed by gardens and its colourful prayer hall is beautifully proportioned with doors and windows painted with Tibetan motifs. We also visit Sangachoeling Gompa, the second oldest gompa in Sikkim. Occupying a commanding site on a ridge above Pelling with spectacular views of the surrounding mountains, the gompa was built in 1697. Surrounded by a courtyard of stupas, prayer wheels and colourful prayer flags, the main hall also contains some beautiful murals and sculptures.

| OVERNIGHT | MEALS |
| --- | --- |
| Pelling hotel | Breakfast |

## DAY 8 Pelling to Glenburn Tea Estate

Leaving Pelling for the exclusive Glenburn Tea Estate (approx 4 hours) near Darjeeling, we pass through valleys carpeted with lush verdant tea plantations and make plenty of stops along the way to admire the spectacular scenery. On arrival at Glenburn, the rest of the day is free for you to relax, perhaps with a cup of tea, and take in the setting of this idyllic colonial plantation house, or you may instead prefer to stretch your legs after the journey with a walk around the estate. Originally established in 1860 and home to generations of tea planters, Glenburn remains a working tea estate today and the main bungalow is a wonderfully peaceful, comfortable place to stay and the faded charm of the colonial period still hangs in the air. The sweeping verandah, crackling fire of the drawing room and the ceremony of a candle lit dinner in the grand dining room provide a focus for the renowned Glenburn hospitality and ensure an unforgettable holiday experience for you.

| OVERNIGHT | MEALS |
| --- | --- |
| Glenburn Tea Estate | Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner |

## DAY 9 Glenburn Tea Estate

The next three days are free for you to simply relax or enjoy some of the various activities on offer at Glenburn including a tour of the tea factory to learn about the process of making fine Darjeeling tea before a chance to refine your taste with a tasting session. The estate also has a camp where you can enjoy a refreshing dip in the River Rungeet before enjoying a barbeque lunch and a walk across the Manjitar Suspension Bridge into the old royal kingdom of Sikkim. There are also a number of nature and bird walks for you to enjoy in the hills, forests and rivers surrounding the estate.

A chauffeur driven air conditioned car is at your disposal during your stay at Glenburn and the famous hill station of Darjeeling just over an hour's drive away. Spread over a mountain range and surrounded by a carpet of tea plantations overlooked by Himalayan peaks, Darjeeling is the premier attraction in West Bengal with a number of colonial buildings, temples and gardens to distract you from the magnificent view of Khanchendzonga. Take a ride of the famous Darjeeling Hill Railway (a UNESCO World Heritage site) before shopping for local crafts and handicrafts in the steep narrow streets of the town. Visit the Palace of a local Maharaja before enjoying the views of the surrounding hillsides from Darjeeling's main square, the Chowrasta, where the bandstand evokes memories of British colonial history.

Drive out to the Lebong Cantonment to see the highest race course in the world before visiting the renowned Himalayan Mountaineering Institute, the Tibetan self-help centre, the Lloyds Botanical Gardens and the Ghoom Monastery.

| OVERNIGHT | MEALS |
| --- | --- |
| Glenburn Tea Estate | Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner |

## DAY 10 Glenburn Tea Estate

Free day to enjoy relaxing at Glenburn Tea Estate or exploring the local area.

| OVERNIGHT | MEALS |
| --- | --- |
| Glenburn Tea Estate | Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner |

## DAY 11 Glenburn Tea Estate

Free day to enjoy relaxing at Glenburn Tea Estate or exploring the local area.

| OVERNIGHT | MEALS |
| --- | --- |
| Glenburn Tea Estate | Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner |

## DAY 12 — Fly to Delhi

After breakfast we transfer you to the airport at Bagdogra for your flight to Delhi where the rest of the day is free for you to relax or perhaps do so last minute shopping for presents.

| OVERNIGHT | MEALS |
| --- | --- |
| Delhi hotel | Breakfast |

## DAY 13 — Transfer to the airport for departure

Your time is free today until we transfer you to the airport for departure.

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

### INCLUDED

- All accommodation and meals as stated in the itinerary
- All transport in private vehicles with a local driver
- All transfers, including 24-hour airport arrival & departure transfer service
- Services of a local English speaking escort throughout the tour
- Entrance Fees to sites visited

### EXCLUDED

- International Flights in and out of India
- Indian visa fees
- Travel insurance (compulsory, get a quote here)
- Meals not indicated in the itinerary
- Drinks, snacks, tips and other personal expenses (e.g. laundry)
- Any other items not mentioned above

# 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

We use good quality hotels and guest houses rated at the Indian 2-star and 3-star level on this tour and try to include some heritage properties where possible. These heritage hotels are often converted from former palaces or merchant houses and are full of historical character, though they may feel a little dated. They are often a highlight of your stay.

Accommodation is based on twin, triple or double en-suite rooms with air conditioning. Please visit the accommodation tab of this tour for examples of the hotels normally used on this tour. If you have any specific accommodation requests please let us know and we'll be happy to provide you with a customised quotation.

### 2 Transport

Our trips feature a mix of different transport options. We want you to feel like you're really experiencing the country you're travelling through, but at the same time finish journeys refreshed enough to enjoy the next stage of the tour. Due to the somewhat chaotic nature of Indian roads, we only use private vehicles for all road journeys. Some fun train journeys may also be included.

### 3 Transfers

The tour price includes a 24-hour airport meet & assist service in New Delhi airport, your arrival and departure airport-hotel transfers and all other transfers.

### 4 Group Size/Tour Leaders/Guides

As we don't offer guaranteed group departures on this tour we can run the itinerary for however many people you happen to be travelling with, starting from 1 upwards. The prices given for this tour are based on a minimum of 2 passengers travelling, so if you have a different number of passengers in your group please contact us for a customised quotation.

In India we provide a fully trained, local English-speaking tour leader/driver to accompany you through the tour. Specialist local guides are used for all of the sightseeing tours and national park activities.

At Encounters Travel we have a policy of only using local Indian guides and reps. We feel this gives you the best experience of the country and the sites you are seeing. Please check our website for more details and profiles of

some of our most famous local guides.

## 5 Entrance Fees

The tour price includes entrance fees to all the tourist sites mentioned in the itinerary. If you visit any sites not mentioned in the itinerary then you will need to cover the entrance fee costs.

## 6 Dates & Prices

This tour is designed as a sample tailor-made tour itinerary. As such we do not offer set group departure dates that you can join. Rather, the tour is available for you to do privately starting on any date of the year. Guideline seasonal prices are given below, based on 2 people travelling. If you would like to adjust the tour itinerary, or there will be more or less people travelling, please contact us and we will customise a price for you. We can operate most of our India tours throughout the year, however you should take the hot monsoon months of May to September into consideration when choosing your travel date.

## 7 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:

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.

**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 north eastern regions of India including Assam and Orissa are considered high risk,while the rest of India is generally considered low enough risk that anti-malarial tablets are not necessary for most travellers doing relatively short tours.

**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.

## 8 What to take

**Luggage:** Suitcases are fine, though you may find rucksacks or large bags are more practical. You should also bring a small daypack/bag to take out during the day. Your main luggage will be left in the hotel during your sightseeing trips - you will not need to carry it far, and there are nearly always porters to assist.

**Luggage allowances:** Most international airlines restrict you to between 20kg and 23kg per person of luggage to go in the hold of the plane. 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 about luggage allowances on your tour. 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.

**Clothing:** The weather is mainly hot most of the year with significant variations from region to region. The coolest weather lasts from around the end of November to the beginning of March, with fresh mornings and evenings, and mostly sunny days. The really hot weather, when it is dry, dusty and unpleasant, is between March and June. Monsoon rains occur in most regions in summer anywhere between June and early October.

**NOTE:** India is very traditional and some heads will turn if you dress provocatively in public. Short tops, short skirts / shorts, tight or body revealing clothes etc should be avoided. You might invite unwanted attention from certain men who stare and pass comments at women to amuse themselves. More detailed climate information is available on the India Country Guide page on our website.

**Suggested List:** This is a guide only - there's no problem if you bring more or less with you. Cheap comfortable clothing is also readily available in India and laundry is inexpensive. It is also worth having some smarter clothes for going out. Towels are provided and laundry services are available in all the hotels we use.

Men: Lightweight trousers, shorts, light shirts & t-shirts, Swimwear

Women: Light cotton skirts/dressers, loose-fitting trousers, light shirts or t-shirts, loose shorts, Swimwear

Men & Women: Jumper/sweatshirt/fleece, Long sleeved shirt(s) (for cool nights, protection from the sun & mosquitoes, and visits to religious sites etc), Handkerchiefs, socks & underwear, Comfortable trainers/sandals for daily wear, Other shoes/sandals for evening wear, Sunhat or headscarf (headscarfs come in handy for some sights which require women to cover their heard)

First Aid: Although First Aid and medication is readily available in India, it may be very different to what you are used to so individuals should consider bringing along their own personal kit. Your personal kit might include: Sunscreen, sunblock & aftersun, Insect repellent/relief, Antiseptic cream/spray, Plasters and a bandage, Lomotil or Imodium against diarrhea, Pills against nausea, Aspirin for heat-stroke (or hangovers) Your kit should also include

your brief medical history, including allergies, blood group, drug vaccinations etc. We suggest bringing copies of prescriptions if you will be carrying medicines on board your flight.

**Toiletries:** Razor, soap & box, shampoo, Toothpaste, toothbrush & container, Sanitary items
**Note:** If you wear contact lenses, you should consider taking or wearing glasses instead, as lenses can be uncomfortable and/or cause infections in hot and humid climates.

**Other useful items:** Sunglasses, Small Torch, Money belt, Camera and equipment, Toilet paper (this is not always provided in public toilets so it is a good idea to carry some spare tissues in your bag. It should be placed in the basket beside the toilet, not flushed away, for you might block the pipes).

**IMPORTANT:** As it can get extremely hot in India, and the sun can burn very quickly, it is very important to ensure you are protected from the sun with sun-cream & sun-hats, and do not get dehydrated.

## 9 Money

Rupee (INR; symbol Rs) = 100 paise. Notes are in denominations of Rs 2,000, 1000, 500, 200, 50, 20, 10 and 1 Coins are in denominations of Rs 10, 5, 2 and 1, and 50 paise (Rs 0.5). Note: The import and export of local currency is prohibited. Sometimes smaller vendors will not take bills larger than Rs 500. It is best to carry a range of rupee notes if you are shopping at bazaars and local markets.

Note: You must present your passport whenever you change currency or travellers cheques. Commission for foreign exchange is becoming increasingly rare; if it is charged, the fee is nominal.

Credit cards: In major cities, the full cadre of banks cards are generally accepted including debit cards, American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa. However, in smaller towns and villages, choice is generally narrowed to cash or MasterCard and Visa.

ATM: 24 hour ATM machines can be found in all the major cities and most large towns. Visa, MasterCard, Cirrus, Maestro and Plus are amongst the most commonly accepted cards.

Travellers cheques: These are gradually getting less accepted but may still be changed at larger banks and some larger hotels. The most widely accepted currencies include US Dollars and Pounds Sterling. Some banks may refuse to change certain brands of traveller's cheques whilst others may exchange quite happily.

## 10 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.

## 11 Financial Security

We are a UK registered company and are committed to providing our customers with financial protection to provide peace of mind and to allow you to book with confidence.

We have therefore partnered with Trust My Travel Ltd., which provides financial protection services to over 2000 partners around the world. Funds paid to us by our customers are protected via an Insurance policy held by Trust My Travel. Each traveller and the description of services sold is declared against Trust My Travel's insurance policy directly against our financial failure. In the event of our insolvency, you will be refunded for any unfulfilled products and/or repatriation to the UK (where applicable). Please see our website or booking conditions for more information.

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## 12 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).

## 13 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')

## 14 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.**

## 15 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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## 16 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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## 17 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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## 18 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 Indian tours start and finish at Delhi airport (DEL).

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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## 19 Tipping - India

Haggling is a traditional necessity, so its wise not to pay too much regard to initial prices. Instead fix an items value in your mind then negotiate towards it unhurriedly and don't be afraid to simply walk away if the price isn't right. Once you have offered a price though, you should be prepared to pay it as you may cause offence if you then back out.

While an accepted part of the culture and customs in India, tipping is always optional, and the amounts paid should reflect excellent service. We are often asked for advice on common amounts, and for assistance with tipping. Some suggested guidelines are given below.

**Restaurants and taxis:** Local markets and basic restaurants - leave the loose change. More up-market restaurants we suggest 5% to 10% of your bill.

**Local guides:** Throughout your trip you may at times have a local guide in addition to your tour guide. We suggest USD 5-10 per person per day for local guides.

**Drivers:** You may have a range of private drivers on your trip. Some may be with you for a short journey while others may be with you for several days. We would suggest a higher tip for those more involved with the group, for example if you don't have an extra accompanying guide. However USD 3-6 per person per day is generally appropriate.

**Tour Guides:** To answer your next question. . . as a guideline for tour guides who accompany you on the entire tour, we suggest you allow around USD 5-10 per person per day, but ultimately, as with all the tipping descrbed above, its up to your satisfaction with their service and your personal budget. You should not feel pressured to tip any particular amount.

## 20 Passports and Visas - India

Your passport expiry date must be at least 6 months after your time in India finishes. Do not bring a full or almost expired passport. You must also have a machine-readable passport or you may be denied entry. If you have an old-style manually issued passport you will need to replace this with a new machine-readable passport before you travel.

Most nationalities (including UK, USA, European, Australian, Canadian) will need to arrange their Indian tourist visa in advance. A new online e-visa system is available which makes the process more straightforward than before. You can make your application online at indiavisaonline.

Visa requirements for India can and do change regularly and we suggest that you arrange your Indian visa early and re-check your specific visa requirements prior to travel for any changes.

## 21 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.

## 22 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.