



Trek for 5 days in the Annapurna region and give something back:

NEPAL: POON HILL + COMMUNITY PROJECT

2 - 13 November 2024



www.different-travel.com

info@different-travel.com

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Trip overview

Project overview

Starting in Kathmandu, you will make a difference at a local community project by taking part in hands-on tasks such as refurbishment and redecoration. After the project you set off for the lakeside town of Pokhara and spend five days trekking in the breathtaking Annapurna region of Nepal.

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. 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.

Kathmandu

Kathmandu is the largest city in Nepal and the capital. The city is at an elevation of around 1400m making the climate generally cool and comfortable. This bustling city features UNESCO World Heritage sites, famous temples, holy rivers and sprawling residential areas. In the touristy areas such as Thamel, souvenir shops, restaurants and bars abound making this a big draw to backpackers and travellers. This incredible city is not to be missed.

What is the experience like?

Where will we be working?

You will be making a difference at a local community project by taking part in hands-on tasks such as refurbishment and redecoration.

No experience is required as full supervision and co-ordination will be provided; you just need a willingness to get involved and make a difference.

If time permits, you may be able to spend time visiting other places of interest, sights and local community initiatives in the area.



Who accompanies us?

You will be working alongside the local people and you will be under the direction of a project manager and skilled local craftsmen. You will also be accompanied by a first aid trained Different Travel Company UK tour manager.

What about meals?

Meals and drinking water are included throughout the trip as specified on the itinerary. While in Kathmandu you will eat at local restaurants and at your hotel.

During the project lunch will be served at the project site. Tables, chairs, plates, mugs and cutlery are all provided. There will be plenty of food however menus while at the project may be repeated. Nepali food is similar to Indian cuisine with some Chinese influences. Rice, bread and dal (lentils) are the staple and vegetables, eggs, soup, noodles and some meat dishes form part of many meals. Vegetarians are well catered for.

Please inform us in advance if you have any specific dietary requirements or preferences.

Where will we stay?

You will stay at hotels in Kathmandu (4 nights) and Pokhara (2 nights) which have en-suite facilities and tea houses with shared bathroom facilities during the trek (4 nights).

Practical information

Is there an age limit?

The minimum age is 18, although 16-17 year olds may register if accompanied by a parent or legal guardian. There is no upper age limit.

Who can take part?

An ideal candidate for the trip would be someone who is willing to make an effort, enjoys being out of their comfort zone and is interested in different cultures. You don't need any building experience to take part—just enthusiasm, a willingness to work hard and the desire to make a difference!

How fit do I need to be?

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.



Health declaration

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 specified. All your medical details are treated in the strictest confidence.

The information will be securely screened by a qualified medical professional, and details provided to your tour manager and local guides so our staff are adequately informed and prepared to support you during the trip. By completing our booking form you are giving consent for us to contact you confidentially with any follow up questions regarding your health.

If you declare any medical conditions you may be asked to provide more information, or we may request to contact your GP.

In the event that your medical issues at the time of booking represent a concern for your safety and wellbeing, or the safety and wellbeing of others in the group, you may be recommended not to take part. If this happens your booking will not be confirmed and the deposit will be refunded.

We must be informed if any conditions or medication change, or if new conditions develop. If necessary confirmation of fitness to travel from your GP or specialist may be required.

Please note that we will never unreasonably deny participation on a trip nor contravene the Equality Act 2010.

Covid-19

Your health and safety is our top priority so rest assured that we are taking steps to ensure you not only have a memorable experience, but a safe one too.

We constantly monitor and follow the advice of the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) who provide recommendations and advice to British travellers about travel to a certain destination.

Health and safety is our top priority so we will **NEVER** operate a trip in an area where there is clear and present risk to our team members, whether that is due to a health outbreak, political instability, natural disasters or anything else.

If travel restrictions either in the UK or Nepal prevent safe travel we will look to either postpone or cancel your trip at no cost to you.

Please note that at the time of travel there may be enhanced safety and security measures in airports, bag drop may take longer, and you may need to provide a certificate of health or proof of vaccination.

We will inform you about any information pertinent to your travel arrangements.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us on info@different-travel.com

Trip cost

A £450 registration fee is payable at the time of booking. You can then choose one of the three payment options:

1. **Self-funded:** Pay your own tour costs balance of £2,475 by 23 August 2024. You are welcome to fundraise separately for any charity of your choice, but this is not mandatory. Any fundraising undertaken cannot be used for your trip costs.
2. **Sponsorship:** Fundraise £4,950 for your chosen charity by 9 August 2024. This includes your £2,475 tour costs balance and a £2,475 donation to charity.
3. **Flexi:** Pay your own tour costs balance of £2,475 and fundraise £2,475 for a charity of your choice by 23 August 2024. Any fundraising undertaken cannot be used for your trip costs.

Trip Includes:

- ✓ Return flights from London
- ✓ Current airport taxes and fuel supplements
- ✓ Local transfers and transport in Nepal
- ✓ All Accommodation
- ✓ Meals
- ✓ English-speaking guides and support crew
- ✓ Project co-ordination and material
- ✓ UK Different Travel tour manager

Trip Does Not Include:

- ✗ Nepal visa (current cost \$30 on arrival)
- ✗ Personal expenses (e.g. drinks, snacks, showers, souvenirs, etc.)
- ✗ Vaccinations
- ✗ Travel insurance
- ✗ Tips (approx. £15-20 per person)
- ✗ Bottled mineral water



Itinerary

Day 1-2 (Saturday 2 November – Sunday 3 November 2024):

London - 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 and a welcome dinner at a local restaurant.

Overnight: Hotel

Meals: Dinner

Days 3-4 (Monday 4 November – Tuesday 5 November 2024):

Kathmandu

Spend two full days assisting at a local project. Hospice Nepal is a non-profit organisation in Kathmandu offering services and support to terminally-ill patients and their families. It was set up by a team of local doctors in 2000, and since then has provided free-of-charge medicines, therapies and support to those in need. It is envisaged we will assist with some basic refurbishment at the hospice, such as repainting rooms and improving kitchen or bathroom facilities. Further details will be confirmed nearer the time.

Overnight: Hotel

Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner



Day 5 (Wednesday 6 November 2024): 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.

Overnight: Hotel

Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner



Day 6 (Thursday 7 November 2024)

Pokhara to Birethanti - Tirkhedhunga

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.

Overnight: Teahouse

Approx. 10km trek / 530m ascent

Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

Day 7 (Friday 8 November 2024):

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.

Overnight: Teahouse

Approx. 11km trek / 1400m ascent

Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

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Day 8 (Saturday 9 November 2024):

Ghorepani to 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).

Overnight: Teahouse

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

Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner



Day 9 (Sunday 10 November 2024)

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.

Overnight: Teahouse

Approx. 8km trek / 700m descent

Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

Day 10 (Monday 11 November 2024)

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.

Overnight: Hotel

Approx. 13km trek / 1000m descent

Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

Day 11 (Tuesday 13 November 2024):

Pokhara - Kathmandu

This morning we transfer back to our hotel in Kathmandu (approx. 6 hours), stopping for lunch en-route. Upon arrival in Kathmandu we will freshen up before a farewell dinner at a local restaurant this evening.

Overnight: Hotel

Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner



Day 12-13 (Wednesday 13 – Thursday 14 November 2024)

Kathmandu - London

Transfer to the airport for the return flight to London. You may arrive on Thursday 14 November depending on flight schedules.

Meals: Breakfast

N.B. *This itinerary has been prepared 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.*

Before You Go!

Important information to help you prepare for your trip

Travel practicalities and country information
Project and Trek knowledge
Food and drink
Kit tips
Luggage
Responsible travel and culture
Fitness, health and safety
Altitude
Kit list

Travel practicalities and country information

Visas

Citizens of most countries require a visa for travel to Nepal. You will require a 15-day tourist visa which currently costs US\$30. 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 will need to be 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 Unregulated Introducer of Campbell Irvine Ltd who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

You can find out more here: <https://microsite.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.

It is essential that your policy covers emergency helicopter airlifting/evacuation as well as trekking at altitudes up to 3700m.

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 optional trek, but your access to phone reception at the project and during the trek 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.

Religion

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

Tipping

While tipping is not mandatory, it is recommended and greatly appreciated by the local staff and the trek team. We would recommend allowing around £40-50 per trekker.

Electricity

Electricity in Nepal is 220V, 50Hz. The plugs used are European two round pin plugs. Electricity will be available at the hotel in Kathmandu but will be limited or not possible at the project. For the project you are recommended to bring a portable power pack which when fully charged before departure allows you multiple recharges of USB-powered devices such as phones.

Trek only: Electricity is available at most of the teahouses during the trek to charge phones etc at a fee which ranges from 200-300 rupees per hour. Please note, some places might only have solar power so power supply will be limited. 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.

Money

The currency of Nepal is the rupee. At the time of writing (January 2023) there are approx. 1159 rupees to the pound. You will require cash for water, tips, drinks, snacks, battery charging, Wi-Fi access etc. It is far better to bring too much cash than not enough. If you are joining the optional trek, 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. £10-20 per day should be sufficient. Take plenty of low denomination notes (sub 500 rupees) on the trek as change is difficult to come by, particularly at local villages. 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 is sometimes double the 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 price as low as possible.

Accessing cash

It is not possible to obtain Nepalese rupees outside of Nepal as it is a closed currency; we recommend 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 optional trek route so you should withdraw or exchange money in Kathmandu before departure. 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.

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.

Photography

When taking photographs of the local people, you must ask their permission to avoid causing

offence, especially elderly people. In contrast, taking photographs of someone you have become friendly with is usually very welcome.

Language

Nepali is the official language in Nepal. Roughly 50% 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	<i>namasté</i>	Excuse me	<i>Hajur</i>
How are you?	<i>tapaai laai kasto chha?</i>	Good luck	<i>saphalhos</i>
Water	<i>pani</i>	I'm sick	<i>ma birama chu</i>
Yes	<i>ho</i>	How much?	<i>kati ho?</i>
No	<i>hoina</i>	That's expensive	<i>Mahango bhayo</i>
Thank you	<i>dhanyabad</i>		

Books

There are many excellent guide books on trekking in Nepal including: Lonely Planet Trekking in the Nepal Himalaya (2016); ISBN 9781741792720 £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.

Project and Trek knowledge

Accommodation

You will stay in a hotel in Kathmandu on a twin or triple share basis and during the project you will stay in a hotel nearby. 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. are available to purchase from the reception area in the dining room. The bedrooms have mattresses, pillows and blankets but are not heated.

Hygiene and bathroom facilities

The hotels have en-suite facilities with flushing toilets and hot showers.

Depending on the project site, there may be Asian style squat toilets available. If there is no existing toilet, then a toilet tent will be made available. The shower and toilet facilities at the teahouses during the optional trek will vary. Most now have gas-powered hot water showers, payable locally (approx. 400-750 rupees). The quality of the shower can vary widely from what you are familiar with at home. Toilet facilities are basic and along the trek route there will be Western and Asian squat toilets which flush, although some toilets in the smaller villages may consist of large water vats with buckets are provided for flushing. 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 daypack 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. You will need to bring your own towel. A highly absorbent but lightweight and fast drying trek towel is recommended.

Difficulty

To make the most of your experience it is advised that you have a good basic level of fitness. The work can be physically demanding however you can do as much or as little as you are able, and you will never be asked to take part in activities you are not comfortable doing. There will be a variety of tasks to get involved with, so everyone's different skills and abilities have a place on this project.

The trek is classified as moderate to challenging for someone of a good general level of fitness. Each day involves several hours trekking, varying between 4 to 8 hours a day depending on the route each day. This will involve various types of terrain at high altitude and many inclines/downhill paths. **You will need to train in preparation for this.**

Weather

Temperatures will be dependent upon the weather, which is usually clear and sunny in the morning, with clouds, and possibly rain, coming in during the afternoon. You can expect days to be sunny and hot (between 15°C to 25°C) and nights to be colder (between -5°C to 5°C). November is one of the best times to trek in Nepal. It's important to be prepared for all weather conditions and temperatures by packing technical non-cotton layers and waterproofs.

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.

Food and drink

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 will be provided for you during the project in large containers so you can fill up your own water bottles. At other times and during the optional trek, 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 at the project and along the trail (during the optional trek) for free (or rarely for a very small charge). 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% 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 (Trek Only)

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.

During the optional trek, a flask of hot water is provided for you at breakfast and in the evenings for you to make hot drinks. There is a small selection of tea and instant coffee supplied but if you have any preferences (e.g. hot chocolate, decaff coffee, herbal tea etc.) you should bring your own supply.

Keeping hydrated

It is important to keep hydrated at the project site as well as on the optional trek. Electrolyte tablets (e.g. 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 (e.g. 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 (e.g. 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.

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

Meals are included throughout the trip as specified on the itinerary. While in Kathmandu you will eat at local restaurants and at your hotel.

During the project, lunch will be served at the project site. Tables, chairs, plates, mugs and cutlery are all provided. There will be plenty of food however menus while at the project may be repeated. Nepali food is similar to Indian with some Chinese influences. Rice, bread and dal (lentils) are the staple and vegetables, eggs, soup, noodles and some meat dishes form part of many meals. Vegetarians are well catered for.

During the trek breakfast, lunch and dinner are included. You will eat 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 will include a choice between: eggs, omelette, toast, pancakes and porridge. A typical lunch will include: dal bhat, pasta, noodles, vegetables, rice, soup, fried potato, momos. A typical dinner will include: soup, dal bhat, vegetables, pasta, noodles/rice, potato dishes.

Snacks

You may wish to bring a selection of snacks for energy, a pick-me-up or a little taste of home. Please bring snacks you have tried before (and enjoy!) so they are appetising to you. Items such as sweets, individually wrapped cake bars, protein bars and dried fruit are ideal but don't forget to bring savoury treats also such as salted nuts, Cheddar biscuits or salted crackers. Snacks are also available to buy - 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 discount and vouchers booklet. Please check the documents section of your online profile.

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 each item 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 (e.g. if your bag gets lost by the international airline) but it's better to bring your own gear you have used and are comfortable with.

Clothing – Project

The clothing you bring should allow for both the warmth of the days and the chill of the nights. During the day you may only need a t-shirt and lightweight trousers or shorts but you may need to add a long sleeved mid-layer or fleece or even waterproofs, in particular when you stop for lunch and in the afternoons when the weather begins to get cooler. These layers can then be added or removed as necessary. Please see the packing list below for more details.

Clothing – Trek

You are recommended to invest in 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% cotton. Good quality Gore-Tex waterproofs are important just in case there are showers. Most people trek in the same outfit for the duration of the trip and have 1 or 2 spares in their kit bag.

Footwear

You will need to bring protective footwear for work during the project. We recommend boots with reinforced toecaps, or strong leather hiking boots as a minimum. For the optional trek, you need to wear good quality hiking boots; walking trainers are unsuitable. It is important that your boots are waterproof (e.g. Gore-Tex or eVent), have good ankle support and a good quality sole (e.g. 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. Comfortable boots are one of the most difficult pieces of luggage to replace/hire at short notice.

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.

Gloves

You should take a pair of tough work gloves to protect your hands during building work. In addition a warm pair of gloves is recommended as the wind can be cool on some days or in the evenings.

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 international flight.

Sunglasses

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

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.

Luggage

You will need the following luggage items:

1. A small daypack

You will need a day pack to carry essentials with you during your days at the project site. It may not be practical to return to the hotel at lunch time so you should pack supplies for each day including waterproofs, fleece, sun hat, sunglasses, tough protective gloves, sun cream, water, tissues, wet wipes, nappy sacks for used toilet paper, hand sanitizer and a basic first aid kit.

Trek: Throughout the trek you must carry a daypack so please pack lightly. We recommend a 25-30 litre pack with a chest strap and hip belt. It is likely to weigh around 6-7kg when packed and with your water so please take this equivalent with you during your training trips so you are adequately prepared. You will need to carry essentials with you during the day as you will not have access to your main luggage as it will be carried by porters. Essentials include waterproofs, warm layers, sun hat, sunglasses, gloves, warm hat, sun cream, water, tissues/wet wipes, nappy sacks for used toilet paper, hand sanitizer, basic first aid kit, head torch, camera and spare batteries etc.

2. A suitcase or large rucksack

You will need a suitcase or large kit bag for your entire luggage.

Trek: you may be more comfortable packing all your items (including your empty trek kit bag) into a suitcase for the international flights. 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 (e.g. toiletries, travel clothes, books etc.).

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

4. A trek kit bag

You will need a trek kit bag which will be carried by porters between teahouses. This will contain your change of clothes, sleeping bag etc. It must be strong, light and waterproof. 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 60-70 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.

It is handy to bring various size plastic bags to put store items inside (such as your sleeping bag) in case of poor weather. 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.

Sleeping bag

You will be staying in teahouses, but it will still be very cold particularly at the higher altitudes. Sleeping bags are available for hire in Kathmandu for approximately \$5 per day but you are strongly recommended to bring your own. You will need a sleeping bag which has a **comfort rating** of at least -5°C .

Please note: a sleeping bag comfort rating is different to the extreme rating and an 'extreme rated -5°C ' sleeping bag may not be warm enough. The difference between the two is that the comfort rating is the temperature at which a person in good health, having eaten a hot meal and sleeping in a sheltered environment will feel comfortable. The extreme rating is the temperature at which a person in good health, having eaten and sleeping in a sheltered place will survive.

The European standard for sleeping bags measures four temperature ratings:

- *Upper Limit* — the temperature at which a standard man can sleep without excessive perspiration. It is established with the hood and zippers open and with the arms outside of the bag.
- *Comfort* — the temperature at which a standard woman can expect to sleep comfortably in a relaxed position.
- *Lower Limit* — the temperature at which a standard man can sleep for eight hours in a curled position without waking.
- *Extreme* — the minimum temperature at which a standard woman can remain for six hours without risk of death from hypothermia.

Examples of suitable sleeping bags include:

Ayacucho Solar 300 (£70); Vango Stratos 350 (£45); Women's Vango Nitestar 300W (£37.50); Mountain Hardwear Lamina 20 (£135); Mountain Equipment Women's Starlight III (-7°C comfort) £80.

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).

Responsible travel and culture

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.

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.

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

- Always endeavour to be polite and respectful. If you show respect, then it will be reciprocated.
- At accommodation, particularly teahouses keeping 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.

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.

Asthma

If you suffer from asthma, there are some important things to consider when preparing for this trek. Please visit your GP and read the website of Asthma UK for advice and support.

<http://www.asthma.org.uk/knowledge-bank-living-with-asthma-high-altitude>

First aid kit

You should have a small first aid kit of essential items which is for your own personal use. You must ensure you have access to your own first aid kit in your daypack. Suggested items to include: personal prescription medicine, Paracetamol, ibuprofen, plasters, blister plasters, insect repellent (containing 50% DEET), anti-histamine tablets, Imodium (Loperamide), rehydration sachets, lip balm with SPF, antiseptic cream, throat lozenges, muscle rub e.g. Deep Heat, etc.

Fitness training

You should start training as soon as you book your place on the challenge. 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.

The trek goes to a maximum of 3690m altitude and each day you can expect to be walking for around 4-8 hours at a moderate pace on variable gradient terrain. Regular breaks are taken, but long days walking are inevitable. There will still be some big hills to climb as well as the infamous 'Nepali flat', a little bit up and a little bit down. It is essential that you are fit enough to trek for at least 8 hours at a time for multiple days. You cannot be too fit for this challenge and you are required to train in preparation.

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. E.g. 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 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.

Zinc Oxide tape

This tape is really useful to prevent blisters. When you feel your boots start to rub against your feet, you should stop and remove any debris from your boots and check your feet. If a hot spot is developing (a red, sore area without broken skin) you can apply zinc oxide tape to the area and it will stop (or slow down) a blister developing. If you are too late to prevent the blister, you should clean the area and apply a Compeed blister plaster instead.

Insect Repellent

There may be some biting insects and mosquitoes in Kathmandu, so it is advised that you take a small bottle of repellent with you (or perhaps share two bottles between the group). DEET is the most effective repellent available. The Department of Health recommends 50% 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.

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.

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. 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. If you are joining the trek, 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.

Altitude

The altitude you experience on this trek is up to 3690m but you may notice some changes as your body adjusts, including a mild headache or slight breathlessness on the days trekking above 3000m. Your local guides are very experienced in spotting the signs of altitude sickness but it is important that you also research the effects so you can be aware of how your body is adjusting. A great source of information can be found at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/altitude-sickness> or <http://www.traveldoctor.co.uk/altitude.htm>

Please be honest about how you are feeling if you do suffer from any of these (or any other) symptoms so our local guides can ensure your safety and well-being.

Important info about altitude:

- Take it easy and don't overexert yourself when you first arrive at altitude.
- Eat a high calorie diet while at altitude.
- Stay well hydrated. You need to drink at least 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.
- Different people acclimatise at different rates. Keep aware of your own symptoms.
- If you begin to show symptoms of moderate 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.

Last updated January 2023

KIT LIST - POON HILL TREK AND COMMUNITY PROJECT

The kit you take on your trek can make the difference between being 'just a trek' or a 'memorable trek'.

Our kit lists are put together with feedback from our own experiences and that of participants who have taken part in our previous trips.

The items on this list do not take into account your personal preferences based on your previous trekking experiences, or individual requirements.

PLEASE NOTE: This list is just a guideline and is not exhaustive or take into account personal preferences.

For information about items on this list please refer to the trip dossier or contact The Different Travel Company on info@different-travel.com

ESSENTIAL DESIRABLE OPTIONAL

DOCUMENTS + FLIGHT ESSENTIALS	✓
Passport and Copy	
E-Tickets	
Visa approval and US\$30 cash	
Travel insurance	
ATM and credit card (s)	
Cash (£ Sterling)	
Pen for immigration forms	
Sunglasses (preferably polarized)	
Mobile phone + charger	
Camera + spare batteries	

LUGGAGE	✓
Suitcase/large holdall kitbag	
Daypack (25 – 30 litres)	
Hand Luggage (take note of dimensions from airline)	
Combination padlocks	

CLOTHING AND FOOTWEAR	✓
Trekking boots: either worn on flight or carried in hand luggage	
Sturdy boot or steel-toe capped boots for project	
Trainers/casual shoes for evenings	
Trek trousers (zip off trousers ideal)	
Non-cotton, technical t-shirts	
Non-cotton long sleeved top/shirt	
Socks and underwear	
Warm fleece layer	
Warm jacket (e.g. down or Primaloft)	
Waterproof jacket and trousers	
Old clothes for project	
Casual clothes for time with community and sightseeing	
Thermal base layer top and trousers	
Sun hat with brim	
Warm hat	
Flip-flops for showers	
Gloves (for trekking and also heavy duty for project)	
Scarf/pashmina for temples	
Neck cooling 'Cobber'/cooling towel and Buff	

HEALTH AND HYGIENE*	✓
Hygiene kit to include: toothbrush and toothpaste, antiperspirant deodorant, wet wipes, shampoo, conditioner, shower gel, nail brush and nail care kit	
Personal first aid kit to include: prescription medicine, insect repellent, ibuprofen, paracetamol, plasters, blister plasters (e.g. Compeed), Imodium, rehydration salts (Dioralyte), antiseptic cream (e.g. Savlon), Anti-histamine cream/tablets, lip balm with SPF protection, zinc oxide tape, nail scissors/tweezers, muscle rub (e.g. Deep Heat), throat lozenges, decongestant, Vaseline	
Hairbrush/comb	
Travel towel	
Lateral flow tests (min x2)	
Disposable masks	
Feminine care products	

OTHER KIT	✓
Sleeping bag (comfort -5°C)	
Sleeping bag liner (silk/thermal)	
Sun block (high SPF)	
Toilet bag: toilet paper, wipes, hand sanitiser, nappy sacks	
2 ltr water hydration system (e.g. Camelbak)	
1 ltr water bottle	
LED head torch + spare batteries	
Adaptor (European 2 round pin)	
Ear plugs	
Hiking poles – to be stowed in hold luggage for flight	
Energy food/snack bars	
Electrolyte (e.g. NUUN)	
Water purification tablets (e.g. Biox Aqua)	
Swimwear	
Travel pillow	
Portable power bank	
Spare glasses/contact lenses	
Video camera + charger	
MP3 player/ipod	
Books/pack of cards	