



BACKROADS OF ASIA

with

ENCOUNTER OVERLAND

LONDON to KATHMANDU
(or vice versa)
16 Weeks 12,500 miles
(20,000kms)

**EUROPE, TURKEY, SYRIA,
JORDAN, EGYPT, IRAN,
PAKISTAN, INDIA, NEPAL.**

ITINERARY GUIDELINE

LONDON-KATHMANDU

Week 1: Transit through Belgium & Germany, Austria & Vienna, Hungary & Budapest, Romania & Bucharest.

Week 2: Bulgaria & Varna on the Black Sea into Turkey, Istanbul & Gallipoli.

Week 3 & 4: Aegean & Mediterranean Turkey to Tarsus—beaches, fishing villages & history: Troy, Ephesus, Hieropolis, Thermessos, Aspendos, Side & Silifke.

Week 5: To Syria & Aleppo, the desert to Palmyra oasis, Damascus, Jerash & Amman in Jordan.

Week 6: Dead Sea, Wadi Musa & Petra, to Red Sea beaches at Aqaba.

Week 7: Ferry to Nuweiba in Egypt, across Sinai to Cairo. Pyramids & Sphinx, train to Aswan & felucca sailing boats down Nile to Kom Ombo. Luxor and Valley of the Kings & Queens.

Week 8: Train to Cairo, across Suez canal to St Katherine's Monastery, return to Nuweiba, Aqaba, Petra & Amman.

Week 9: Syria's coastal hills, cedars & olive groves, waterwheels of Hama, ancient cities & crusader castles. To Turkey's rugged Taurus Mountains.

Week 10: Cave cities of Cappadocia; Turkish wine & carpets. Open spaces of the Anatolian plateau to Mt Ararat & Iran

Week 11: Esfahan—city of gilded mosques, gold domes & Islam's highest artistry, desert pillars of King Darius' Persepolis. Across the Dasht-e-Lut Desert, nomads & camel caravanserai to Zahedan.

Week 12: Southern Pakistan & oasis city of Quetta. Baluchistan & frontier tribal lands to Peshawar, gateway to the Khyber Pass.

Weeks 13 & 14: **May–October:** Across the Indus river & north to Pakistan's jagged Karakoram Himalaya—to Gilgit & the valley of Swat, the Punjab plains into India & Delhi. **November–April:** Across the Indus



river to the Punjab & India to Delhi, Jaisalmer & the colours of Rajasthan, fabulous cities & palaces of the Maharajahs in Jodhpur & Udaipur.

Week 15: Palaces of Jaipur, the Taj Mahal, Fatehpur Sikri & Agra and the byways of rural India.

Week 16: The temples of Khajuraho to the Ganges & holy city of Varanasi, Himalayan foothills & wildlife of Chitwan National Park to the high Himalayas & Kathmandu.

ITINERARY GUIDELINE

KATHMANDU-LONDON

Week 1: Kathmandu to Himalayan foothills & wildlife of Chitwan National Park, Indian plains & the Ganges, holy city of Varanasi to the temples of Khajuraho.

Week 2: Byways of rural India. To Agra & the Taj Mahal, Fatehpur Sikri, palaces of Jaipur.

Weeks 3 & 4: **May–October:** Delhi, the Punjab & northern Pakistan, jagged mountains of Karakoram Himalaya—to Gilgit, the valley of Swat & Peshawar, gateway to the Khyber Pass. **November–April:** The colours of Rajasthan, fabulous cities & palaces of the

Maharajahs in Jodhpur & Udaipur, Jaisalmer & Thar Desert to Delhi and the Punjab, to Pakistan, Lahore & Peshawar.

Week 5: South through frontier tribal lands of Baluchistan to the oasis city of Quetta. Iran & Zahedan, across the Dasht-e-Lut Desert, open spaces, nomads & camel caravanserai to Persepolis.

Week 6: Desert pillars of King Darius' Persepolis, Esfahan—city of gilded mosques, gold domes & Islam's highest artistry, to Mt Ararat & Turkey.

Week 7: Wild Anatolian plateau. Cave cities of Cappadocia; Turkish wine & carpets.

Week 8: Rugged Taurus Mountains to the eastern Mediterranean. Syria's coastal hills, cedars & olive groves, waterwheels of Hama, ancient cities & crusader castles to Damascus.

Week 9: Jordan, Amman & Petra, the Gulf of Aqaba & ferry to Nuweiba in Egypt, across Sinai to the Suez canal & Cairo.

Week 10: Pyramids & Sphinx, train to Aswan & felucca sailing boats down Nile to Kom Ombo. Luxor and Valley of the Kings & Queens, train to Cairo into the Sinai to St. Katherine's Monastery.

Week 11: Nuweiba, ferry to Aqaba & Jordan, Red Sea beaches, Petra & Dead Sea, to Amman & Jerash.

Week 12: To Syria & Damascus, the desert to Palmyra oasis & Aleppo.

Week 13 & 14: Mediterranean & Aegean Turkey with its beaches, fishing villages & history: Silifke & Side, Thermessos, Hieropolis, Ephesus & Troy.

Week 15: Gallipoli & Istanbul, then Bulgaria & Varna on the Black Sea.

Week 16: Transit through Europe to Romania & Bucharest, Hungary & Budapest, Austria & Vienna, Germany & Belgium to London.



PLEASE NOTE

The above is intended as a guide only and to indicate a typical itinerary and its highlights. While our intention is to adhere to this, it should be understood that group interests and wishes together with the constraints of weather, road conditions and local restrictions can alter our exact route, its activities and timings.

DELAYS OR FORCED ALTERNATIVE ROUTES

The possibility of some delay en route is planned into this expedition and we usually arrive on time. But, by the very nature of the journey, it should be recognised that longer delays outside our control can still happen. Although these are uncommon in Asia, it is still suggested that you do not make any firm commitments within 8 days of the scheduled end date of The Backroads of Asia. If we are delayed en route, no additional payments to Encounter Overland will be asked of you.

Major forced changes to our expeditions are also unusual in Asia. When they do happen it is because of a border closure or civil insurrection making it impossible or imprudent to enter a particular country or

region. In the worst of cases this could involve an overflight of the affected area. If this were to happen, Encounter Overland would meet the first US\$300 per person of the fare. Should more than this be needed, a contribution from you of up to (but not exceeding) US\$300 would be required. Any further amount beyond this would again be met by Encounter Overland.

HIGHLIGHTS & ROUTE EUROPE & ASIA MINOR

Our crossing of Europe is a straight transit toward the Black Sea and Asia. From London to Belgium & Germany's Rhine Valley, skirting the Alps through Austria, across the Bakony hills to the Danube plains of Hungary, Romania & the Transylvanian Alps to Bulgaria. Depending on daylight travelling hours and weather conditions, there are full travelling days with overnight stops in Vienna, Budapest & Bucharest. Then, in Bulgaria, the Danube again to the historical port of Varna on the Black Sea.

To Turkey & the Bosphorus, where the streets of Istanbul are packed with diversion—bargain for carpets, gold, metalwork & hand tooled leather in the Grand Bazaar. The Topkapi palace & museum, tall minarets & grand mosques, the waterfront of the Golden Horn, and tastes for every appetite.

From Gallipoli we ferry across the Hellespoint to Asia Minor. Aegean shores of sun and eternity, fishing villages, wine and music. History springs from every turn in the warm hillsides: here are the ruins of Ephesus and Troy, Pamukkale's mineral springs and the Roman baths of Hieropolis; the tombs and temples of Thermessos hidden high in the pine hills, and Aspendos' perfect amphitheatre. This is the Mediterranean's 'Turquoise Coast' of hidden coves and beckoning sands—lazy days just to swim, relax and explore market towns and fishing villages like Kusadasi, Fethiye, Kas and Antalya. (Optional overnight cruise from Fethiye aboard Turkish caique to bays & inlets opposite Rhodes—approx US\$40).

THE LEVANT & EGYPT

East beyond Tarsus we cross into Syria and the Levant—the 'fertile crescent' & the Holy Land. Aleppo's souk is the largest & perhaps the oldest in Asia, and



Hama's great waterwheels speak of ancient skills far in advance of their time.

Out in the Syrian desert the time softened ruins of Queen Zenobia's city, Palmyra, echo the footfall of camel caravans that carried wealth and knowledge from Samarkand, India and farthest China. We enter Jordan—to Amman, the great Roman forum at



Jerash and the biblical shores of the Dead Sea. The dry ravines and narrow chasm walls of Wadi Musa reveal the red sandstone temples and treasure-houses of Petra where for centuries the Nabataean Arabs maintained an independent city-state, collecting and controlling the flow of wealth throughout the known world. The sands & beaches of Aqaba are washed by the warm, crystal-clear waters of the Red Sea. Leaving our truck behind in Jordan we cross by boat to Nuweiba—and our chartered transport to the Suez

Canal and Cairo, the Treasures of Tutankhamen, the Pyramids and inscrutable Sphinx.

A train journey along the banks of the Nile takes us far inland to Upper Egypt and Aswan where we board traditional Nile feluccas to sail slowly downstream toward Kom Ombo and the majestic Valley of the Kings and Queens. (Optional same day return flight from Aswan to Sun Temple & statues of Ramses & Nefertari at Abu Simbel near Sudan border—approx US\$115).

Return by train to Cairo. Drive across the Bedouin deserts of the Sinai to the Monastery of St Katherine. From this Land of the Pharaohs, where Asia merges with Africa and history with mythology, we return across the Sinai to Jordan and the crossroads of Damascus.

Style driven boulevards and plazas cannot hide the intriguing undertow in cob-

bled backstreets and pavement coffee houses, in whispered secrets over hookah pipes and along the cornucopian alleys of the covered bazaar. In the quiet hills of cedar and olive groves behind Syria's Mediterranean coast, the imposing crusader stronghold of Krak des Chevaliers seems oddly out of place. The cold stone lines of mediaeval Europe echo to another era in the Levant's long story. North into Turkey's Taurus Mountains, the high Anatolian plateau and the steppes of central Asia.

EASTERN TURKEY AND PERSIA

Early Christians fled to Cappadocia and built completely underground cities. Churches, tunnel-linked houses and villages are carved out of the ravines and cliffs of soft sandstone at Goreme. Life in Cappadocia has gone unchanged for centuries, time's only influence is slow erosion. Turkey's best wines and most colourful carpets are also here. The Anatolian scenery is magnificent & rugged, nomad descendants of Genghis Khan's Mongols and the cameleers of Silk Road caravans still pitch their black tents here, moving across central Asia without regard to frontiers. Mt Ararat marks our entry into Iran, to Esfahan's beautiful squares and blue tiled mosques that project the highest achievements of Islamic art and architecture. The pillars of Persepolis stand over the dust of King Darius' great Empire, the Dasht-e-Lut's dramatic landscape of arid rock and parched plains leads to crumbling caravanserais, to the tents and wandering camels of the Kashgai tribes.

PAKISTAN, INDIA & NEPAL

From the small border town of Zahedan we cross into Pakistan and the tribal desert lands of Baluchistan to the desert city of Quetta. Pathan villages of the Afghan hills to Peshawar, gateway to the Khyber Pass, and a frontier town of frenetic bazaars and dubious dealings. Of opium & carpets, precious stones, firearms and ammunition.

The bridge at Attock across the great Indus river heralds a suddenly different land. Ahead lie the great plains of the Indian sub-continent, green and fertile from the deluge of summer monsoons, prized by history's invaders—Aryans, Alexander's Greeks, Tartars, Afghans & Moghuls. Here is proud Rawalpindi so dear to the British Raj; the Red Fort and Shalimar

Gardens of Lahore—city that Kipling loved to hate, where the swirl of commerce and daily life is celebrated with wild abandon and Punjabi panache.

From May to October: during the hot weather, we head north into the Karakoram mountains—dramatic western teeth of the Himalaya. To the scenery and pastoral settings of the Swat valley, the Murree Hills and Gilgit on the upper Indus beneath the snows of Nanga Parbat (26,600ft/8,100m). **From November to April:** during the cool weather, we move south into India's Thar desert & the colours of Rajasthan. To Jaisalmer, hilltop 12th century town springing straight from the pages of 'Arabian Nights'. Jodhpur's cliff fortress—museum of artistic & martial perfections and excess; and Udaipur—graceful lake city of island palaces and gardens.

Dawn spills across the wide Jumna and Ganges rivers, exploding a day of new sounds and sights, of heady aromas and a spirit of India that invades the soul. Here is the formal ceremony and politics of Delhi, the marble shades of royal Agra and the Taj Mahal, the pastel palaces and incomprehensible wealth of Jaipur's Maharajahs.

There is evocative silence in the empty Moghul city of Fatehpur Sikri and enlightenment among the erotic carvings of the Karma Sutra at Khajuraho. There is calm conviction in the pilgrim's devout steps towards the holy waters of the goddess Ganges at Varanasi. India also lives along her backroads, in shadows of morning mist and shafts of dappled sunlight, the quiet footfall of a wayward elephant and the accepting smiles of village life. In Nepal's teak forested lowlands tiger and rhinoceros stalk the riverbanks of the Royal Chitwan National Park. (Optional day on elephant back through park, on foot



with guide, & dugout canoe along river—approx US\$30. Asian rhinoceros, deer, gaurial crocodile, waterfowl & raptors, rare tiger).

Our road ends against a backdrop of Himalayan giants that crowd the horizons to improbable heights, in the pagodas and palaces of Kathmandu—where everywhere the eye is instructed upward.

GROUP SIZE & STAFF

24 max including EO staff. Plus local guides Istanbul, Ephesus, Petra, St Katherine's monastery, Pyramids & Sphinx, Valley of Kings & Queens, Goreme, Peshawar, Jaipur, Agra, Khajuraho & Varanasi.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS

None, other than the extended camping/nomadic lifestyle. Living this way for 16 weeks requires flexibility

and an adaptable outlook, and cannot be recommended to most people over the ages of 40-45. The heat and humidity of India & Pakistan from May to September can be difficult.

INCLUDED IN EXPEDITION COST

All transport, food, camping equipment & supplies, hotels & guest houses in Egypt, local guides, camping fees, entrance fees & activities as detailed from published start-date of expedition until arrival in Kathmandu or London. There are no kitties or similar en route payment funds.

EXPEDITION COST DOES NOT COVER

Flights from/to Kathmandu/London, transfers to/from airport & airport taxes, vaccinations, visas, personal insurance, laundry, snacks, drinks, occasional lunches in major centres (minimal cost), personal clothing/equipment & items of a personal nature. Some individual entry fees to museums/sights (minimal cost), and any individual options as noted in Highlights and Route (cost as noted). Accommodation and meals in London/Kathmandu before/after the expedition.

EQUIPMENT SUPPLIED

Standard EO truck equipment including 2 person tents, campbeds, kitchen/dining tent, tables & stools, light, cooking equipment & utensils, mosquito nets, first aid kit etc.

WHAT YOU NEED TO BRING

A warm sleeping bag, a medium sized bag or backpack and a daypack. Personal clothing, strong footwear, water bottle, personal medicines & toiletries etc. No specialised clothing (apart from Iran) or equipment is necessary and you probably already have most of what is needed.



A complete suggested clothing list is included in our pre-departure information. Soft bags or frameless backpacks are the most suitable kinds of luggage to bring. Airlines flying in and out of Kathmandu have a 44lbs/20kg baggage limit.

TRANSPORT

EO expedition truck, Red Sea Ferry Aqaba—Nuweiba (4 hrs) & return, chartered bus & driver in Egypt with

train Cairo—Aswan & Luxor—Cairo (1 day each), felucca sailing boats on Nile from Aswan—Kom Ombo (1 day).

ACCOMMODATION

Budget hotels & guest houses in Egypt (approx 9 nights), Nile felucca (1 night). Otherwise camping throughout. Equipped campsites in most of Europe

and parts of coastal Turkey; then basic campground facilities in main centres only, usually extending to simple washing/showering & toilet arrangements. Otherwise open “bush” camping with no facilities other than standard EO truck equipment. (Your involvement is needed in camp setup, domestic & day to day routines etc).

MEALS, COOKING & FOOD

Camp cooked breakfasts & evening meals, picnic lunches. Expedition members are involved in daily fresh food shopping & cooking. (Fresh vegetables, fruit, meat where available, eggs, bread, cereals, cheese, preserves, supplemented by canned and dried goods in areas where no fresh supplies available). Restaurant/hotel meals in Egypt, and meals prepared by felucca crews on Nile. In larger cities where a day is spent in individual sightseeing or activities away from the truck, lunch

will sometimes be at your own expense. The cost of these occasional lunches is minimal.

PASSPORTS & VISAS

You will need a passport that is valid for not less than six months after the end of the expedition, and which contains not less than 18 blank pages. Your passport should also be free of any evidence of having visited Israel.

Visa requirements and costs vary according to your nationality, and even then are subject to sudden change. Some visas need to be obtained before departure, others en route. EO or your agent can advise you of all the up to date visa requirements applicable to you, and their costs.

We can also help you in obtaining any visas you may require before departure. Visas en route are applied for as a group with the assistance of your leader/driver.

INSURANCE & MEDICAL

Everyone must have individual personal travel insurance. Various policies are available, but they must include a minimum of £20,000 or US\$30,000 for medical, hospital and additional expenses including emergency repatriation. Several vaccinations are strongly recommended though not required by law for travel through Asia. Their up to date details are given in our pre-departure information. Malaria pills are supplied on the expedition.

PERSONAL SPENDING MONEY

To cover personal day to day expenditure en route—drinks, snacks, laundry, occasional lunches in major centres, optional activities, individual museum entry fees & some souvenirs. You should budget an



additional £25/\$40 per day that you spend in Kathmandu after or before the expedition to cover hotel, meals & incidentals. (Good buys can include leatherwork & ceramics, ornate copper & brasswork, silks, lacquerware, gems & jewellery, gold & silver,

miniature & religious paintings, carvings, bronzes, statues & inlaid woodwork. Many small 'treasures' need not cost much at all. Credit cards are accepted in most cities). Apart from this, and your en route visas, EO has no hidden expenses, funds or kitties to surprise your spending money in Asia.

ARRIVING AND LEAVING

There will be a pre-departure meeting at our London office or our Kathmandu hotel at 6.00 pm two days before expedition departure date. On departures from Kathmandu we recommend that you arrive at least 3 days before expedition departure date to allow yourself time to acclimatise and get over intercontinental flights. (It is safe to say that even a week in the Kathmandu valley is not wasted: city, temples & bazaars, restaurants & nightlife, old city of Bhaktapur, nature reserve, overnight at Nagarkot for sunrise/sunset Himalayan views). Even though serious delays en route are unlikely, we would prefer that you not have any firm commitments for up to 8 days after scheduled expedition completion date.

COMBINATIONS & CONNECTING PROJECTS

"The Backroads of Asia" expedition is also a combination of "Cradles of our Civilisation" (London—Cairo or v.v.) & "East of Suez" (Cairo—Kathmandu or v.v.). The "East of Suez" section can also be part of "The Great Overland Encounter" (London—

Nairobi—Kathmandu or v.v.). You may therefore be travelling with some group members who are leaving or joining the expedition in Cairo. Expeditions arriving in, or leaving Kathmandu, December—April combine well with Encounter's trekking & white water rafting programme in Nepal.

INTERESTING READING

Anatolian Tales (Yashar Kemal), Among the Believers (V.S. Naipaul), Meatless Days (Sara Suleri), A Princess Remembers (Gayatra Devi). A full list of recommended reading in history, guidebooks and fiction is given in our pre-departure information.

SPECIFIC DETAILS

On mailing lists for receiving letters from home, the best ways to organise & carry your spending money, clothing lists etc are all contained in our pre-departure information.



CLIMATE

Istanbul & coastal Turkey, Syria, Jordan & Egypt. Hot summers, cool winters.

MEDITERRANEAN													
CELSIUS	High	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
	Low	13	14	17	21	26	31	33	33	29	24	19	14
Daily Average		4	4	6	9	13	17	21	21	17	13	9	6
FAHRENHEIT	High	55	57	63	70	79	87	92	92	85	76	67	58
	Low	39	40	43	49	56	63	69	69	62	59	45	42
Daily Average													
Relative Humidity		62%	51%	52%	48%	45%	40%	31%	37%	42%	49%	58%	64%
Rainfall in mm		112	84	76	43	33	15	5	5	20	53	84	122

Central & eastern Turkey, western Iran. Warm summers, cold winters. Generally dry.

MOUNTAINS													
CELSIUS	High	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
	Low	4	6	11	17	23	26	30	31	26	21	14	6
Daily Average		−4	−3	−1	4	9	12	15	15	11	7	3	−2
FAHRENHEIT	High	39	42	51	63	73	78	86	87	78	69	57	43
	Low	24	26	31	40	49	53	59	59	52	44	37	29
Daily Average													
Relative Humidity		70%	67%	52%	40%	38%	34%	28%	25%	31%	37%	52%	71%
Rainfall in mm		33	31	33	33	48	25	13	10	18	23	31	48

Central & eastern Iran, Pakistan to Indus. Very hot, dry summers, cold winters.

DESERT													
CELSIUS	High	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
	Low	8	12	16	22	28	33	37	36	32	25	17	11
Daily Average		−4	−2	3	8	12	17	19	18	13	8	3	−2
FAHRENHEIT	High	47	53	61	72	83	92	98	96	90	77	63	52
	Low	24	29	37	46	54	62	67	64	56	46	37	29
Daily Average													
Relative Humidity		53%	40%	33%	25%	27%	18%	15%	15%	19%	24%	35%	45%
Rainfall in mm		15	10	25	15	5	0	0	0	0	3	15	20

Pakistan & India. Very hot, wet & humid summers, warm dry winters. Cooler all year in Himalayas

MONSOON													
CELSIUS	High	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
	Low	21	24	31	36	41	39	36	34	34	34	29	23
Daily Average		7	9	14	20	26	28	27	26	24	18	11	8
FAHRENHEIT	High	70	75	87	97	105	102	96	93	93	93	84	73
	Low	44	49	58	68	79	83	81	79	75	65	52	46
Daily Average													
Relative Humidity		41%	35%	23%	19%	20%	36%	59%	64%	51%	32%	31%	42%
Rainfall in mm		23	18	13	8	13	74	180	173	117	10	3	10

AGENT'S STAMP

OTHER COSTS/EXPENSES

Return flights

Visas

Vaccinations

Insurance

Personal spending money

TOTAL_____

