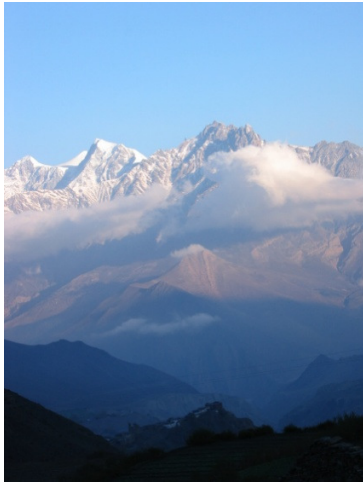


THE NEPAL CHALLENGE 2011

organised by
DIFFERENT TRAVEL

About Nepal



Nepal, officially the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, is a landlocked country in South Asia and the world's youngest republic. It is bordered to the north by the People's Republic of China, and to the south, east, and west by the Republic of India. With an area of 147,181 square kilometres (56,827 square miles) and a population of approximately 30 million, Nepal is the world's 93rd largest country by land mass and the 41st most populous country. Kathmandu is the nation's capital and the country's largest metropolitan city.

Nepal is a country of highly diverse and rich geography, culture, and religions. The mountainous north contains eight of the world's ten highest mountains, including the highest, Mount Everest. The fertile and humid south is heavily urbanized. By some measures, Hinduism is practiced by a greater majority of people in Nepal than in any other nation. Buddhism, though a minority faith in the country, is linked historically with Nepal as the birthplace of Siddhartha Gautama who as the Buddha Gautama gave birth to the Buddhist tradition.

Geographically, Nepal is uncommonly diverse. Nepal is of roughly trapezoidal shape, 800 kilometres long and 200 kilometres wide, with an area of 147,181 square kilometres. It is commonly divided into three physiographic areas: the Mountain Region, the Hill Region and the Lowland Plains.

The southern Lowland Plains bordering India are part of the northern rim of the Indo-Gangetic plains. They were formed and are fed by three major rivers: the Kosi, the Narayani, and the Karnali. This region has a hot, humid climate.

The Hill Region (Pahad) abuts the mountains and varies from 1,000 to 4,000 metres (3,300–13,125 ft) in altitude. Two low mountain ranges, the Mahabharat Lekh and Shiwalik Range (also called the Churia Range) dominate the region. The hilly belt includes the Kathmandu Valley, the country's most fertile and urbanised area.

The Mountain Region, situated in the Great Himalayan Range, makes up the northern part of Nepal. It contains the regions of highest altitude in the world; the world's highest mountain, 8,850 metres (29,035 ft) height Mount Everest (Sagarmatha in Nepali) is located here on the border with Tibet. Seven other of the world's ten highest mountains are located in Nepal: Lhotse, Makalu, Cho Oyu, Kanchenjunga, Dhaulagiri, Annapurna and Manaslu.

The Trek

Nepal is popular for trekking, containing some of the highest and most challenging mountains in the world, including Mount Everest. Since Nepal first opened its frontiers to foreign visitors in the fifties, it has captured the minds of mountaineers and explorers from all over the world. Today Nepal has established itself as the true home of Adventure not only for mountaineers and trekkers but, also to all other explorers from all walks of life.

GHOREPANI / POON HILL TREK:

Amongst the varied treks available, this trek is ideal for beginners or for those who have limited time, but still want a real Himalayan experience. The trek starts from Nayapul where, after a short drive from Pokhara, the trail passes through rhododendron forest and the fascinating traditional Gurung village of Ghandruk, a great opportunity to witness the culture and tradition of the Nepalese countryside. Along the way, there are spectacular views of the snowy peaks of the Annapurnas, culminating with the unforgettable mountain panorama from Poon Hill.



Itinerary

Day 1: London - Kathmandu

Depart London on an overnight flight to Kathmandu.

Day 2: Kathmandu

Arrive in Kathmandu and check into a central hotel in time for dinner and a briefing on the trip ahead.

Day 3: Kathmandu – Pokhara

Today we fly to Pokhara. After lunch at the hotel, the rest of the day is free to rest or explore Pokhara.

Day 4: Pokhara - Birethanti (1075m) 4km

This morning we drive to Naya Pool, along the graceful Modi Khola Valley. On reaching our destination, we begin the panoramic Annapurna trek with a gentle introduction. The route skirts through lush forest leading finally to Birethanti after walking for about one hour. Birethani houses well-resourced shops, hotels, cafes, a police check post, a bakery and a bank, a nice little village town to have fun and settle in for our first overnight on the mountain.

Day 5: Birethanti - Ghandruk (1940m) 10km

Leaving Birethani, we trail along terraced fields beneath the splendid panorama of awe-inspiring glaciated Himalayan mountain ranges. After passing a succession of flatlands, forest, cultivated lands and a suspension bridge over Khumnu Khola, we arrive at the beautiful village of Ghandruk. A spectacular viewpoint in this pristine village offers breathtaking views of Annapurna South, Annapurna, Annapurna III, Machhapuchhare and Hiunchuli.

Day 6: Ghandruk - Tadapani (2540) 8km

Today we ascend along the trail rich in rhododendron forests and gloriously cascading sparkling mountain streams. After continuously climbing for 3 hours, we reach the area of Tadapani, at an altitude of 2540 meters. Tadapani offers the most magnificent mountain views of the overpowering peaks of Annapurna South.

Day 7: Tadapani - Ghorepani (2880m) 10km

Today there are more steep, but stunning, trails, with majestic views of snow-capped mountain peaks, lush vegetation and rich plant life. You will be climbing through rhododendron forests to Deorali (3100m) to reach a hamlet and cultivated fields before continuing to Ghorepani.

Day 8: Ghorepan - Nayapul - Pokhara 15km

After ascending to, and savouring, the mesmerizing sight of Dhaulagiri, Tukuhe Peak and other Himalayan giants from the popular vantage point of Poon Hill [3195m], you leave Ghorepani and continue on towards Nayapul. You descend further towards Birethanti, which lies stretched beside the Modi River. Descending via a trail of stone steps, you pass through dense forest and the small village of Ulleri. From here a very steep section [with 3767 steps!] leads down to Hille on the Bhurungdi Khola. Forty minutes later, you reach the main road from where you return to Pokhara.

Day 9: Pokhara - Kathmandu

A morning flight to Kathmandu and transfer to the central hotel. Enjoy some free time in this exotic city this afternoon.

Days 10-12: Kathmandu

Spend 3 days taking part in a local community project, assisting at a project in the Kathmandu Valley. We work with a variety of projects and would be able to link in with a school orphanage. A typical challenge would be to paint and decorate a classroom, build a children's playground and assist with teaching and sports.

Day 13: Kathmandu - London

Transfer to the airport for the return flight to London.

Notes: The day-to-day program is subject to weather, conditions and the progress of the group. Most importantly, the leaders will be making daily decisions about, for example, exactly how far or which way we go, and will be thinking ultimately about the safety and health of all in the party, as well as the enjoyment of the group and success in the outcome of the trek.

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

A is for Arrival. You must obtain a visa prior to travel. See http://www.nepembassy.org.uk/visa_information.html for more information. You should check visa validity and conditions carefully. They are usually valid for one month. There are fines and/or imprisonment if you overstay your visa. Entry to Nepal may be refused if your passport has less than six month's validity.

A is also Accommodation. You will be staying in lodges and teahouses. Although simple, the teahouses or lodges do provide shelter and warmth and are normally run by friendly local families. Rooms are basic, normally just a bed with a pillow and blankets. There is no need to bring a sleeping bag or sleeping mat, however you may wish to bring a sleeping bag liner if you are particularly health conscious, although all bedding is well cleaned. A few have electric lights and all have a spacious dining room-lounge. All meals are included and are taken in lodges along the trail. There will be a wide variety of Nepali and Western food as well as drinks (beers etc will be available to purchase).

A is also for Altitude. The trekking on this trip does not go into high altitude areas (i.e. not above 2775m) so there is little chance of altitude related sickness (acute mountain sickness, AMS).

B is for Begging. Begging has become more prevalent in recent years especially where tourists congregate. In most cases however they will try to sell you trinkets and jewellery that can either be purchased or in some cases exchanged for the taking of their photo. We strongly advise against giving anything to the children on the streets as this will only encourage more begging.

C is for Communications. International telecommunications charges from Nepal are among the highest in the world, and hotels usually add a high surcharge on top of this. It's best to make quick calls and to have the other party call you back. While trekking in the remote parts, you may not have an access to telephone facility for some days. However, en route there may be few places where telephone facilities may be available and likely to be working. Mobiles will receive an intermittent signal.

C is for Clothing. Although there are no real restrictions on tourist clothing it is best to err on the side of caution and dress modestly, smartly and respectfully. Short skirts and hot pants should be avoided, but below the knee skirts for women are acceptable and provide some privacy when using the bathroom in the great outdoors.

Linen trousers or smart trekking bottoms and cotton shirts or t-shirts would be suitable attire for both men and women during the trek. Local women often wear salwar kurta and saris but increasingly wear Western clothing. Local men tend to wear smart Western clothes apart from during special occasions.

C is also for Climate. The best seasons to trek in the Annapurna region are autumn (from mid-September till November end) and spring (from the beginning of March until mid-May). Temperatures will drop considerably as you trek higher every day. You can expect nights to be a bit colder (between 5°C to 15°C) but, the days are sunny and hot (between 15°C to 30°C). The mornings are usually clear, with clouds building up during the afternoon, disappearing at night.

D is for Drink. Fresh fruit and vegetables should always be peeled or washed thoroughly with purified water. Bottled or purified water should be used at all times for drinking. Boiled drinks such as coffee or tea are fine. Ice is not to be trusted unless you are sure it has been made with bottled water.

D is also for Dietary Requirements. The majority of special diets, such as vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free, etc., can be catered for. Please ensure that you notify us of any dietary requirements at the time of booking or as soon as possible.

D is also for Difficulty. This trek is classified as a moderate adventure trek. The trek does not go above 3000 metres and each day you can expect to be walking for around 5-6 hours. It is a perfect introduction to trekking in Nepal. The activity level is fairly easy but don't expect it to be all easy going, there will still be some big hills to climb as well as the well-known 'Nepali flat' – a little bit up and a little bit down.

D is also for Dehydration. This is a potential problem and you must bring a good supply of rehydration salts with you. You can buy the small packets from chemists in different flavours and just add the powder to quantity of water mentioned on the packet.

D is also for Daypack. Throughout the trek your daypack is your responsibility and you will be carrying your own – so don't make it too heavy. We recommend a 25-30 litre pack. It is likely to weigh around 10kgs when packed, so please take this equivalent with you during your training trips. You will need to carry some essentials with you as you will not have access to your main pack: waterproofs, fleece, sun hat, sunglasses, gloves, warm hat, sun cream, water bottle, tissues/wet wipes, medical kit, packed lunch etc. You may also wish to bring your camera and spare memory cards and batteries. It is worth taking a waterproof cover for your daypack as rain is not unusual during the climb. Alternatively, consider dry bags for inside your pack, which will keep important items dry.

E is for Expenses. Very little spending money is required as all meals are provided. You only need a small amount for soft and/or alcoholic drinks, snacks, souvenirs, porters' tips, laundry, telephone calls, and occasionally there may be a small charge to use hot water in the lodges.

E is also for Electricity. Mains electricity is 230v/ 50 Hz but is subject to fluctuations and power cuts. Plugs are 2 round pin sockets (European style) or three large round gold pins (South African style).

E is also for 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 (probably Pokhara). Please ensure your travel insurance covers you for trekking of this nature.

F is for Food. Nepali food is very similar to Indian, with some Chinese influences. Rice or bread and dhal (lentils) are the staple and are eaten twice a day. Vegetarians are well catered for. Snacks such as bread, chura, roti, curried vegetables, and milk tea are generally eaten in between the two big meals.

Popular Nepali dishes

Equally popular among Nepali people and foreign tourists, Gundruk-Dheedo is a sugar-free dish made of wheat, maize and dried green vegetable. The food is high on nutrition level and satisfies the taste buds as well.

Vegetable Pulao (Fried Nepali Rice). Vegetable Pulao is one of the popular ways rice is served during the parties and events in the Nepalese household. It has flavour of turmeric and cumin to it. The rice is particularly famous among tourists who prefer eating it with curd and Manchurian.

Masu. Masu is spiced or curried meat (usually chicken, mutton, buffalo or pork) with gravy. Served with rice, it is a main course dish, very popular in Nepal.

Chatamari. Regarded as Newari pizza, Chatamari is a flat-bread made from rice flour with or without toppings (meat, vegetables, eggs, sugar). It is highly savoured by the tourists who consider it as a good and healthy substitute to pizza.

F is for First Aid kit. Especially whilst on the climb you should have a small first aid kit of essential items (Anti-malarials, personal prescription medicine, painkillers, plasters/blister spray, insect repellent (containing 50% DEET), anti-histamine tablets and cream, Imodium (Loperamide), rehydration sachets, throat lozenges, painkillers such as Ibuprofen, decongestant, lip balm with SPF, antiseptic cream, antifungal powder, scissors, tweezers, thermometer, sanitary towels and/or tampons or a Mooncup, spare glasses or contact lenses, toilet roll. See packing list for more detail.

F is also for Fitness. A good general level of fitness is required. You should start a programme of body conditioning well before your departure including walking and cardio vascular workouts to both improve your stamina and your ability to walk up and down gradients. You will be walking very slowly, but for many hours, so it is essential that you are able to walk for at least 6 hours. Regular breaks are taken, but long days walking are inevitable. DTC has the right to refuse anyone who they feel is not fit enough for the challenge. Please see the fitness tips sheet for more information.

H is for Health. Remember to take all your existing medication in clearly labelled packages. Normal body temperature is 98.6 f / 37 C. Resting pulse rate should be 60 – 90 per minute (higher at higher altitude). Respiratory rate should be 12-20 breaths per minute. You should seek medical advice at least 8 weeks before travelling and ensure that all appropriate vaccinations are up-to-date. For further information on health

<http://www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk>

Malaria occurs in Nepal but we may not visit the areas where it is a problem, so it is **ESSENTIAL** you seek up to date medical advice at least 8 weeks before departure. It is important that you wear long sleeve shirts and trousers during the evenings, use 50% DEET mosquito repellent. Upon your return you should mention to your doctor that you have been to a Nepal if you develop any symptoms (fever, fatigue).

H is also for Haggling. Unless marked with a price most items in a shop are not fixed so prepare your bargaining skills early! As a general rule halve the initial asking price and you should eventually come to a price that is agreeable to both you and the vendor.

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 recognised 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 cancelled trips, delays, medical problems, baggage loss or damage.

L is for Language. An attempt to speak a few words of the local language is always appreciated! Here are some simple phrases to get you started:

Welcome स्वागतम् (swagatam)

Hello/Goodbye नमस्ते (namaste)

How are you? तपाईंलाई/तिमीलाई कस्तो छ? (tapaaii/timi lai kasto cha?)

Fine thanks, and you? मलाई सन्चै छ । तपाईंलाई नि? (sanchai cha. tapaaialai ni?)

What is your name? तपाईंको/तिम्रो नाम के हो? (tapaaiiko/timro naam ke ho?)

My name is... मेरो नाम ... हो (mero naam ... ho)

Have a nice day शुभ दिन (subha din)

Thank you धन्यवाद (dhanyabad)

Excuse me/Sorry माफ गर्नुस् (maapha ganus)

Where's the toilet? शौचालय कता छ? (sauchalaya kata chha)

How do you say... in Nepali? तपाइले नेपालीमा ... लाइ कसरी भन्नुहुन्छ? (tapain le nepalima ... lai kasari bhannu hunchha?)

L is for Luggage. During trek your main luggage will be carried by porters. You simply carry a day pack with water bottle, camera, sun-screen, spare jacket, etc. - a small load that allows full enjoyment of the trek. A trek bag is ideal for your main luggage, plus a small lockable bag for travel clothes or anything that you do not need during trek which you can leave in the hotel free of charge.

M is for Money. The official currency is the rupee. Several ATMs are available in Kathmandu and money can be exchanged at banks and hotels. The exchange rate at time of publishing is UK£1.00 = 118 rupee. Travellers' cheques can be cashed at major banks for a service fee of 2%-5%. Visa, Master, American Express and Diner's Club are widely accepted at most of the larger hotels, restaurants and shops.

P is for Personal Safety. Nepal is widely acknowledged to be a safe destination. In almost all cases the Nepalese people regard tourists with the highest level of respect as guests in their country. However petty theft and pick pockets do exist in the larger cities. In other areas reports of these activities are almost unheard of. It is certainly not something to be concerned about but you should be aware of your surroundings. You should therefore ensure that all bags have sturdy locks. Place all valuables, including passport and air tickets in the in-room safe at hotels or at the front desk. It is best not to bring expensive jewellery or watches to Nepal. Do not carry unnecessarily large amounts of cash with you at any time.

P is also for Photography. If you take photographs of local people, you should ask permission first

R is for Religion. Hinduism is practiced by a greater majority of people in Nepal than in any other nation. Buddhism, though a minority faith in the country, is linked historically with Nepal as the birthplace of Siddhartha Gautama who as the Buddha Gautama gave birth to the Buddhist tradition. Religion is an integral part of life for most of the population, and its evidence is all around.

R is also Responsible Travel. The wonderful environment of the Himalayas is also an extremely fragile one. Increasing population density and the numbers of trekkers threaten the beauty of Nepal and, as such, we are extremely conscious about the environment and aim to minimize our impact as much as possible.

As deforestation is one of the greatest environmental threats, we do not have camp fires. 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.

R is also for Rubbish Disposal. Rubbish disposal is another major problem which we strive to avoid. Our staff members are well motivated towards eco-friendly practices. We carry out all our rubbish, apart from that which can be safely and easily burnt at nearby the Lodges. Our aim is to help protect and preserve this beautiful environment for future generations of trekkers to enjoy.

S is for Souvenirs. Nepal boasts a wide variety of traditional handicrafts, including quality hand embroidery, woodcarvings, paintings and ceramics. There may be some local handicrafts available to purchase on the trek, and once back in Kathmandu there are plenty of opportunities for shopping!

S is for Sleeping bag. You do not need to bring a sleeping bag as you will be staying in teahouses or guesthouses along the trek where bedding will be provided. If you wish you can bring a silk sleeping bag liner to sleep inside although all bedding is clean. Sleeping bags are available to hire in Kathmandu for \$5US per night if you wish but are not required.

S is also for Staff. In addition to your Different Travel Tour Leader, you will be accompanied on the trek by a trained and experienced Sherpa Guide. There will also be 1 porter for 2 participants, to carry your luggage (you are just responsible for your day pack).

T is for Tipping. Whilst tipping is not part of Nepal's cultural make-up it is nonetheless an important and welcome recent addition. We would recommend allowing around \$50 in total for tips during your trip.

T is also for Typical Day on Trek. Each morning after packing our bags and a hearty breakfast, we set off on the day's walk. After walking for 3-4 hours we stop for lunch at around midday. The afternoon's walk is generally shorter and we usually arrive at our destination in time for afternoon tea. The remainder of the afternoon can be spent exploring the village, doing a bit of washing or simply relaxing with a good book. After dinner, the evening will often be spent playing cards and reliving the day's adventures, before retiring for a well-earned sleep.

W is for Weather.

Nepal has five climatic zones, broadly corresponding to the altitudes. The tropical and subtropical zones lie below 1,200 metres (3,940 ft), the temperate zone 1,200 to 2,400 metres (3,900–7,875 ft), the cold zone 2,400 to 3,600 metres (7,875–11,800 ft), the subarctic zone 3,600 to 4,400 metres (11,800–14,400 ft), and the Arctic zone above 4,400 metres (14,400 ft). During this trek, in autumn, lowest temperatures are not expected to fall below 5°C.

W is also for Water. All water on this trip is undrinkable. You must not brush your teeth or rinse your mouth with the tap water, only use bottled or purified water.

You should bring water purification. A highly recommended purification is 'Biox Aqua Drops' which contains chlorine dioxide. If you are considering using a filter method of purification, please bear in mind that you cannot measure how many litres you are purifying, and if you are not careful, your filter could run out, and you could end up drinking dirty water. You may also wish to consider powdered fruit juice, as this will make purified water taste better.

Z is for Zen Travelling. We suggest these tips for successfully dealing with Nepalese officials, airport personnel and bureaucrats:

- Try your best to smile and be pleasant.
- Don't complain loudly.
- If you feel you need to criticise someone, do it in a joking, light-hearted manner to avoid confrontation.
- Expect delays - build them into your schedule.
- Never show anger - ever! Getting visibly upset is not only rude; it will cause you to lose face.
- Don't be competitive. Treating your interaction as a cooperative enterprise works much better.
- Don't act as though you deserve service from anyone. If you do so, it's likely that you will be delayed.

PACKING LIST

CLOTHING

- Flip Flops/ Trekking sandals
- Walking boots
- Trainers
- Light (or convertible) trekking trousers x 2
- Pair of long shorts/capri pants
- Long base layer trousers
- Breathable waterproof trousers
- Long-sleeve thermal base layer
- T-shirts/vests x 2
- Long-sleeved cotton shirt x 2
- Thick sweater/fleece
- Warm jacket
- Breathable waterproof jacket
- Trekking socks
- Underwear
- Scarf / pashmina
- Warm hat and gloves
- Sun hat
- Swimwear

HYGIENE

- Wash bag and washing kit
- Personal toiletries
- Toothbrush/Toothpaste
- Soap/Shower Gel
- Large pack of wet wipes
- Antiseptic hand gel
- Sanitary towels/tampons
- Wash bag and washing kit

SLEEPING

- Silk sleeping bag liner
- Eye mask / Ear plugs

FIRST AID KIT

- Anti malarials (see your GP)
- Prescription medicine
- Painkillers
- Plasters
- Anti-histamine tablets/cream
- Imodium
- Rehydration salts
- Lip balm with SPF
- Antiseptic cream
- Antifungal powder
- Scissors/tweezers
- Insect repellent: 50% DEET
- Spare glasses/contact lenses
- Sun cream - high SPF
- After-sun lotion

ESSENTIALS

- Tickets (or e-tickets)
- Passport and copy
- Money
- Insurance policy details
- Torch, head torch + spare batteries
- Diary/Notebook and pen
- Sunglasses
- Toilet roll
- Books/Playing Cards
- Money belt
- Adaptor (2 round pin European or 3 gold round pin South African)

LUGGAGE

- Day pack 25-30 litres
- Large Rucksack/holdall (max 50 litres)
- Waterproof rain cover for daypack and large rucksack

OPTIONAL

- Camera
- Video camera + charger
- Films/batteries/memory stick
- Mobile phone + charger
- Walkman/MP3 Player
- Sewing kit
- Trekking poles
- Pair of work gloves
- Sleeping bag (not required)

EATING AND DRINKING

- Powdered fruit juice
- Energy snacks
- 2 litre personal water bottle x 2
- Water purification

If there are any questions or queries regarding the items on this list, please feel free to contact us on info@different-travel.com