

Nepal Trek and Tiger Conservation Experience



Trip Overview

You will fly from London on an indirect overnight flight to Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal where you will enjoy a welcome dinner and a good rest at a central hotel. The next day you transfer to the picturesque lakeside town of Pokhara from where your challenge begins.

Starting in nearby Nayapul you will commence a five-day trek in the stunning Annapurna area of Nepal where you will discover the local culture while enjoying views of the snowy peaks of the Annapurnas; a highlight will be the panoramic sunrise views which unfold from Poon Hill (3400m), the highest point on the trek. Staying in quaint locally-owned teahouses during the trek is also a fantastic opportunity to experience the incredible hospitality of the local people.

After completing your trek you will transfer to the famous Bardia National Park in the south of the country, reputed to be the best place in Nepal for potential tiger sightings. You will stay here for four nights taking part in a variety of activities including a minimum of three jeep safaris, talks from park officials, and even a chance to engage in a tiger awareness programme with the local community.

After completing your activities you will take a short domestic flight to Kathmandu and enjoy a farewell dinner and final night in Nepal before your flight home the next day.



Trek details

How tough is the trekking?

This trek is graded *challenging* because of the combination of long days trekking over varying terrain (including some days where you will trek uphill all day), the changeable climate and the basic conditions at the teahouse accommodation. Each day's trek is between 5 and 8 hours in duration (variable depending on group pace).

What is the terrain like?

The first two days you will gain altitude so you will spend more time going uphill. On day three you will spend the morning ascending and the afternoon descending, and the final two days will be descending. It is essential that your training includes plenty of hillwalking and trekking up gradients over consecutive days in order to condition your muscles to this type of exertion. Underfoot you will find stony trails, muddy forest floors, rocky steps or scree slopes. In some places it will be very dusty (bring a 'Buff' to cover your nose/mouth). There are some suspension bridges to cross.

Altitude

You will slowly ascend to an altitude of 2800m, then trek to the highest point on the trek at 3400m (Poon Hill) where you will spend a short period of time before descending back to 2800m. Despite 3400m being within the agreed threshold for high altitude (3000m+), your time at this altitude is very limited so you are unlikely to feel symptoms of altitude exposure. Your local guides are experienced in spotting altitude related symptoms but please speak up if you are concerned about how you feel.

Support during the trip

Who accompanies us?

You will be accompanied throughout the trek by English-speaking local Sherpa guides who have an excellent knowledge of hiking in the region. The guides are first aid trained and will support you throughout your journey, sharing their experience and wisdom with you. You will also be supported by a team of assistant guides and a Different Travel UK tour manager. Your luggage is carried by a team of local porters.

Where will we stay?

You will stay at hotels in Kathmandu (2 nights) and Pokhara (2 nights) which have en-suite facilities; tea houses with shared bathroom facilities during the trek (4 nights); and a basic guesthouse or tents in Bardia National Park (4 nights).

What about meals?

All your meals are included, as specified on the itinerary. During the trek the food is plentiful although the teahouses tend to offer similar menus so be prepared for a menu which is repeated. There will also be plenty of snacks and drinks available to purchase at each teahouse (prices vary). In tourist areas of Kathmandu you will find a wide range of restaurants catering for international and high-quality Nepalese food.

Being part of the experience

Who can join this trip?

An ideal candidate for the trek would be someone who enjoys trekking and being out of their comfort zone; is interested in different cultures and is willing to train for the challenge. The minimum age is 18, although 16-17 year olds may register if accompanied by a parent or legal guardian.

Health considerations

We require a medical form to be completed by everyone upon registering, and any pre-existing conditions, medications used and other medical issues **must** be noted and (if relevant) signed by your GP. Any conditions that develop must be declared and a new medical form completed and signed.

What does it cost?

To sign up you will pay a non-refundable, non-transferrable registration fee of **£330**. This may be payable in up to three instalments.

Once your place is confirmed you can start your fundraising which is a minimum target of **£4,400** for Cats Protection. A flexi pay and self-funded option is also available upon request.

The £330 registration fee is totally separate from, and in addition to, fundraising targets or self-funded balance payments. You will also need to budget for airport taxes and fuel surcharges not included (currently approx. £290-320). *See below for inclusions and exclusions.*

The Events team at Cats Protection will help you every step of the way to reach, and most likely exceed, this target.

What is included?

Return flights from London, all transfers and transport in Nepal, domestic flight from Nepalgunj to Kathmandu, hotel accommodation in Kathmandu and Pokhara (four nights), teahouse accommodation for trek (four nights) and basic guesthouse or tents in Bardia National Park (four nights), all meals as specified, local English-speaking guides, porters and support crew, National Park entrance fees, trek permits.

Trip Does Not Include:

Airport taxes and fuel surcharges (currently approx. £290-320), Nepal visa (US\$25 on arrival), transport to/from UK airport, bottled water, personal expenses (drinks, snacks, showers, souvenirs etc.), meals other than those specified, travel insurance, vaccinations, tips (approx. £40-45), personal trekking kit etc.



Itinerary

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Day 1-2 (Saturday 6 – Sunday 7 November 2021): London to Kathmandu

Depart for Kathmandu on an indirect overnight flight. Upon arrival in Kathmandu you will transfer to a central hotel. Depending on flight times there may be an opportunity to do some independent sightseeing before gathering together for a briefing on the days ahead. Welcome dinner at a local restaurant tonight.

Meals: Dinner



Day 3 (Monday 8 November 2021): Kathmandu - Pokhara

After breakfast we depart for the scenic drive to Pokhara (approx. six hours). Upon arrival in this beautiful lakeside town we check into the hotel then the afternoon is free to take in the sights or even do some souvenir shopping.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner.



Day 4 (Tuesday 9 November 2021): Pokhara - Nayapul - Ulleri

This morning we transfer to Nayapul (approx. 2 hours' drive) from where you commence the trek. You will follow the banks of the Bhurungdi Khola River as far as Tikhedhunga (1575m) where your final challenge for the day is a steep uphill walk to Ulleri where you stay the night in a teahouse (2073m).

Approx. 10km trek / 530m ascent.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner.

Day 5 (Wednesday 10 November 2021): Ulleri - Ghorepani

A day of ascent! Today we will gradually gain more altitude as we walk for about 5 hours uphill to the overnight teahouse in Ghorepani (2800m). As we approach Ghorepani we will pass through stunning rhododendron forests.

Approx. 11km trek / 1400m ascent.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner.



Day 6 (Thursday 11 November 2021): Ghorepani - Poon Hill - Tadapani

An hour-long pre-dawn ascent gives us the opportunity to see the fascinating views of the Annapurnas and Dhaulagiri glowing in the morning sun from Poon Hill (3400m). After breakfast back at the teahouse, it is a mostly downhill walk through magnificent oak and rhododendron forests, to reach our teahouse in Tadapani, where you will have another chance to enjoy views of Annapurna South and Machapuchare (Fishtail Mountain).

Approx. 11km trek / 330m ascent / 640m descent.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner.

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Day 7 (Friday 12 November 2021): Tadapani - Ghandruk

The descent to Ghandruk is a shorter and easier walk, mostly downhill. From Tadapani you descend through mossy forests and deep gorges, before the scenery changes to a drier more sparse forest as we approach Ghandruk, where we will stay in a teahouse tonight. Ghandruk is a beautiful Gurung Village, where many of the inhabitants are Gurkhas.

Approx. 8km trek / 700m descent.
Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner.



Day 8 (Saturday 13 November 2021): Ghandruk - Pokhara

Today is our final day of trekking as we descend to Birethanti, from where we travel by road back to our hotel in Pokhara.
Approx. 13km trek / 1000m descent.
Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner.

Day 9 (Sunday 14 November 2021): Pokhara – Bardia National Park

After breakfast we head off for the drive to Bardia National Park (approx. 8 hours). On arrival we settle in at our accommodation for the next four nights.
Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner.

Day 10-12 (Monday 15 - Wednesday 17 November 2021): Bardia National Park

We spend the next three days in Bardia National Park, the best place in Nepal for potential tiger sightings. We will enjoy a range of activities including a minimum of three jeep safaris, talks from park officials, and you will even have the chance to engage in a tiger awareness programme with the local community.
Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner.



Day 13 (Thursday 18 November 2021): Bardia National Park - Kathmandu

This morning we transfer to Nepalgunj airport for the domestic flight to Kathmandu. Upon arrival in Kathmandu we will transfer to our hotel to freshen up before a farewell dinner at a local restaurant this evening.
Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner.

Day 14-15 (Friday 19 – Saturday 20 November 2021): Kathmandu - London

Transfer to the airport for the return flight to London. You may arrive on Saturday 20 November depending on flight schedules.
Meals: Breakfast.

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N.B. This itinerary has been prepared 30 months in advance so while we do not anticipate changes, this itinerary may be subject to alteration due to flight schedules, hotel availability and other factors outside our control. During the trip itself the itinerary will depend on the group ability, weather and the daily circumstances. Any changes in the itinerary will be made in the interest of group safety and enjoyment. In-country, your guide and tour manager will have the final say in the interest of the health and safety of the group.

ATOL Protection.

This trip is operated by The Different Travel Company (ATOL 6706). The flights in this brochure are financially protected by the ATOL scheme. When you pay you will be supplied with an ATOL Certificate. Please ask for it and check to ensure that everything you booked (flights, hotels and other services) is listed on it. Please see our booking conditions for further information or for more information about financial protection and the ATOL Certificate go to: www.caa.co.uk.



Before You Go!

Important information to help you prepare for your trip

Country tips and practicalities

Trek knowledge
Drink and hydration
Food
Kit tips
Luggage

Sleeping accessories

Culture and responsible travel
Fitness, health and safety
Altitude
Kit list

Country tips and practicalities

Nepal is a landlocked Himalayan country in south Asia covering an area of 147,181 sq. km, bordered by Chinese Tibet to the north and by India to the south, east and west. For a small nation, the Nepali landscape is diverse, ranging from the humid Terai in the south to the lofty Himalayas in the north. Nepal boasts eight of the world's fourteen highest mountains, including of course Mount Everest on the Chinese border.

Visa.

Citizens of most countries require a visa for travel to Nepal. You will require a 15-day tourist visa which currently costs US\$25. You can apply online for a visa pre-authorisation via the Nepalese Immigration Authority website: <http://online.nepalimmigration.gov.np/tourist-visa>. Application support for the visa pre-authorisation will be provided by Different Travel no earlier than 8 weeks before departure. Applications should be lodged no earlier than 15 days prior to arrival in Nepal or they will expire and a new application made. You must have at least 6 months validity on your passport from the date of entry.

Travel insurance.

The Different Travel Company will do everything possible to ensure a safe and enjoyable trip however unexpected things can occur such as delays, medical problems, baggage loss, cancellation by you etc. The purchase of travel insurance is mandatory; you are advised to organise it at the time of booking to ensure you are covered immediately. Different Travel is an authorised introducer for Campbell Irvine Direct insurance policies. You can find out more here: www.campbellirvinedirect.com/differenttravel.

Please note: most travel insurance policies protect you before departure too so it is advised to buy insurance as close to booking as possible as it may protect you against the loss of your non-refundable, non-transferable registration fee if you cancel due to injury, illness etc.

Tipping.

While tipping is not mandatory it is expected and greatly appreciated by your trek team, safari guide and the local transfer driver. We would recommend allowing around £40-45 in total for tips per trekker.

Photocopies.

Remember to photocopy of all your documents (insurance details, passport, credit/debit cards etc.) and take a copy with you during the trip, stored separately from the original copies. You should also scan and email these documents to yourself and leave a copy with a trusted family member or friend. If you lose any of your documents you will then have access to a copy with you and online. You may also wish to upload your documents to cloud storage such as Dropbox or Google Drive.

Books.

There are several excellent guide books on trekking in the region such as Lonely Planet Trekking in the Nepal Himalaya (Jan 2016); ISBN: 978-1741792720; £14.99. For tips on learning the local language, why not pick up the Lonely Planet Nepali Phrasebook (Sept 2014); ISBN: 978-1743211908 £4.99.

Souvenirs.

Nepal provides splendid opportunities for the shopper especially for handicrafts such as carvings, prayer bowls, paintings, prayer flags, clothing, fabrics and much more.

Electricity.

Electricity in Nepal is 220V, 50Hz. The plugs used are European two round pin plugs. Electricity is available at the hotel in Kathmandu and at the teahouses during the trek (at a fee which ranges from 100 rupees to 350 rupees per hour. You are recommended to bring a portable power pack (power bank or battery pack) which when fully charged allows you multiple charges of USB-powered devices such as phones. You should buy a power pack with a minimum capacity of 15,000mAh and these are widely available online. This can then be recharged at the teahouses and other devices charged from this.

Language.

Nepali is the official language in Nepal. Roughly 50 per cent of the population speak Nepali and many other Nepalese speak it as a second language. Here are some helpful words and phrases to get you by:

Hello/Goodbye Namasté

How are you? Tapaai laai kasto chha?

Water Pani

How Much? Kati Ho?

Thank you Dhanyabad

Excuse me Hajur

Good Luck saphalhos

Yes ho

No hoina

Money.

The currency of Nepal is the rupee. At the time of writing there were approx. 140 rupees to the pound. You will require cash for water, tips, drinks, snacks, battery charging, hot showers, Wi-Fi access, apple pie etc. It is far better to bring too much cash than not enough. As you progress along the trail, simple creature comforts such as a hot shower and a chocolate bar can make a huge difference to your morale, and the money you pay helps support the local economy. Approx. £200-250 in Nepalese rupees should be sufficient. Take plenty of low denomination notes (sub 500 rupees) on the trek as change is difficult to come by. To help you budget typical costs are:

- 80-400 rupees for 1l bottled water
- 80-300 rupees for 1l boiled water
- 0 rupees for cold, unpurified water
- 100-350 rupees to charge batteries for 1 hour
- 400-750 rupees to have a hot shower
- 145-600 rupees for soft drinks/snacks (Mars, Twix, Pringles, Coke, Sprite, Toblerone etc.)
- 300-400 rupees for a slice of apple pie or other cake
- 200-1500 rupees for a Wi-Fi card
- £40-45 for tips

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Accessing cash.

It is not possible to obtain Nepalese rupees outside of Nepal as it is a closed currency; we recommended that you withdraw cash from ATMs or exchange cash locally. There are many ATMs in Kathmandu and your guides may be able to help you exchange cash. If you wish to exchange cash please do not bring Isle of Man, Channel Island or Scottish notes, as these will not be accepted for exchange. If you wish to withdraw cash from ATMs, please note that most banks charge for overseas withdrawals and transactions and some block cards when they are used abroad so please inform them of your travel plans before departure. You may prefer to use a prepaid currency card loaded with pounds to withdraw cash instead of using a bank card. There are no ATMs along the trail. Please note that you cannot exchange rupees back to pounds in the UK so you should spend or exchange all leftover cash before you depart Nepal.

Phone and Wi-Fi access.

Nepal is served by a number of mobile networks including Nepal Telecom, NCell and SmartCell. Coverage is widespread, even during the trek, but your access to phone reception will vary depending on your home network, roaming capabilities, contract type and mobile handset. In general most people should have reception during most of the trek route. Wi-Fi is available in hotels and most bars and restaurants, and Wi-Fi access cards can be purchased along the trail for between 200 to 1500 Rupees depending on the amount of data. Please contact your phone provider to find out details about costs and remember to turn off data roaming on your phone to avoid incurring high data charges.

Trip knowledge

Domestic flights.

At the end of 2013 the EU Commission added all domestic airlines in Nepal to the list of airlines banned from operating in EU airspace as a result of a number of fatal crashes. This ban does not restrict EU passengers from using these airlines in Nepal and since then all domestic airlines have been working to improve standards. All domestic flights in Nepal are subject to local weather conditions, and being a mountainous country, delays and cancellations are a possibility.

Weather and climate.

November is one of the best times to trek in Nepal and generally offers dry days with clear skies to enjoy incredible views of the mountains. Daytime temperatures can range between 15°C to 25°C during the day, dropping to 0°C to -5°C at night. It tends to get dark at around 6pm. **Please note:** the conditions above are historically accurate but climate change can lead to uncharacteristic conditions which are out of our control. The guides will assess the situation and make decisions to ensure the best enjoyment and safety of the group.

Accommodation.

You will stay at a hotel in Kathmandu for one night at the start of the trip and one night at the end of the trip. You will stay at a hotel in Pokhara for one night before the trek, and one night after the trek. All hotels have en-suite facilities. During the trek you will stay for four nights in tea houses with shared bathroom facilities. During your time in Bardia National Park you will stay in tents at a basic guesthouse with shared bathroom facilities for four nights.

You will stay in hotel rooms on a twin or triple-share basis, and there will be two, three or four people per room at each teahouse. A single-occupancy hotel room may be possible subject to availability and payment of a single supplement.

Teahouses

Tea houses are locally-owned lodges which comprise of a heated dining area, shared bathroom facilities and bedrooms. The tea houses are comfortable but very simple. You will eat your meals in the dining room and in the evenings you will likely enjoy the warmth of the room to play cards and get to know each other before retiring to bed. Battery charging facilities, soft drinks, hot drinks, snacks, toilet paper etc. is available to purchase from the reception area in the dining room. The bedrooms have mattresses, pillows and blankets but are not heated.

Hygiene and toilet facilities.

The hotels have en-suite facilities with flushing toilets and hot showers. The shower and toilet facilities at the tea houses during the trek will vary. Most now have gas-powered hot water showers, payable locally (approx. 400-750 rupees). There will be Western and Asian squat toilets which flush. Toilet paper should always be placed in the bin, not flushed.

If you need to use the toilet during the trek day you must find a private area off the trail. You must never leave used toilet paper on the ground; this must be packed up into a nappy bag or sanitary disposal bag, pop it in your backpack and dispose of it properly at the teahouse (please bring your own nappy sacks with you). You should bring one to two rolls of toilet paper for your own use but more can be purchased along the way if you run out.

You are advised to bring a small pack of baby wipes and use natural or biodegradable soap/shampoo. Lush products (<http://www.lush.co.uk/>) are particularly good. You will need to bring your own towel. A highly absorbent but lightweight and fast drying trek towel is recommended.

Water and keeping hydrated

Water.

Tap water in Nepal is not safe to drink; this includes the tap water at the hotel. **You must not brush your teeth or rinse your mouth with any tap water**, only use bottled or purified water. Drinking water is not provided for you but there are three options available to you for obtaining drinking water:

1. Refill your bottle from the tap and purify the water – cheapest

You can refill your water bottle regularly along the trail for free (or rarely for a very small charge) and you will need to bring your own water purification to make the water safe to drink. A highly recommended purification is 'Biox Aqua' tablets which contains chlorine dioxide. This kills 99.9 per cent of all known bacteria plus cysts such as cryptosporidium and giardia and doesn't leave water tasting of chemicals. This is the most environmentally friendly and cheapest way to obtain drinking water. You must ensure you use the purification as specified for your safety.

2. Buy boiled water and purify it when cooled – good for local economy

At the teahouses you can purchase hot, boiled water. Purchasing from the local people directly supports the local economy and goes directly into the hands of the people. Boiled water is safe to drink but for peace of mind you may wish to purify this once it has cooled.

3. Buy bottled water – convenient but worst for environment

This is the most convenient option as mineral water is widely available but it is also the most expensive and the worst for the environment. Empty water bottles may end up in landfill, or more often, are burnt to be disposed of which causes putrid, black smoke which is not good for the environment. Buying bottled water will avoid any chemical taste in purified water.

At breakfast and in the evenings a flask of hot water is provided for you to make hot drinks. A small selection of Lipton black tea and instant coffee will be supplied but if you have any preferences (for example hot chocolate, decaff coffee, herbal tea etc.) you should bring your own supply.

Preventing dehydration.

Electrolyte tablets (for example Nuun, High5, PowerBar etc.) are flavoured effervescent tablets which contain salts, sugars and minerals which are naturally lost from your body when you sweat. By adding these tablets to your water it not only offers flavour to your water but it can help prevent dehydration before it begins. Electrolyte tablets are widely available in outdoors stores and online for around £8 for 12 tablets. You may also wish to bring a small supply of rehydration salts (for example Dioralyte) which treat dehydration.

Water bottle.

You will need to bring your own bottles to carry at least three litres of water per day. Some people will bring a 2-3 litre CamelBak hydration system (for effortless access to water while you trek) plus one 1-litre water bottles (for example plastic Nalgene or metal Sigg bottle). Some people prefer to bring three 1-litre bottles. The choice is yours. If you're bringing a CamelBak hydration system, a separate 1-litre bottle is essential as it can be used as a backup if your hydration system fails.

Please write your name on all your bottles in marker pen. Please note that 'own brand' and cheap hydration systems are notorious for splitting, leaking or valves not functioning properly. CamelBak and Platypus are the leader in this market because their products are significantly better quality and more reliable.

A great benefit of a separate water bottle is that it can be filled with warm water at the tea house so you can use it as a hot water bottle at night, and then have fresh cool water to drink in the morning. You may also wish to bring a thermos to carry a hot drink with you during the day.

Food

Dietary requirements.

The majority of special diets, such as vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free, etc., can be catered for if we are notified in advance. Please ensure that you notify us of any dietary requirements at the time of booking or as soon as possible. Please note that we cannot guarantee that food preparation will have taken place in a contamination free environment.

Food.

Breakfast, lunch and dinner are included throughout the trip as specified on the itinerary. You will eat at local restaurants in Kathmandu, Pokhara and Bardia, and at teahouses along the trail during the trek. Although the food is plentiful during the trek the menus are not varied and most teahouses offer the same variations of rice, potato and noodle dishes, and soups.

A typical breakfast may include a choice between: eggs, omelette, toast, pancakes and porridge.

A typical lunch may include: dal bhat, pasta, noodles, vegetables, rice, soup, fried potato, momos.

A typical dinner may include: soup, dal bhat, vegetables, pasta, noodles/rice, potato dishes.

Snacks.

You should bring a selection of snacks for energy and a pick-me-up which you have tried before (and enjoy) so they are appetising to you. Most people bring sweets, individually wrapped cake bars, protein bars and dried fruit but don't forget to bring savoury snacks for when these become sickly. Great savoury snacks include salted nuts, individually wrapped cheese, Peperami, Cheddar biscuits or salted crackers. Please don't bring too much as there will be plenty of snacks available to purchase such as chocolate bars, apple pie, cakes, crisps and soft drinks. These are payable locally and prices vary. It's better to bring more money than snacks.

Kit tips

Discount.

When you book you will receive a 15 percent Cotswold Outdoor discount voucher and a 10 per cent Nomad Travel discount voucher for use at their travel clinics.

Kit hire.

Sleeping bags, hiking poles, down jackets and more can be hired in Kathmandu and the current rental cost is between \$5-10 per day for the each items depending upon the quality. It is strongly recommended that you come fully prepared with your kit from home, as there may not be time for shopping for/renting gear, and you cannot guarantee that items purchased or hired will suit you. You can obtain every item you need in Kathmandu if required (for example if you bag gets lost by the international airline) but it's better to bring your own gear you have used and are comfortable with.

Clothing for the trek.

You are recommended to invest in good quality trekking gear which can be worn in layers (base layer, warm layer, shell layer) which can be added and removed easily to manage your temperature and the climate. Your clothes should be made of technical fabrics designed to wick sweat away from your body which keep clothes dry and smelling fresh. Merino wool, nylon, polyester, polypropylene and bamboo fabrics are all effective technical fabrics. Never bring cotton clothing to trek in. Cotton clothing can be hazardous to wear in cool conditions because when sweat is absorbed by cotton fibres (rather than forced to evaporate as with technical fabrics), it leaves clothes damp. Damp clothes make you cold and uncomfortable and could even leave you vulnerable to hypothermia on a cold day. You can find good quality technical clothing in all reputable outdoors stores. Check the garment label to ensure your garments contain 0 per cent cotton. Good quality Gore-Tex waterproofs are important just in case there are showers. Most people will trek in the same outfit for the duration of the trip and have one or two spares in their kit bag.

Clothing for Bardia National Park.

Ideally you should bring **neutral coloured** clothing to wear during the game drives as these colours are less attractive to biting insects. You are strongly recommended to bring long sleeved tops (for example a non-cotton trek shirt) and long leg bottoms (for example trek trousers) to minimise your risk of mosquito bites and contact with plants which may have sharp barbs on them.

Gloves.

You should take a pair of gloves or mittens with you as high winds can be very chilly during the trek.

Head torch.

This is a vital piece of kit. Petzl is one brand which makes good quality headlamps but there are many head torches available from other companies. Please ensure you take an LED torch as ones with bulbs are not bright enough. Bring your head torch with fresh batteries inside it, and take a full set of spare batteries. Do not bring a wind-up head torch as these are unreliable.

Hiking poles.

Hiking poles can be very useful on steep ascents and descents, particularly when carrying a heavy pack on uneven terrain. Poles are also very useful for stability. They are not mandatory but are recommended. You should use them on your training walks to familiarise yourself on how to use them. If you bring hiking poles they must fit inside your suitcase/kitbag for the purposes of the international flight.

Sunglasses.

These are important even on overcast days. They must offer a minimum of 100 percent UV protection, and polarised sunglasses are ideal. Taking a spare pair is recommended.

Footwear.

You need to wear hiking boots during the trek; walking trainers are unsuitable. It is important that your boots are waterproof (for example Gore-Tex or eVent), have good ankle support and a good quality sole (for example Vibram). You are recommended to try on lots of pairs at a specialist outdoors store such as Cotswold where the staff can advise you on the correct boot and fit for you. Do not leave it to the last minute to purchase hiking boots as you need time to break them in. You should wear your boots on the plane, or carry them in hand baggage, in case there are baggage problems or delays.

Socks.

It is important that the socks you choose are high quality, non-cotton and will not slip down in your boots which causes blisters. Never wear cotton socks which absorb sweat making them damp and more likely to rub against your feet, causing blisters. Socks containing Coolmax (a brand of polyester) or nylon have wicking properties which means that it pulls sweat away from the skin for it to evaporate. Good brands to consider include Bridgedale, Smartwool and Brasher.

Luggage

You will need the following luggage items:

1. A daypack.

You are responsible for carrying your own daypack containing essentials for each day. We recommend you bring a 25-30 litre rucksack which **must** have a hip belt and a chest strap. High quality brands to consider when looking for a suitable pack include Osprey, Berghaus and Lowe Alpine (amongst others) and you are strongly advised to visit a reputable store like Cotswold to have your backpack fitted, as they come in a variety of sizes, and some brands offer male and female specific fits. You can expect to carry your personal first aid kit, warm layer, sun cream, packed lunch, three litres of water, snacks, waterproofs, toilet paper, wet wipes and camera. It could weigh 6-8kg when packed, so you should make your backpack selection carefully and ensure it fits correctly and is comfortable. You will not have access to your main luggage while trekking.

2. A dry bag/rucksack liner.

You are advised to use a lightweight waterproof rucksack liner or dry bag (for example Exped dry bag) inside your daypack to keep your belongings dry in rainy conditions. It should be large enough to fit inside your entire backpack. Rucksack covers alone are ineffective at keeping your kit dry in wet conditions, and can often blow away in the wind.

3. A soft-sided kit bag or large rucksack.

This is to hold your trek luggage which will be carried by porters to each teahouse. It will contain the items you need for the evenings and mornings (for example toiletries, change of clothes, sleeping bag etc.). The weight limit is strictly **10kg** for this bag due to porter welfare regulations. The kit bag must be strong, light and waterproof. Some *examples* of kit bags include:

Mountain Equipment wet and dry bag,

North Face Base Camp duffle bag,

Rab Expedition kit bag,

but there are many brands and models available in outdoors stores for various prices. A large rucksack with your gear packed inside a lightweight waterproof rucksack liner is suitable too. The capacity of your kitbag should be around 70-80 litres but as long as all your gear fits and is within the weight limit it doesn't matter if the size differs. **Do not** bring a solid suitcase or holdall with wheels as this is not suitable for the trek.

If you wish you can use this bag to hold your checked luggage for the international flight; just ensure you bring a small separate bag you can store items in not required for the trek at the hotel while you're trekking.

4. A suitcase (optional)

For the international flights, you may be more comfortable packing all your items (including your empty trek kit bag) into a suitcase. This is entirely your choice. If you bring a suitcase, it will be stored at the hotel along with anything not required for the trek (for example toiletries, travel clothes, books etc.).

5. Combination padlocks which should be used to secure your bags during your flights and also to keep zips secure on your kitbag during the trek while being carried by porters, so zips don't come open in transit and your items fall out.

Sleeping accessories

Sleeping bag.

You will be staying in teahouses during the trek but the walls aren't insulated and the rooms aren't heated so it will still be very cold at night. The expected lowest night time temperature will drop to approx. -5°C so you need to bring a '5-season' sleeping bag with a 'comfort rating' of -10°C or lower, not an 'extreme rating' of -5°C. There is a critical difference between the two ratings, as outlined here:

- Comfort — the temperature at which you can expect to sleep comfortably in a relaxed position.
- Extreme — the minimum temperature at you can remain for six hours without risk of death from hypothermia.

Examples of suitable sleeping bags include:

Ayacucho Solar 300 (£60);

Vango Stratos 350 (£45);

Women's Vango Nitestar 300W (£37.50);

Mountain Hardwear Lamina 20 (£135);

Mountain Equipment Women's Starlight III (£80)

Sleeping bags are available for hire upon request in Kathmandu for approximately \$5 per day.

Please note: that the temperature guidance is based on historical averages in the desert at this time of year and we cannot be held responsible if the weather conditions are different than expected.

Sleeping bag liner.

A silk sleeping bag liner is recommended to complement your sleeping bag as it adds an extra layer of insulation to keep you warm if it's cool. If it's too warm you can sleep under your sleeping bag liner with your sleeping bag unzipped. A sleeping bag liner also protects your sleeping bag from dirt, sweat and damage. Silk sleeping bag liners are quite expensive if purchased on the high street, so consider eBay where you can purchase directly from the manufacturers (usually Vietnam or China) at a fraction of the price. Make sure you look out for 'pure silk' sleeping bag liners, not 'satin' (which is usually low quality and synthetic).

Culture and responsible travel

Animal welfare.

Viewing wild animals when travelling is an incredible and memorable experience however on occasions some animals are subjected to cruelty, taken from their natural habitats or used for entertainment. The Different Travel Company does not condone any form of animal cruelty or exploitation and we ask that you make educated and positive choices when travelling to avoid being part of exploitation, even unknowingly. In particular during your time in Bardia National Park, we ask that you refrain from taking part in any elephant rides or other forms of animal exploitation. It may appear that the elephants are well looked after but the reality may be very different. You are advised to do your research into this. Please consider visiting the World Animal Protection website for advice on how to travel responsibly: <https://www.worldanimalprotection.org.uk>

Culture Shock.

Nepal is very different and as such you may experience a certain amount of culture shock.

- Drivers lean on horns, radios and TVs blare loud music and preachers use loudspeakers to spread their message.
- Nepali streets, markets, and bazaars are bustling with people; vehicles and motorbikes seem to ignore traffic lights and streets are narrow with potholes and cracks.
- A traditional greeting in Nepal is with your hands pressed together (similar to hand position for prayer), and say 'Namaste'.
- Licking your fingers is considered an unpleasant habit and should be avoided.
- It is common to slurp tea and hot drinks.
- Public displays of affection are considered inappropriate.
- Permission should be sought before taking pictures of people. Occasionally you will be asked for payment in exchange for a photograph. This is particularly true in places such as Durbar Square where you will find many Sadhu holy men, wearing traditional robes and with faces covered in ash and paint encouraging you to take photos of them in exchange for payment.

Begging and poverty.

Begging in Nepal can be an issue particularly in tourist hot spots due to the best but ultimately wrong intentions of tourists. As part of our responsible tourism policy we strongly advise against giving anything directly to beggars or offering gifts to children. This can lead to these individuals pestering other travellers or considering that begging is more profitable or beneficial than searching for work or attending school.

Environment.

We are environmentally conscious and aim to minimise our impact as much as possible. Key points:

- Never leave toilet paper or litter on the trail.
- Don't dispose of fruit peel, cores or seeds on the ground; although they decompose eventually they are unsightly and may attract animals.

- Turn off lights when not in rooms.
- Minimise your water usage by having short showers.
- Be considerate of other trekkers.

Etiquette.

- At accommodation, particularly teahouses, keep noise to a minimum, especially early in the morning and late at night.
- Be respectful to your guides and hosts; don't forget to say please and thank you.
- Be considerate of the feelings of other group members.
- When taking photographs of the local people, it would be wisest to ask their permission. Taking a photograph of someone without their permission, especially in rural areas, can cause offence. Older people, particularly ladies prefer not to be photographed but in contrast young children are often very keen to be photographed.

Haggling.

When shopping for gifts in market places where there are no price tags on items it is expected that you will haggle. The first price given is sometimes multiple times the true value of the item, but remember that you should engage with the vendor to encourage rapport before haggling then only pay what you think is a good price for the item, not trying to get the lowest price possible.

Religion.

Nepal is the birthplace of Lord Buddha (thought to be Lumbini). Hindus constitute approximately 80 per cent of the population. Buddhists make up 10 per cent, Muslims 4 per cent, Kirant 3 per cent, other religions 3 per cent.

Fitness, health and safety

Vaccinations and travel health.

Different Travel regrets that we cannot provide medical advice or recommendations. You are advised to seek medical advice at least 8 weeks before travelling to ensure that all appropriate vaccinations are up to date. For general information visit www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk or www.travelhealthpro.org.uk but your GP or travel health professional should be the first stop for a consultation tailored to your medical history. Please note that failure to be adequately vaccinated, or take necessary prophylactic medication can invalidate travel insurance policies as it is considered that you have not taken necessary precautions.

First aid kit.

You should bring a small first aid kit of essential items which is for your own personal use and keep it in your backpack. Suggested items to include: personal prescription medicine, painkillers, blister plasters, insect repellent (50 per cent DEET), throat lozenges, decongestant for the dust, anti-histamine tablets, Loperamide (for example Imodium), lip balm with SPF, indigestion remedy for unfamiliar food, muscle rub, zinc oxide tape etc. Please keep the contents to a minimum as you have to carry it yourself.

Zinc oxide tape.

If your boots start to rub against your feet, you can apply zinc oxide tape to the hot spot to stop a blister developing. If a blister does occur, you should apply a Compeed plaster.

Insect Repellent.

There are biting insects and mosquitoes on the first and last days of the trek, in Kathmandu and especially in Bardia National Park, so it is advised that you take a small bottle of repellent with you. DEET is the most effective repellent available. The Department of Health recommends 50 per cent DEET is the **maximum** that you should use on your skin, as higher concentrations are less effective due to their higher oil content which does not stick to the skin as effectively as lower concentrations. Be careful when using any DEET product as it can stain clothes, melt plastic and remove dye from fabrics. You are recommended to prevent bites by wearing long sleeve tops and long leg trousers, and covering your ankles.

Fitness training.

You should start training at least 6 months before your departure. The best form of training for a trek is get outside and start walking. If you're not a regular walker, start slowly with short distances then as you get more comfortable, increase your mileage and add in more challenging terrain until you can comfortably walk for several consecutive days, for around 8 hours at a time, on hilly terrain while maintaining a comfortable pace without needing to stop more than frequently than once an hour for a 5-minute rest.

Hill walking while carrying a fully packed backpack while wearing your hiking boots should feature predominantly in your training as this will help prepare your body for the terrain and baggage load you will experience during the trek.

Other activities which can complement hill walking include running, cycling, gym workouts and boot camps etc. Developing your core and leg muscle strength is also important so exercises such as squats, lunges, push-ups, planks and crunches will really enhance your training. These exercises can be done at home; no gym needed.

You can download a number of free apps, which will help you train and track your progress, for example MapMyWalk, C25K (couch to 5k run), MyFitnessPal.

Please note that attempting to complete the trek without any training may make the experience unnecessarily difficult and hinder your experience, and also the experience of your teammates.

The trek does not require technical climbing skills but it is still a tough trek so it is important to **take your training seriously and arrive in Nepal as fit as you can be**. The local guides, in consultation with your Different travel tour manager, may advise that if you are not fit enough to continue that you leave the trek.

Emergencies and evacuations.

In the unlikely event of a serious illness or accident, the local team will ensure you are transferred as swiftly as possible to the nearest hospital. Please ensure your travel insurance covers you for airlifting/emergency evacuations as this can be required to reach casualties on more remote trails in an emergency. You are recommended to bring a credit card during the trip in the event that you need to pay for medical treatment upfront in the event of an emergency.

Safety.

Please take common-sense precautions while travelling to ensure your safety and the protection of your belongings. For example: leave flashy jewellery, watches and accessories at home; keep wallets out of sight stowed in a handbag or backpack rather than sticking out of a pocket; don't leave bags unattended at any time; carry cameras in their cases rather than carrying them openly with the camera strap; split cash into different pockets rather than carrying all your money in one place, especially immediately after you have used the ATM; and so on.

Altitude

You will slowly ascend to an altitude of 2800m, then trek to the highest point on the trek at 3400m (Poon Hill) where you will spend a short period of time before descending back to 2800m. Despite 3400m being within the agreed threshold for high altitude (3000m+), your time at this altitude is very limited so you are unlikely to feel symptoms of altitude exposure.

However, on rare occasions people can experience very mild symptoms at altitudes as low as 2500m so it is important that you do your own research so you can be aware of how your body is adjusting. Common mild symptoms of altitude sickness include headache, fatigue, loss of appetite and disturbed sleep. Your local guides are experienced in spotting altitude related symptoms but please speak up if you are concerned about how you feel.

Important info about altitude:

- Different people acclimatise at different rates. Keep aware of your own symptoms.
- Eat a high calorie diet.
- Stay well hydrated. Drink 4-5 litres of fluids each day to remain properly hydrated (at least three litres per day from water plus soup, tea, juices etc.). Urine output should be copious and clear to pale yellow.
- Acclimatisation is inhibited by overexertion, dehydration, tobacco and alcohol.
- If you begin to show symptoms of altitude sickness, don't go higher until symptoms decrease.
- If symptoms increase, you must descend immediately. **Your tour guide and tour manager's decision for you to descend must be respected.**
- You must not take depressant drugs such as barbiturates, tranquillisers, sleeping pills and opiates such as codeine as these decrease respiratory drive during sleep resulting in a worsening of symptoms. Speak to your GP for advice on alternatives.

General information about altitude can be found here:

<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Altitude-sickness/Pages/Introduction.aspx> or
<http://www.traveldoctor.co.uk/altitude.htm>.

Kit List

ESSENTIALS

E-tickets + pre-departure info
Passport + copy
US\$25 + visa-on-arrival authorisation
Passport photo for trek permit
Travel insurance info
Cash + credit/ATM card(s)
LED head torch + spare batteries
Plug adaptor (EU 2 round pins)
Sunglasses (100% UV)
Camera + spare batteries
Mobile phone + charger

CLOTHING & ACCESSORIES

Hiking boots*
Trainers/camp booties for evenings
Trek socks + underwear
Non-cotton base layer
Non-cotton t-shirt
Warm jacket (down/Primaloft)
Warm mid layer or fleece
Thermal top + bottoms
Lightweight trek trousers
Waterproof jacket + trousers
Warm gloves
Warm hat
Sun hat
Buff (for dust) buffwear.co.uk
Casual attire for travel days
Scarf or pashmina (for temples)
Neutral colour clothes for Bardia NP
Comfortable footwear for Bardia NP

HYGIENE

Shampoo + shower gel
Toothbrush + toothpaste
Antiperspirant deodorant
Wet wipes (small pack)
Toilet paper (1-2 rolls)
Nappy sacks (for used loo roll)
Hand sanitiser
Sun cream (SPF 30+)
Small travel towel
Feminine hygiene products

FIRST AID KIT

Prescription medicine
50% DEET insect repellent
Ibuprofen
Paracetamol
Anti-histamine tablets/cream
Imodium (Loperamide)
Plasters
Blister plasters (Compeed)
Rehydration (e.g. Dioralyte)
Muscle rub (e.g. Deep Heat)
Lip balm with SPF protection
Indigestion remedy (Gaviscon)
Antiseptic cream (e.g. Savlon)
Scissors/tweezers
Decongestant
Zinc oxide tape (optional)
Throat lozenges (optional)
Spare glasses/contact lenses

OPTIONAL

Video camera + charger
MP3 player/iPod
Playing cards
Diary/notebook and pen
Walking pole(s)
Packing cubes/luggage organiser

LUGGAGE

Suitcase for checked luggage
Daypack (25-30 litres)
Kit bag
Combination padlocks
Dry bag/rucksack liner

EATING AND DRINKING

Energy snacks
2-litre water bottle e.g. CamelBak
plus 1-litre water bottle **or**
3x 1-litre water bottles
Electrolyte tablets
Water purification
Flask/Thermos (optional)
Favourite tea/coffee/choc (optional)

SLEEPING

Ear plugs (essential)
Sleeping bag (comfort -5°C)
Silk sleeping bag liner
Pyjamas (use thermals for trek)

PLEASE NOTE: this list is just a guideline and is not exhaustive.

The items on this list do not take into account your personal preferences based on your previous trekking experience, or individual requirements. For information about items on this list please refer to the trip dossier or contact The Different Travel Company on info@different-travel.com

*Please ensure you pack your hiking boots into your hand baggage in the unlikely event your checked luggage goes missing or is delayed.