



THE NORTH FACE CHALLENGE - EVEREST BASE CAMP

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NEPAL

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. More than 80% of Nepal's 27 million people follow Hinduism making it the single most Hinduic nation in the world. 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. Much of Nepal's history is inextricably linked to its larger neighbor to the south, India. For centuries the region came under the rule of successive Indian Empires and Dynasties and ultimately the British Raj gaining independence from the British in 1923 – fully 24 years before India. In 1990 Nepal officially became a constitutional monarchy ending centuries of absolute rule. This however has done little to assuage the fears of the majority of the population and the country is in a state of polarization between those supporting the status quo and the monarchy and those in favor of the radical Maoist guerillas.

Itinerary

Day 1 - UK - Kathmandu

Fly from London to Kathmandu.

KATHMANDU

The historic capital of Nepal, Kathmandu has long captured the imagination of travellers worldwide. It is a living museum, with a unique experience around each corner! Literally hundreds of Hindu temples sit alongside Buddhist stupas and Tibetan monasteries, with their evocative prayer flags flapping in the breeze.

Arrive at Tribhuvan International Airport, Kathmandu and transfer to the hotel.

Day 2 Kathmandu – Nuwakot

SWAYAMBHUNATH STUPA, PASHUPATINATH TEMPLE & DURBAR SQUARE

The Swayambhunath Stupa is situated 4km outside the capital on a hill top and is believed to date back to around 500 BC. Legend has it that a sage named Manjushree, who is credited with the creation of Kathmandu saw a celestial lotus in bloom on the hill top and blessed it. Swayambhunath is an important pilgrimage site as well as a center of art, architecture, religion and culture of Mahayana Buddhism.

Pashupatinath is one of the world's most sacred Hindu temples. During the annual Shivaratri pilgrimage, thousands of Siva devotees come here to pay homage. On the other side of the sacred Bagmati River is a sacred funeral site, where bodies are taken to be cremated before the charred remains are swept into the waters which ultimately flow in to the Ganges.

Durbar Square is Kathmandu's focal point. Durbar Square holds the palaces of the Malla and Shah kings who once ruled the city. Along with these palaces, the square also contains a series of temples, the oldest dating back to the 16th century. The square is also known as Hanuman Dhoka, a name derived from the statue of Hanuman, the monkey god, near the entrance of the palace.

In the morning we visit some of Kathmandu's most important sites including the Swayambhunath Stupa, Pashupatinath and Durbar Square. In the afternoon we leave the Nepalese capital and transfer by minivan to Nuwakot. Nuwakot district is nestled amidst beautiful pristine villages 75

km from Kathmandu. Nuwakot has great historical importance as it was the place from where King Prithvi Narayan Shah began his Nepal unification campaign. The drive takes between 3 to 4 hours from Kathmandu. Nuwakot is a small village of only 2,000 people and like many villages in the Kathmandu Valley it has suffered as a result of poor education and the migration of much of its skilled and educated inhabitants to the city in search of a better life. The problem is compounded by the fact that the new migrants have no education or skills to speak of. Lack of education and awareness has left the place in a backward and poverty-stricken condition. In the afternoon we will have an introduction to the project. We spend the night at a local guesthouse.
(B,L,D)

Days 3 – 4 Nuwakot (Project work)

We dedicate the next three days to our project work.
(B,L,D)

Day 5 Nuwakot - Kathmandu

We return to Kathmandu and transfer to our hotel.
(B,L,D)

TIBET

With an average altitude of over 3,500m, Tibet is truly the rooftop of the world. Lying to the north of the great Himalayan range which separates it from its neighbors India, Nepal and Bhutan, much of the country's 1,200,000 sq. km is high-altitude desert. With its spectacular mountain scenery and rich Buddhist culture, Tibet is a remarkable place to visit. For centuries Tibet remained detached from worldly affairs until the Chinese occupation which forced the Dalai Lama in to exile. Today's 2.7 million Tibetans are used to hardship and have managed to keep their culture and humor alive.

Day 6 Kathmandu - Nyalam (Tibet)

Today we drive the 123km to Kodari on the Nepal - Tibet border. Once immigration formalities have been completed we drive up a series of breathtakingly steep switchbacks passing through a gully with cascading waterfalls to Nyalam.
(B,L,D)

Day 7 Nyalam

We spend today resting and acclimatizing to the higher altitude in Nyalam today before we continue our ascent towards Everest. There is a short excursion from town to a small temple, Nyalam Pelgye Ling, associated with the eleventh century poet-lama Milarepa.
(B,L,D)

Day 8 Nyalam - Tingri (4,390m)

A TYPICAL DAY'S TREK

A typical day begins with a hot cup of tea brought to the tent at about 6am, followed by a bowl of hot water for washing. After packing our bags and having a good breakfast, we set off on the morning's walk. All you need to carry is a small day pack containing water bottle, camera, sun cream, hat, rain jacket and a warm jumper, just in case. The porters will carry the rest of your gear for you. After walking for 3-4 hours we stop for lunch at around midday. The afternoon's walk is generally shorter and we arrive at camp in time for afternoon tea. The remainder of the afternoon can be spent exploring the nearby villages, doing a bit of washing or simply relaxing with a good book. On some days, we will arrive at camp by lunchtime and the entire afternoon will be free. Dinner is usually served between 6 and 7pm. After dinner, the evening will often be spent playing cards and talking with the crew, or perhaps even joining in some singing and dancing, before heading off to the tent for a well-earned sleep.

After breakfast we continue our drive along the Friendship Highway to Tingri and explore Everest Base Camp at an altitude of 5,150m. The base camp itself is dry and barren, but the views of Everest more than compensate for this. It is a truly awe-inspiring place as you come face to face with the sheer north face of the world's highest mountain towering above you.
(B,L,D)

Day 9 Tingri - Lung Thang (4,510m)

The trek begins today as our trail leads us away from the Tingri Plain towards Cho Oyu . As we near the village of Chholung a small Gompa comes into view. Further on, seemingly barren plains open up and yet somehow the villagers manage to yield good barley harvests year in year out. Tonight we set up camp at Lung Thang.

(B,L,D)

Day 10 Lung Thang - Lamna La (5,150m)

Today's trek is a strenuous one as we climb above 5,000m through the Lamna La Pass. Once again though the stunning vista of the surrounding peaks that greets us as we reach the pass makes all our efforts worthwhile. Tonight we camp at the top of the pass.

(B,L,D)

Day 11 Lamna La - Zommug (4,790m)

The bulk of today's trek is downhill as we come down the other side of Lamna La Pass passing yak herders and vegetation along the way. The trail continues towards the whitewashed walls of Zommug, a village with a stunning setting and amazing views of Mount Everest and Gyachung Kang. The land here is largely infertile and villagers are unable to yield agricultural crops, instead they are largely dependent on animal husbandry for their livelihood. Once again we have another superb location for our camp site.

(B,L,D)

Day 12 Zommug - Rongbuk (5,000m)

After breakfast we break camp and trek towards Rongbuk. After a few hours of walking along the Rongbuk Glacier the north face of Everest becomes visible. Up ahead Rongbuk Monastery is situated at the foot of Rongbuk Glacier only 15km below Everest Base Camp at an elevation of 4,980m. The monastery was reconstructed following the Cultural Revolution in 1960 and is regarded by many as the gateway to Mount Everest. Tonight's camp site will be at an outstanding location with jaw-dropping views of Mount Everest as a backdrop.

(B,L,D)

Day 13 Rongbuk - Everest Base Camp (5,150m) - Nyalam

From Rongbuk it is a 9km walk along a dirt road to the base of Mt. Everest where there will be time to admire and contemplate Everest's grandeur. In the afternoon we drive back to Nyalam (215km) on the Friendship Highway crossing over the Pang La Pass and stopping at Tingri for a late lunch. Other passes negotiated include Lalung La at 5,124m and Shung La at 5,200m as we leave the arid Tibetan Plateau behind. Tonight's accommodation will either be a guest house in Nyalam or a camp site at nearby village.

(B,L,D)

Day 14 Nyalam - Kathmandu

From Nyalam we drive a few kilometers to the Friendship Bridge which spans the Bhote Koshi River and marks the Chinese - Nepalese border. We bid farewell to our Tibetan guide and driver and walk to Nepalese Immigration Control in Kodari where we will be met by our Nepalese staff. After completing the re-entry formalities we continue the drive to Kathmandu which, depending on road and weather conditions, should take about 5 hours.

(B,L,D)

Day 15 Kathmandu

Today is a free day to relax and unwind after the trek or else explore this fascinating city.

(B,L,D)

Day 16 Kathmandu - UK

We transfer to Tribhuvan International Airport for our return flight to the UK.

(B)

PROJECT DETAILS

The 'Explore Himalaya Community Service Program' was developed to assist impoverished rural communities and has been operating in Nuwakot for several years. The old capital of Nepal, Nuwakot is rich in cultural heritage and many important historical monuments and temples remain, but the people who live in the surrounding area are amongst the country's poorest. One of the program's main priorities is education, working closely with the local secondary school, and also by providing vocational training to young adults along with skill development for all ages. Other projects include helping to restore some of the historical buildings, such as Buddhist prayer halls, which have fallen into disrepair.

We have allowed 2 full days to undertake work at the secondary school. We intend to repair some of the oldest buildings in the village and to improve conditions by creating some sporting facilities. In addition to this work there will be other areas that may need assistance including:

- Providing books, pens and paper for the children
- Undertaking a nutritional and/or medical program
- Dental check ups
- Teaching English and other subject coaching

A lot will depend on the eventual size of the group, but if you would like to formally commit to a particular project, to assist with your marketing, then we can discuss this accordingly.

Please note that Different Travel cannot provide items such as hard hats, steel-capped boots etc and advise you to bring additional equipment if you feel this may be necessary as part of the project.

Please also note that due to the high altitude, a generally good level of fitness is recommended for this tour. DTC has the right to refuse anyone who they feel is not fit enough for the challenge.

Items the school is in need of which people can bring with them:

Stationery

Books

Sports equipment

Educational games

Different Travel support responsible tourism and therefore don't encourage personal gift-giving, as the children soon equate visitors and foreigners with "gifts" and expect them. So we ask you to please give your donations to the local representative or the orphanage director to distribute to the children.

BEFORE YOU GO: AN A - Z OF INFORMATION ON NEPAL

A is for Arrival. British nationals require valid 10-year passport, duly endorsed with Nepalese visa, for travel to Nepal. This can be obtained in advance from the Royal Nepalese Embassy (£20) or on arrival at Kathmandu's Tribhuvan Airport (US\$30).

A is also for Altitude. Most people will encounter some symptoms to varying degrees including: headache, nausea, vomiting, lack of appetite, insomnia, fatigue, dehydration. When you arrive at a place of high altitude you should have a few hours rest in a chair and avoid alcohol, cigarettes and heavy food.

B is for Begging. You will encounter beggars especially in and around Durbar Square although generally speaking begging is not as prevalent in Nepal as it is in its southern neighbor India.

C is for Communications. The international direct dialing code for Nepal is +977. Making long distance call is easy from major cities like Kathmandu and Pokhara. Cyber cafes and communication shops offer phone and Internet services in every corner. They let you receive and send fax and provide computer for Internet access for a fee. Most hotels and lodges also have

phone and Internet access facilities these days. Internet phone is available everywhere in Kathmandu and Pokhara. The cost starts from Rs. 10 to 30 (about 0.15 to 0.30 cents) per minute. Internet bandwidth is increasing so Internet calling is becoming realistic.

The international direct dialing code for Tibet is +86. Sending letters by airmail or packages by air or surface from Tibet is surprisingly reliable. To receive mail in Lhasa, have it addressed to Post Restante, Main Post Office, Lhasa, Tibet, China. Telegrams are commonly used. It is very easy to dial or fax direct to Europe or the United States. International calls can be made at large hotels or at the Telecommunications Office. Telexes and faxes are available to guests at the Holiday Inn, and at the Telecommunications Office, which has cheaper rates.

C is also for Clothing: The clothing you bring will need to allow for both the warmth of the days and the chill of the nights. While trekking during the day at lower altitudes, lightweight trekking trousers and T-shirts are recommended. It's always a good idea to carry a waterproof jacket and some warmer clothing with you though as mountain weather is notoriously unpredictable. For the cold nights, thermal underwear, a warm fleece jacket and even a down jacket will help to keep you warm.

D is for Day pack. Throughout the trek your day pack is your responsibility. What's more you will carry your own so please don't make it too heavy. We recommend a 3 litre pack weighing 3-5kgs. You may want to carry some essentials with you as you will not have access to your main pack. This would include waterproofs, fleece, sun hat, gloves, warm hat, sun cream, 3 litre water bottle, tissues and packed lunch. You may also wish to bring your camera and spare films.

D is also for Dehydration. This occurs most often in the heat whilst walking at high altitude. As a result you should bring your own some re-hydration salts. Packets can be purchased from chemists in different flavours and simply added to water. Please take care to drink only bottled water and ensure it is still sealed when you receive it and avoid ice in drinks.

E is for Etiquette. Always endeavour to be polite and respectful and take your lead from the local people around you in terms of what is acceptable or not. When in public places or during project work shorts and a t-shirt would be fine but you should respect the preferences and cultural norms of those around you – i.e. no bikinis, hot pants, halter neck tops etc! If you show respect then it will be reciprocated.

E is also for Expenses. In particular porter's tips, laundry, drinks, food for mealtimes not included, personal spending money, personal equipment, souvenirs and tips.

E is also for Environment. Wonderful environment of the Himalayas is also an extremely fragile one. Increasing population density and number of trekkers threatens to destroy the very beauty which attracts us in the first place. At Explore Himalaya, we are extremely environmentally conscious and aim to minimize our impact as much as possible. As deforestation is one of greatest environmental threats, we do not have camp fires and use kerosene for cooking as an alternative fuel to wood. We also discourage trekkers from using wood-fuelled hot showers in lodges along the way. Many lodges, however, now provide solar hot showers, a far more eco-friendly alternative. Garbage disposal is another major problem and some of the busier trails can, at times, appear strewn with litter. Our staff members are well motivated towards Eco-friendly practices. We carry out all our garbage, apart from that which can be safely and easily burnt at the campsite. Our aim is to help protect and preserve this beautiful environment for future generations of trekkers to enjoy.

F is for Food. A typical Nepali meal is dal-bhat - boiled dal served with rice and vegetables, and some spicy relish. This is consumed twice daily, once in the morning and again after sunset. Between these main meals, snacks such as chiura (beaten rice) and tea are consumed. Apart meat, eggs, and fish are considered a treat. In the mountainous region the staple diet are based on wheat, maize, millet and potatoes.

A Tibetan dinner begins with cold appetizers, which can be quite spicy, followed by a main course of several hot dishes. Meat is often boiled to tenderize it and then stir-fried with other ingredients. An important mainstay is tsampa, a flour ground from highland barley. This is mixed with tea,

butter or eaten dry. Noodles or dumplings accompany dishes, as good rice is scarce. Soup with a broth base is usually an integral part of the meal especially if momos, steamed meat dumplings like giant ravioli, are being served. Fried momos are particularly good, called kothay. Another favourite is shabalay, deep-fried meat pies, which are served with a spicy salad made from radish or cabbage, rather like Korean kimchi. Tibetans like hot chillies with their meat but these are usually served separately or sliced in a vinegar sauce.

F is also for Fitness. This tour is classified as moderate to challenging and a good general level of fitness is required. You should start a programme of body conditioning before your departure including walking, cardiovascular workouts and work to improve both your stamina and your ability to walk up and down gradients. One experienced walker suggests you should be able to cover 8km in 45 minutes or you should get training! DTC has the right to refuse anyone who they feel is not fit enough for the challenge.

H is for Hagglng. Whilst you are working with the local community this should not be an issue. However if you are considering someone's financial request you should have a chat with DTC ground staff before committing. Unless you are shopping at a fixed price store, it is customary to bargain. Generally the buyer and the vendor will settle on a price somewhere between where they first started.

H is also for Health. It is essential that you contact your GP before travelling. There are no compulsory vaccinations required for Nepal and Tibet however it is likely that your GP will recommend you are covered against typhoid, tetanus, polio and hepatitis A, all of which are more prevalent in this part of the world.

I is for Insurance. Different Travel will do everything possible to ensure a safe and enjoyable trip. However, certain risks are involved and should be recognized by participants. Thus, we highly recommend the purchase of short-term travel insurance for our expeditions. Travel Insurance is a cost effective way to protect yourself and your equipment in the event of problems due to canceled trips, delays, medical problems, baggage loss or damage. **Medical insurance** is an absolute necessity. Ensure you inform the insurance company concerned of your intention to trek in Peru as some policies have a different rate for treks.

L is for Language. Nepali is the official language and is an Indo-Aryan language spoken in Nepal, Bhutan, and some parts of India and Myanmar. Roughly 505 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
Thank you	Dhanyabaad
How are you?	Tapaai laai kasto chha?
Water	Pani
Excuse me	Hajur
How Much?	Kati Ho?
What is this?	Yo ke ho?
Yes	ho
No	hoina
Good Luck	saphalhos
rice	bhat
cold beer	ciso biyar
That's Expensive	mahango bhayo
I'm Sick	ma birami chu

Tibetan is spoken in Tibet, Bhutan, Nepal, and in parts of northern India (including Sikkim).

M is for Money. Nepalese Rupees are found in denominations of 1000, 500, 250, 100, 50, 25, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1. Coins are found in denominations of 10, 25 and 50 paisa. One rupee equals 100 paisa. Nepal has modern banking facilities and some of the International Banks have their own offices in Kathmandu. Almost all foreign currencies along with credit cards such as American

Express, Visa and Master Card are accepted in Nepal at major hotels, shops and restaurants. When travelling around Nepal, change large bills whenever you can. Taxis, cycle rickshaws and small shops seldom have small bills. Don't be afraid to ask local shops for change, but expect to ask three or four before someone can or will change your large bill.

In Tibet the unit of currency is the Chinese Yuan divided into 10 jiao (mao) or 100 fen. Travellers' cheques and foreign currency can be changed at the Bank of China in Lhasa, Shigatse, Zhangmu and Shiquanhe (travellers cheques only). Bank hours are 8:30am -12 and 3.30pm -6:30pm.

P is for Photography. When taking photographs of the local people, it would be wisest to ask their permission. Taking a photograph of someone with out their permission – especially in rural areas can cause offence. In contrast, taking photographs of someone you have become friendly with is usually very welcome.

P is also for Poverty. It is important not to underestimate the psychological impact of viewing extreme poverty, and a sense of helplessness and guilt that often comes from it. We have noticed before that some people respond to such sights by feeling they must do everything they can to help everyone they can (we call this 'save the world mode'). The risk with this is that it leads to disappointment and disillusionment as no one person can do everything. The secret here is to recognise the signs (raised levels of stress, feeling emotional, guilty, frustrated and angry), and to set realistic goals about what you can and cannot do. We also recommend that you avoid acting on impulse – especially when it comes to giving away money. People may seem genuine, but very many people still regard tourists as 'cash cows' and act dishonestly and unethically. Do check with your guides before giving away significant sums of money, and consider the use of food parcels instead. The general advice is (i) question everything you are told, (ii) don't be afraid to say no, and (iii) check it out with your guides!

R is for Religion. Nepal is the birthplace of Lord Buddha (thought to be Lumbini). According to the 2001 census, Hindus constitute 80.6% of the population. Buddhists make up 10.7%, Muslims 4.2%, Kirant 3.6%, other religions 0.9%.

S is also for Souvenirs. Nepal provides splendid opportunities for the shopper especially for silks and cotton, gemstones, carpets, bed linen, handicrafts in all types of medium, miniature paintings and much more.

T is for Tipping. Tipping is the accepted norm in this part of the world. It is customary to leave a small tip (approximately 10 – 15%) when you pay for a meal. However, hotel staff relies heavily upon gratuities to augment their salaries (which are only probably between £200 and £300 per annum). Therefore, your generosity towards the staff will be much appreciated. Likewise, the same applies for any drivers or guides you use, who would appreciate a tip especially those in Tibet.

T is also for Trek Equipment.

- **Sleeping bag.** Down-filled bags are better. Beg, borrow or steal a good one (ie 4-5 season) because high altitude nights will be cool. Good down is fluffy, light and thick. A muff (an extra section around the neck) makes a big difference to the overall warmth of a bag. Reasonable sleeping bags are cheaply available for rent in Kathmandu. Alternatively add a fleece sleeping bag liner to add warmth to a 3-4 season bag.
- **Insulation Mat.** a foam sleeping pad is provided by the trail company but you might consider bringing your own. A blow up variety or 'thermarest' is a great idea.
- **Jacket.** Your jacket for the trek should be windproof and fleece-lined if possible. An outer waterproof breathable jacket is also advisable along with waterproof trousers.
- **Tents.** These will be provided by the tour operator. 4-people capacity tents will be used to sleep 2 people for extra comfort and for safe storage of your rucksack.
- **Torch /head torch.** This is an absolute necessity. Remember to also bring your own batteries/charger.
- **Kit bag.** You will need your trek kit bag which will be carried by the porters. This must be

- strong, light and waterproof. Metal framed rucksacks are unsuitable. It is also handy to bring some large plastic bags to put your whole pack inside in case of poor weather. The weight limit for the bag and its contents is 9kg per person including sleeping bag and mat.
- **Gloves.** You should consider taking a pair of gloves for the trek as the nights at high altitude are very cold.
 - **Nibbles.** High energy snacks, chocolate and sweets will be most welcome during your trek.
 - **First Aid Kit.** See First Aid Kit list at end of itinerary.
 - **Boots.** For a happy trek you need comfortable feet. Good boots must have good ankle support, plenty of toe room for long descents, a stiff sole to lessen twisting torsion, and be light. Look at the inner lining - leather is good and Cambrelle is even better, a material that eats smelly feet bacteria. Good lightweight trekking boots or light all leather boots are perfect. Boots must be lightly worn in before trekking and this should include some steep hills to show up trouble spots. The longer the trek, the better the boots you need.

W is for Weather. Nepal's climate varies with its topography and altitude. The lowland region for instance has a hot and humid climate that can rise above 45 degrees Celsius during summer. The midland regions are pleasant almost all the year round, although winter nights are cool. The northern mountain region, around an altitude above 3,300m has an alpine climate with considerably lower temperatures in winter. Nepal has four climatic seasons. Spring lasts from March to May, Summer from June to August, Autumn between September and November and Winter from December to February.