

TIBET

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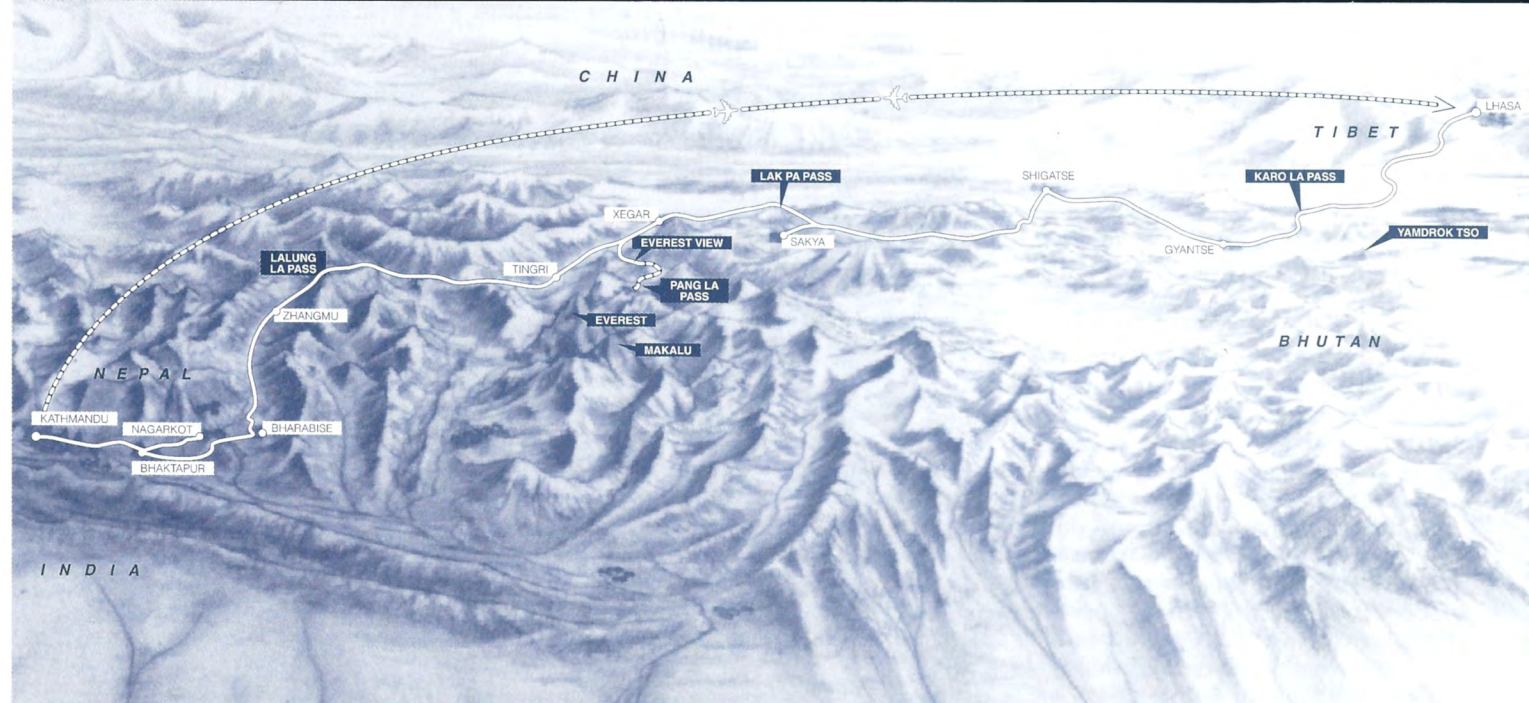
ENCOUNTER OVERLAND

THE LHASA HIGHROAD

From KATHMANDU
16 days 600 miles
(1,000kms) by land
NEPAL, TIBET

NEPAL & TIBET

From KATHMANDU
28 days 900 miles
(1,500kms) by land & river
NEPAL, TIBET



THE LHASA HIGHROAD

ITINERARY GUIDELINE FROM KATHMANDU

Day 1: In Kathmandu, preparation. Hotel/Guesthouse.

Day 2: Day bicycle tour of city & valley, Bodhnath Stupa & Swayambhunath hill temple (local guide).

Day 3: Early a.m. departure, drive Kathmandu to Bharabise (approx. 3 hrs). Trek/drive to Tatopani (approx. 6 hrs). Road frequently cut by landslides, walk around slide areas, drive intervening stretches in local trucks/taxis stranded by slides. Basic teahouse accommodation Tatopani.

Day 4: Drive or trek alongside Sun Kosi to Kodari (approx. 3 hrs). Drive or trek from Kodari to Zhangmu (Tibet), steep ascent through forest (approx. 3 hrs). Basic resthouse.

Day 5: Uphill from Zhangmu town to roadhead (approx. 1 hr). Meet transport, drive up jungled gorges of Sun Kosi & steep S. Himalayan rim onto open Tibetan plateau. Milarepa's Cave, Lalung La Pass (16,500ft/5,000m) to Tingri. (approx. 5 hrs incl stops). Basic Resthouse.

Day 6: Drive to Pang La Pass (17,000ft/5,200m)—stunning, wind-

swept views onto N. faces Everest. To Lhaze (approx. 8 hrs incl stops & detours). Basic Resthouse.

Day 7: Drive to isolated Sakya monastery (avoided plunder/destruction of cultural revolution, some of Tibet's finest artwork, statuary & Buddhist artifacts), and to Shigatse. (approx. 9 hrs incl detours & stops). Simple hotel/guesthouse.

Day 8: In Shigatse—Tibet's second city & seat of Panchen Lama: the great Tashilunpo monastery, fort & market (local guide). Simple hotel/guesthouse.

Day 9: Drive to Gyantse (approx. 3 hrs). In Gyantse (old city). Simple hotel/guesthouse.

Day 10: Drive over Karo La Pass (17,000ft/5,200m) to Turquoise Lake (Yamdrok Tso) and to Lhasa (approx. 10 hrs incl stops & breaks). Hotel.

Days 11–13: In Lhasa: the Potala, Summer Palace, Jokhiang Temple, Barkhor bazaar (local guide). Hotel Guesthouse.

Day 14: Fly Lhasa—Kathmandu (approx. 90 minutes). Hotel.

Day 15: Drive to Nagarkot village (approx. 90 mins). Sunset views of Himalayas—Kanchenjunga to Dhaulagiri. Hill lodge at Nagarkot.

Day 16: Sunrise at Nagarkot. Drive to ancient city of Bhaktapur (approx. 1 hr). Return to Kathmandu (approx. 45 mins). Afternoon arrival. End arrangements.

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.

N.B. This itinerary also operates in reverse direction.

HIGHLIGHTS & ROUTE

The streets of Kathmandu by bicycle, to Durbar Square in the old city (old Royal Palace, House of the Living Goddess, Kasthamandap—House of Wood from where the city gets its name. Legend maintains this meeting place, now a Hindu temple, was built from the wood of a single sal tree). Buddhist temple of Swayambhunath—on a hill to the west of the city. Inquisitive monkeys cavort on the long stairway to the temple, twin statues of peacocks, horses, garudas, fierce temple dogs & elephants guard the upper steps. It is believed that the Kathmandu valley was once a giant lake, and Swayambhunath its sacred island.

The giant Bodhnath Stupa—prayer wheels ring its wide base, strings of prayer flags flutter above the white dome, topped by the all seeing eyes of Buddha, and the third eye, watching over the valley. Across the Bagmati river, the squares of the old city of Pathan are a feast of temples, pagodas and courtyards. By chartered small bus through the hills to Dolalghat, and alongside the fast waters of the upper Sun Kosi river flowing from Tibet. Almost every year the upper 20 miles/30 kms of this road through Tatopani to the Tibetan border is cut by the monsoon swollen river. Deforestation in the hills has caused more water to reach the river faster, which can literally slice up to 100 metres into the mountain slopes, in turn causing massive landslips. Every year in the dry season Nepali engineers do an incredible job in rebuilding the road again. If we are lucky we may be able to drive the entire way to the border. It is more usual to have to hike several miles of this stretch over the worst areas of land slip, with porters carrying equipment & packs. In the intervening sections of undestroyed road, stranded trucks & taxis run a “shuttle” service.

Zhangmu village is just above the small Friendship bridge connecting Tibet with Nepal. It is a terraced jumble of Nepali shops & traders, wild looking Tibetan nomads & Han Chinese austerity. A luxury looking hotel was built towards a brave new future, it remains empty & echoing with a few

caretaker staff guarding the mausoleum against the intrusion of inquiring guests. We reach our transport (chartered Chinese bus) at the roadhead a few kilometres above Zhangmu to drive the climbing gorges towards the Tibetan plateau. Tropical greenery & hanging vegetation suddenly cedes to treeless horizons and gravel hills of the trans-Himalayan highland. There is a small monastery at Milarepa's cave where the revered 11th century Tibetan poet spent 6 years in hermit repentance & the path to enlightenment for invoking the dark demons over a family feud.

Across arid and breath sapping heights to Lalung La Pass (16,500ft/5,000m) & Tingri—a windswept huddle of low built houses looking across the plain to the snows of Everest. Xegar is now a Chinese settlement, starting point for expeditions to Everest's north flanks. On the small hill above town are the ruins of the once famous “Shining Crystal” monastery, victim along with so many in the plunder & destruction of Mao's ‘Cultural Revolution’. We detour south along a rock strewn track to the cold Yak pastures of Pang La (17,000ft/5,200m), and stunning close-up views onto Everest's snow & ice. Irvine



& Mallory started from here toward the summit in 1924 and never returned. It is believed they reached it, but only the gods of the mountain really know. The isolation of Sakya Monastery saved it from the plunder & destruction of the Red Guards in the 1950's. Practically every hamlet & settlement in this part of Tibet has the ghost & jagged ruins of a monastery in the hills above. Monastic tradition & control may well have perpetuated village feudalism, but it was a benign enough system that was constant, unchanging and familiar across generations and the centuries. Sakya was founded in

1073. Rows of tree trunk pillars support the main hall, its walls lined with Buddha statues, vases, vessels & books that represent the last surviving remains of some of the countries' finest artistic achievements. Shigatse is Tibet's second city and seat of the Panchen Lama. The magnificent Grand Monastery of Tashilunpo dominates this mediaeval town. Built in 1447 by the first Dalai Lama, it once had over 4,000 monks in attendance. It survives as one of the few active monasteries in the land, its original glory faded but its hopes strong. There is a pilgrim's circuit around the walls to the Thangka tower & fortress vantage point over the city. Tibetan carpet weaving still continues here, and there is an interesting market. Gyantse was once on the main commercial route to India, through Sikkim & Darjeeling, and was the centre for trade in wool. Its livelihood is now farming but the town retains its original character and an atmosphere of distant connections to the other world beyond the mountains.

The beautiful Khumbum stupa is decorated in gold & ornaments, a gilded parasol tops the four corners of all-seeing eyes. Yaks stare & prayer flags flutter at 17,000ft/5,200m in the cold Himalayan winds of Karo La Pass; silent empty rock shores gently embrace the turquoise & mirror still waters of Yamdrok Tso Lake. The final heights & lonely reaches of Kamba Pass lead to the pale greens & poplar trees of the Brahmaputra valley, and the road to Lhasa. The Potala Palace of the Dalai Lamas dominates the valley & city. Like the Taj Mahal or other pinnacles of mankind's achievements, no picture or representation adequately expresses the enormity & majesty of its structure when seen face to face. Above the zig-zag stairway approaches a warren of corridors lead to 1,000 monk's rooms, prayer halls, treasure rooms, dungeons & shrines. Outer walls are 5 metres thick, strengthened in construction by molten copper poured between the layers of stone. Only the resident monks know the full complexity of passages, steering pilgrims & visitors according to their whim & inclination. High on the rooftops the Dalai Lama's quarters remain empty.

City life below revolves around the Jokhang Temple and Barkhor Bazaar. Flagstones around the temple are worn smooth by pilgrims crawling prostrate round this holiest of Buddhist places. A press of peoples, a sea of faces, a colour of dress & nomad's plaincloth, and the murmuring voices of tantric chants fill the square. It is a personal & intense religious fervour, far removed from the rampant rhetoric & fanaticism of other creeds. In the alleys of the bazaar yak meat & rice beer provide sustenance to the circling pilgrims.

Carpets hang alongside stalls of crusted ornaments & daggers, silver & wooden eating bowls, coins and earrings, purses, tinder boxes & the family treasures of peoples from the furthest mountains of Asia. Religion still has its price. Norbulinka was the Dalai Lama's Summer Palace, kept just as he left it in 1959. The meeting and throne rooms are

decorated in historical murals & Thangka religious paintings. **(Fly Lhasa–Kathmandu).** To the hill village of Nagarkot on the rim of Kathmandu valley, a welcoming mountain lodge—and unbelievable sunset/sunrise views across 350 miles/550 kms of Himalayan peaks. From Kanchenjunga in the east, to the distant south faces of Everest, the towering Langtang & Ganesh Himal, to the Annapurnas & Dhaulagiri in the west. Bhaktapur is a beautifully preserved and restored city of the Malla dynasties who ruled the Kathmandu valley from the 15th to 18th centuries. No museum or dry archeological site, life continues throughout the city just as it has over the centuries of today's reality and ancient history.

GROUP SIZE & STAFF

20 max. Plus EO staff, local guides & drivers.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS

Ten days are spent at altitudes of 12–17,000ft/3,700–5,200m and some effects of altitude sickness and oxygen deprivation will be felt by everyone. Accommodation & facilities in rural Tibet are basic and spartan.

INCLUDED IN PROJECT COST

All transport, food—3 meals a day, accommodation & activities as detailed from Day 1 until final return to Kathmandu on afternoon/evening of Day 16. Local guides in Kathmandu on Day 2 & in Tibet, porters on trekking sections Tatopani to Zhangmu roadhead. Other than payment in Kathmandu for the Lhasa–Kathmandu flight (approx. US\$200). There are no further en route payments, funds or kitties.

PROJECT COST DOES NOT COVER

International flights between home & Kathmandu, transfers to/from Kathmandu airport on arrival in & final departure from Nepal, and airport taxes. Flight between Lhasa & Kathmandu (approx. US\$ 200 cash or Travellers Cheques payable in Kathmandu), vaccinations, visas, Tibet entry permit (obtained by EO in Kathmandu, approx. US\$80), personal insurance, malaria prophylaxis, laundry, snacks, drinks, personal clothing/equipment & items of a personal nature. Some individual entry fees to museums/sights (minimal cost). Evening meal & accommodation in Kathmandu on Day 16.

WHAT YOU NEED TO BRING

A warm sleeping bag (bedding supplied at some of our overnight stops is not suitable), mountain/cold weather jacket, hat, gloves, light waterproof jacket, day-pack, a medium sized



soft sided bag or backpack, strong boots, water bottle, personal clothing, medicines & toiletries. If you do not already have some of the more specialised equipment above, a suitable sleeping bag, cold weather jacket, water-bottle etc can be hired from local suppliers in Kathmandu at approx. US\$7–10 total per day. Total luggage weight must be kept to 44lbs/20 kgs in Tibet.

TRANSPORT

Bicycles on Day 2 in Kathmandu. Chartered small bus in Nepal, on foot around landslides Bharabise–Zhangmu with porters carrying luggage, various trucks/taxis on motorable sections. Chartered small bus in Tibet. Flight Lhasa–Kathmandu (or vice versa).

LHASA–KATHMANDU FLIGHT (OR VICE VERSA)

The cost of this flight is NOT included in the published project price. The payment of approx. US\$200 for the flight is made directly in Kathmandu and can only be made in US\$ cash or recognised travellers cheques. You should budget this amount into your travelling funds & personal spending money.

ACCOMMODATION

Travellers hotels in Kathmandu & Lhasa on shared basis (7 nights); mountain lodge at Nagarkot (1 night), otherwise very

basic & sparse dormitory type accommodation in teahouses, guesthouses & resthouses. Minimal washing/toilet facilities in rural areas. Accommodation on night 16 in Kathmandu is not included. Reservations at our Kathmandu hotel before Day 1 may be made through EO, or by you directly to hotel on arrival.

MEALS & FOOD

Restaurant & hotel restaurant meals Kathmandu, Nagarkot & Lhasa (Western, Nepali & Chinese/Tibetan cooking). Small local restaurants in main towns, roadside teahouses or picnic lunches en route. (Three meals a day). Food in rural Tibet ranges from pleasant to quite basic, with reliance on canned/dehydrated Chinese goods. A small staple of biscuits, jams, chocolate, cheese etc, along with cups & cutlery, are carried from Nepal as a supplement. Evening meal on Day 16 in Kathmandu is not included. Occasional lunches whilst sightseeing are taken at ones own expense.

PASSPORTS & VISAS

You will need a passport that is valid for not less than 6 months after the end of the project, and which contains not less than 4 blank pages. All nationalities require visas for Nepal which should preferably be obtained before you leave home. Their costs vary according to your nationality. EO or your agent can advise you of up to date visa details & their costs applicable to you. We can also help you in obtaining one. Chinese visas and entry permits for Tibet are obtained on a group basis in Kathmandu.

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.

No vaccinations are required for Nepal & Tibet but a few are strongly recommended. Their up to date details are given in our pre-departure information. You will also need to obtain a small supply of malaria tablets. The most effective types for this area, as recommended by the UK Tropical Disease authorities are also detailed in our pre-departure information.

PERSONAL SPENDING MONEY

On arrival in Kathmandu you will need to pay approx. US\$280 in cash or recognised travellers cheques for the Lhasa–Kathmandu flight (approx. \$200) & your Tibet Entry Permit

(approx. \$80). Credit cards cannot be accepted for payment. Otherwise, to cover personal day to day expenditure—drinks, snacks, occasional small souvenirs, individual museum entry fees etc. Good buys can include woodcarvings, Hindu deity bronzes & statues, Buddhist prayer wheels, religious items & thangka paintings, jewellery, Tibetan carpets made by refugee villages in Nepal. Small & interesting ‘treasures’ need not cost much at all. Credit cards accepted by most hotels & well-established merchants in Kathmandu only. Other than the above, EO has no hidden expenses, funds or kitties to surprise your spending money.

ARRIVING AT START OF THE PROJECT

There will be a pre-departure meeting at our Kathmandu hotel at 9.00am on the morning of Day 1. This meeting is also your latest arrival time as applications for Tibetan entry permits are made the following morning. If you are arriving earlier there is plenty to see & do in the Kathmandu valley: shopping & city bazaars; palaces, museums & outlying temples, amazing selection of cafes, restaurants & bars, nature reserve (45 mins bicycle). Simple bicycles may be hired at small cost from most Kathmandu hotels.

LEAVING AT END OF THE PROJECT

Arrangements end on arrival back at our Kathmandu hotel on the afternoon/early evening of Day 16. You could fly out late on this same evening but international flights are often overbooked, and late or un-reconfirmed check-ins will be denied boarding with little prospect of another flight out for several days. Unless you are on very tight timings you might prefer to arrange your homeward flights for the following day.

MODULES, CONNECTING & CONCURRENT PROJECTS

On the first and last departures of the year ‘The Lhasa High Road’ is also part of the ‘Nepal & Tibet’ project which includes white water rafting on the Trisuli river, a five day trek into the Annapurna Himalaya & the wildlife of Chitwan National Park in the lowlands. On these departures you may therefore be travelling with some group members who have already been in Nepal for two weeks. Maximum group size remains the same. April, September & October departures can combine well with EO’s trekking & white water rafting trips in Nepal.

INTERESTING READING

Trespassers on the Roof of the World (Peter Hopkirk), Seven Years in Tibet (Heinrich Harrer). A full list of recommended reading in history, guidebooks and fiction is given in our pre-departure information.

CLIMATE

Warm to cool days/cold nights in Tibet. Winds can be severe at any time. Hot humid days/warm nights Nepal. Most rain July in Tibet, Jun–Aug in Nepal.

Climate chart is for **Lhasa** at 12,000ft/3,700m. Colder at higher altitude. (e.g.—at 17,000ft/5,000m in mist or cloud cover, subtract 8°C/15°F from the readings below). Even Summer temperatures can drop to -8°C/16°F at night. As a guide for **Nepal**: Add 8°C/15°F to readings below, humid.

TIBET PLATEAU		JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
CELSIUS	High	7	9	12	16	19	24	23	22	21	17	13	9
	Daily Average	Low	-10	-7	-2	1	5	9	9	7	1	-5	-9
FAHRENHEIT	High	44	48	53	60	67	75	74	72	70	62	55	48
	Daily Average	Low	14	20	28	33	41	49	48	45	34	23	16
Relative Humidity		71%	71%	72%	67%	59%	64%	71%	72%	71%	64%	71%	71%
Rainfall in mm		0	13	8	5	25	64	122	89	66	13	3	0

OTHER COSTS/EXPENSES

Return international flights

Kathmandu–Lhasa flight
(payable at Kathmandu)

Visas & Permits
(Double entry visa required for Nepal)

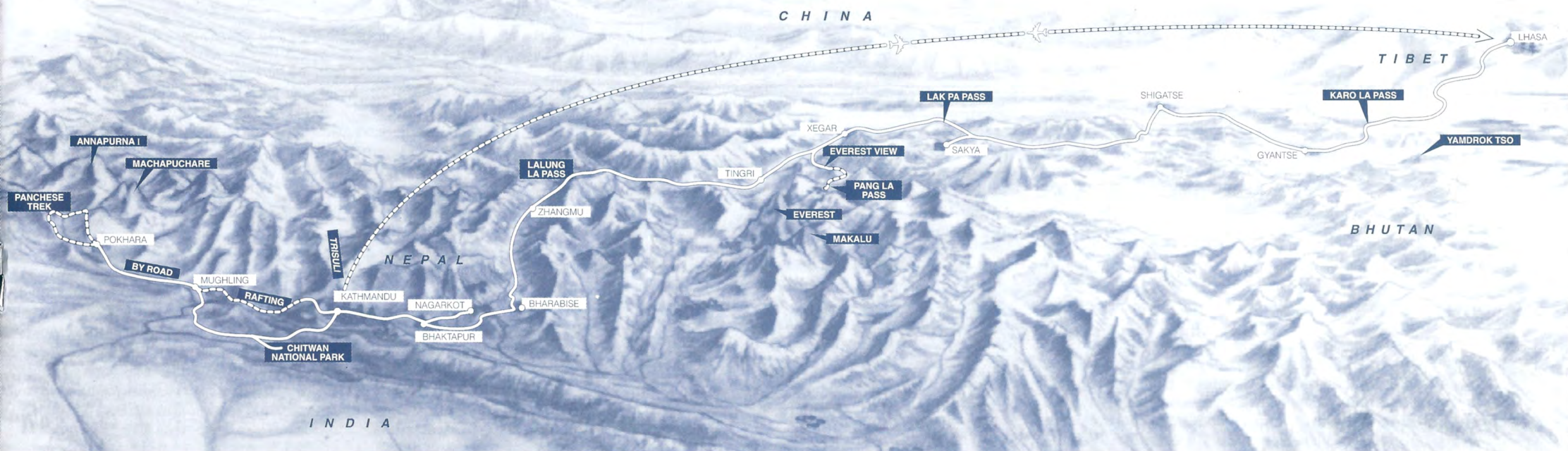
Vaccinations

Insurance

Personal spending money

TOTAL _____





NEPAL & TIBET

ITINERARY GUIDELINE FROM KATHMANDU

Day 1: Arrive Kathmandu, preparation day. Hotel/Guesthouse.
 Day 2: Bicycle tour of city & valley, Bodhnath Stupa & Swayambhunath hill temple (local guide).
 Day 3: Drive to Trisuli river (approx. 3 hrs). Start white-water rafting (approx. 3 hrs). Camp on river bank
 Days 4 & 5: On river (approx. 7 hrs rafting each day incl stops/breaks). Camp on river banks.
 Day 6: On river (2–3 hrs) to Mughling village. Drive to Pokhara (approx. 5 hrs). Camp near lake at Pokhara.
 Days 7–11: Panchese Trek. approx. 8 hrs walking per day incl stops and breaks. Highest altitude 8,000ft/2,460m. Return Pokhara evening of Day 11. Camping.
 Day 12: Drive Pokhara to Mughling, south to Terai lowlands and Chitwan National Park (approx. 9 hrs with stops). Permanent tented camp at Chitwan.
 Day 13: In Chitwan Nat. Park, on foot & elephant back through park. Dugout canoe along Rapti river (local guides).
 Day 14: Drive from Chitwan back into mountains and Kathmandu. Hotel/Guesthouse.
 Day 15: Drive Khatmandu to Bharabise (approx. 3 hrs). Trek/drive to Tatopani (approx. 6 hrs). Road frequently cut by landslides, walk around slide areas, drive intervening stretches in

local trucks/taxis stranded by slides. Basic teahouse accommodation Tatopani.

Day 16: Drive/trek alongside Sun Kosi to Kodari (approx. 3 hrs). Drive/trek from Kodari to Zhangmu in Tibet (approx. 3 hrs). Basic Resthouse.

Day 17: Uphill from Zhangmu town to roadhead (approx. 1 hr). Meet transport, drive up jungled gorges of Sun Kosi & steep S. Himalayan rim onto open Tibetan plateau. Milarepa's Cave, Lalung La Pass (16,500ft/5,000m) to Tingri. (approx. 5 hrs incl stops). Basic Resthouse.

Day 18: Drive to Pang La Pass (17,000ft/5,200m)—windswept views N. faces Everest. To Lhaze (approx. 8 hrs total). Basic Resthouse.

Day 19: Drive to isolated Sakya monastery, avoided plunder/destruction of cultural revolution, some of Tibet's finest artwork & Buddhist artifacts), and to Shigatse (approx. 9 hrs total). Simple Hotel/Resthouse.

Day 20: In Shigatse—Tibet's second city & seat of Panchen Lama: great Tashilunpo monastery, fort & market (local guide). Simple Hotel/Guesthouse.

Day 21: Drive to Gyantse (approx. 3 hrs). In Gyantse (old city). Simple hotel/guesthouse.

Day 22: Drive over Karo La Pass (17,000ft/5,200m) to Turquoise Lake (Yamdruk Tso) and to Lhasa (approx. 10 hrs total). Hotel.

Days 23–25: In Lhasa: the Potala, Summer Palace, Jokhang Temple, Barkhor bazaar (local guide). Hotel.

Day 26: Fly Lhasa—Kathmandu (approx. 90 minutes). Hotel/Guesthouse.

Day 27: Drive to Nagarkot village (approx. 90 mins). Sunset views of Himalayas—Kanchenjunga to Dhaulagiri. Hill lodge at Nagarkot.

Day 28: Sunrise at Nagarkot. Drive to ancient city of Bhaktapur (approx. 1 hr). Return to Kathmandu (approx. 45 mins). Afternoon arrival. End arrangements.

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.

HIGHLIGHTS & ROUTE

The streets of Kathmandu by bicycle, to Durbar Square in the old city (old Royal Palace, House of the Living Goddess, Kasthamandap—House of Wood from where the city gets its name. Legend maintains this meeting place, now a Hindu temple, was built from the wood of a single sal tree). Buddhist temple of Swayambhunath—on a hill to the west of the city. Inquisitive monkeys cavort on the long stairway to the temple, twin statues of peacocks, horses, garudas, fierce temple dogs & elephants guard the upper steps. It is believed that the Kathmandu valley was once a giant lake, and Swayambhunath its sacred island. The giant Bodhnath Stupa—prayer wheels ring its wide base, strings of prayer flags flutter above the white dome, topped by the all seeing eyes of Buddha, and the third eye, watching over the valley. Across

the Bagmati river, the squares of the old city of Pathan are a feast of temples, pagodas and courtyards.

TRISULI RIVER

The Trisuli rises in the Ganesh Himalaya to the north of Kathmandu. It winds along wide peaceful valleys dotted with farms and villages, and courses through bouldered canyons and deep gorges hung with jungle and fern. River travel gives a different perspective on valley life, and our 5-mile-an-hour glide through the warmth of the Trisuli's changing landscapes is well punctuated with rapids. They have a growl and a kick to them, wild rushes of churning water as the river decides that we, and it, have rested enough. The Trisuli has frequent white water and 4–5 major rapids. Our Avon rafts are built to withstand the heaviest of punishment while comfortably accommodating both ourselves and the supplies and equipment. An experienced helmsman pilots from the stern but paddle-power is needed from everyone to position the boat in the correct line for rapids. The 16-foot inflatables take a maximum of 8 people and usually operate in pairs to provide support, and spread the equipment load. Lifejackets are worn and safety helmets are also used through the major rapids. Days are leisurely. We are under way after breakfast as the sun warms and the morning mists clear. We pick our campsites towards late afternoon, with daylight still to relax in our always new surroundings.

ANNAPURNA-PANCHESE TREK

At the town of Mughling the Marsyandi river meets the Trisuli and they turn south to the plains. Meeting our transport again we drive along the Marsyandi valley to Pokhara, under the shadow of the Annapurna massif and the giant 'fish-tail' peak of Machapuchare, the holy mountain. Pokhara is Nepal's second city, but only started to grow when malaria was eradicated here 40 years ago. The first road arrived ten years later. Pokhara's beauty comes from its position on Lake Phewa, and the great mountains only a few foothill valleys away. On our trek we are accompanied by Sherpa guides from the Everest region, and Gurung porters from the Pokhara hills. Loads are apportioned by the Sirdar head Sherpa. Porters usually disdain the western backpack, placing everything into a wide conical basket slung on their backs from a headstrap. All we need to carry is a daypack with warm jacket, camera & daily needs. A typical day on the trail dawns with a hot mug of tea thrust into your tent. We start walking after breakfast while the porters break camp. Trails seldom keep to the same level, dropping 2,000ft/600 metres from ridge to valley floor before climbing back again on the other side. But there is no hurry, time to take your own pace, stopping at village tea houses or admiring the view. The porters pass us on the trail to set up camp at the end of our trekking day in the late afternoon. We climb upwards through green forests and Gurung villages. Rhododendron woods lead to haunting lichen covered passes

while all around is the panorama of 30 Himalayan peaks thrusting high into the crystal air. Dhaulagiri (26,800ft/8170m), Annapurna II (26,000ft/7900m), Manaslu (26,750ft/8160m) and Machapuchare (22,940ft/6990m) tower above all. Reaching a highest altitude ourselves of only 8,000ft/2,500m, this is nevertheless a wilderness trek that avoids the well travelled routes along the Annapurnas. Getting off the beaten path not only affords us the best views here but also brings us into close contact with an unchanged way of life in the mountain villages.

TERAI LOWLANDS

To the Royal Chitwan National Park in the low hills along the border with India. This wildlife reserve of tall shaded forests, hidden clearings, and high elephant grass sits astride the sandy & slow moving Rapti river. All the Terai lowlands were forest & jungles until the eradication of malaria in the 1950's. Tiger hunts of the aristocracy & the British Raj during the early part of the century frequently killed more of the animals in one day than the total now surviving in Nepal. With malaria gone, hill people moved in to cultivate the rich, flat soil—and wildlife came under further pressure. The 1,000 square kilometre Park & reserve was declared by the King in 1973 and the animal numbers are now growing strongly again. It is a beautiful haven for the great Asian rhinoceros, elephant, sloth bear, deer, gharial crocodile, langur monkeys, wild pig, several hundred bird species, and the elusive leopard & Bengal tiger. There are now estimated to be 80 tigers and some 400 rhino here. From our permanent tented camp at Sauraha we travel through the Park on elephant back, on foot with a local guide & in dug-out canoes along the banks of the Rapti river.

TIBET

By chartered small bus through the hills to Dolalghat, and alongside the fast waters of the upper Sun Kosi river flowing from Tibet. Almost every year the upper 20 miles/30 kms of this road through Tatopani to the Tibetan border is cut by the monsoon swollen river. Deforestation in the hills has caused more water to reach the river faster, which can literally slice up to 100 metres into the mountain slopes, in turn causing massive landslips. And every year in the dry season Nepali engineers do an incredible job in rebuilding the road again. If we are lucky we may be able to drive the entire way to the border. It is more usual to have to hike several miles of this stretch over the worst areas of land slip, with porters carry equipment & packs. In the intervening sections of undestroyed road, stranded trucks & taxis run a "shuttle" service. Zhangmu village is just above the small Friendship bridge connecting Tibet with Nepal. It is a terraced jumble of Nepali shops & traders, wild looking Tibetan nomads & Han Chinese austerity. A luxury looking hotel was built towards a brave new future, it remains empty & echoing with a few

caretaker staff guarding the mausoleum against the intrusion of inquiring guests. We reach our transport (chartered Chinese bus) at the roadhead a few kilometres above Zhangmu to drive the climbing gorges towards the Tibetan plateau. Tropical greenery & hanging vegetation suddenly cedes to treeless horizons and gravel hills of the trans-Himalayan highland. There is a small monastery at Milarepa's cave where the revered 11th century Tibetan poet spent years 6 years in hermit repentance & the path to enlightenment for invoking the dark demons over a family feud.

Across arid and breath sapping heights to Lalung La Pass (16,500ft/5,000m) & Tingri—a windswept huddle of low built houses looking across the plain to the snows of Everest. Xegar is now a Chinese settlement, starting point for expeditions to Everest's north flanks. On the small hill above town are the ruins of the once famous "Shining Crystal" monastery, victim along with so many in the plunder & destruction of Mao's 'Cultural Revolution'. We detour south along a rock strewn track to the cold Yak pastures of Pang La (17,000ft/5,200m), and stunning close-up views onto Everest's snow & ice. Irvine & Mallory started from here toward the summit in 1924 and never returned. It is believed they reached it, but only the gods of the mountain really know. The isolation of Sakya Monastery saved it from the plunder & destruction of the Red Guards in the 1950's. Practically every hamlet & settlement in this part of Tibet has the ghost & jagged ruins of a monastery in the hills above. Monastic tradition & control may well have perpetuated village feudalism, but it was a benign enough system that was constant, unchanging & familiar across generations & the centuries. Sakya was founded in 1073. Rows of tree trunk pillars support the main hall, its walls lined with Buddha statues, vases, vessels & books that represent the last surviving remains of some of the countries' finest artistic achievements.

Shigatse is Tibet's second city and seat of the Panchen Lama. The magnificent Grand Monastery of Tashilunpo dominates this mediaeval town. Built in 1447 by the first Dalai Lama, it once had over 4,000 monks in attendance. It survives as one of the few active monasteries in the land, its original glory faded but its hopes strong. There is a pilgrim's circuit around the walls to the Thangka tower & fortress vantage point over the city. Tibetan carpet weaving still continues here, and there is an interesting market. Gyantse was once on the main commercial route to India, through Sikkim & Darjeeling, and was the centre for trade in wool. Its livelihood is now farming but the town retains its original character and an atmosphere of distant connections to the other world beyond the mountains. The beautiful Khumbum stupa is decorated in gold & ornaments, a gilded parasol tops the four corners of all-seeing eyes. Yaks stare & prayer flags flutter at 17,000ft/5,200m in the cold Himalayan winds of Karo La Pass; silent empty rock shores gently embrace the turquoise & mirror still waters of Yamdrok

Tso Lake. The final heights & lonely reaches of Kamba Pass lead to the pale greens & poplar trees of the Brahmaputra valley, and the road to Lhasa. The Potala Palace of the Dalai Lamas dominates the valley & city. Like the Taj Mahal or other pinnacles of mankind's achievements, no picture or representation adequately expresses the enormity & majesty of its structure when seen to face. Above the zig-zag stairway approaches a warren of corridors lead to 1,000 monk's rooms, prayer halls, treasure rooms, dungeons & shrines. Outer walls are 5 metres thick, strengthened in construction by molten copper poured between the layers of stone. Only the resident monks know the full complexity of passages, steering pilgrims & visitors according to their whim & inclination. High on the rooftops the Dalai Lama's quarters remain empty. City life below revolves around the Jokhang Temple & Barkhor bazaar. Flagstones around the temple are worn smooth by pilgrims crawling prostrate round this holiest of Buddhist places. A press of peoples, a sea of faces, a colour of dress & nomad's plaincloth, and the murmuring voices of tantric chants fill the square. It is a personal & intense religious fervour, far removed from the rampant rhetoric & fanaticism of other creeds. In the alleys of the bazaar yak meat & rice beer provide sustenance to the circling pilgrims. Carpets hang alongside stalls of crusted ornaments & daggers, silver & wooden eating bowls, coins & earrings, purses, tinder boxes & the family treasures of peoples from the furthest mountains of Asia. Religion still has its price. Norbulinka was the Dalai Lama's Summer Palace, kept just as he left it in 1959. The meeting & throne rooms are decorated in historical murals & Thangka religious paintings. **(Fly Lhasa—Kathmandu)**. To the hill village of Nagarkot on the rim of Kathmandu valley, a welcoming mountain lodge—and unbelievable sunset/sunrise views across 350 miles/550 kms of Himalayan peaks. From Kanchenjunga in the east, to the distant south faces of Everest, the towering Langtang & Ganesh Himal, to the Annapurnas & Dhaulagiri in the west. Bhaktapur is a beautifully preserved and restored city of the Malla dynasties who ruled the Kathmandu valley from the 15th to 18th centuries. No museum or dry archeological site, life continues throughout the city just as it has over the centuries.

GROUP SIZE & STAFF

18 max in Nepal—rafting, trekking & Chitwan (Days 1—14); then 20 max in Tibet (Days 15—28). Plus EO staff, local guides & drivers.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS

This is an active project that requires a sound level of physical fitness and stamina. Ten days in Tibet are spent at altitudes of 12—17,000ft/3,700—5,200m & some effects of altitude sickness and oxygen deprivation will be felt by everyone. No previous experience of rafting is required, or even expected, but you must be a competent swimmer and unafraid of the

water. We cannot accept bookings from non-swimmers. Rafts are propelled by group paddle power, not by the helmsman with oars. On trek you need carry no more than a light day-pack, but the hiking consists of repeated ascents & descents between the valleys and ranges and is harsher than mountain walking in Europe/North America etc. Accommodation & facilities in rural Tibet are basic and spartan.

INCLUDED IN PROJECT COST

All transport, food—3 meals a day, accommodation & activities as detailed from Day 1 until final return to Kathmandu on afternoon/evening of Day 28. Local guides in Kathmandu on Day 2, in Chitwan & in Tibet. Safety equipment & gear bags on river, Porters for personal gear on trek. Park entry fees. Porters on trekking sections Tatopani to Zhangmu in Tibet. Other than payment in Kathmandu for your trekking & rafting permit (US\$10), combined Chinese visa/Tibetan entry permit (approx. US\$80) & Lhasa—Kathmandu flight (approx. US\$200) there are no further en route payments, funds or kitties.

PROJECT COST DOES NOT COVER

International flights between home & Kathmandu, transfers to/from Kathmandu airport on arrival in & final departure from Nepal, and airport taxes. Flight between Lhasa & Kathmandu (approx. US\$200 cash or Travellers Cheques payable in Kathmandu), vaccinations, visas; Trekking & Rafting permits, personal insurance, malaria prophylaxis, laundry, snacks, drinks, tips to porters, personal clothing/equipment & items of a personal nature. Some individual entry fees to museums/sights (minimal cost). Evening meal & accommodation in Kathmandu on Day 28.

EQUIPMENT SUPPLIED

Buoyancy aids, helmets, waterproof spray jackets & gear bags, bivouac tents, domestic & cooking equipment on river. 2 person tents, kitchen/dining tent, insulite sleeping mats, domestic & cooking equipment on trek. Field first aid kits.

WHAT YOU NEED TO BRING

A warm sleeping bag, mountain/cold weather jacket, hat, gloves, light waterproof jacket, day-pack, a medium sized soft sided bag or backpack, strong boots, water bottle, personal clothing, medicines & toiletries. If you do not already have some of the more specialised equipment above, a suitable sleeping bag, cold weather jacket, water-bottle etc can be hired from local suppliers in Kathmandu at approx. US\$7—10 total per day. Luggage weight must be kept to 44lbs/20 kgs in Tibet.

TRANSPORT

Bicycles on Day 2 in Kathmandu. Chartered small bus in Nepal, on foot around landslides Bharabise—Zhangmu with porters carrying luggage, various trucks/taxis on motorable sections. Chartered small bus in Tibet. Flight Lhasa—Kathmandu (or vice versa).

LHASA—KATHMANDU FLIGHT (OR VICE VERSA)

The cost of this flight is NOT included in the published project price. The payment of approx. US\$200 for the flight is made directly in Kathmandu and can only be made in US\$ cash or recognised travellers cheques. You should budget this amount into your travelling funds & personal spending money.

ACCOMMODATION

Guesthouse/hotels on shared basis in Kathmandu & Lhasa (8 nights), mountain lodge at Nagarkot (1 night), very basic & sparse dormitory type accommodation in teahouses, guesthouses & resthouses in Tibet (7 nights). Otherwise camping: 2 person bivouacs on river (3 nights); 2 person lightweight tents on trek (6 nights), 2 person tents at permanent tented camp in Chitwan (2 nights). Minimal washing/toilet facilities in rural Tibet. Accommodation on night 28 in Kathmandu is not included. Reservations at our Kathmandu hotel before Day 1 may be made through EO, with payment by you directly to hotel on arrival.

MEALS & FOOD

Restaurant & Guesthouse restaurant meals in Kathmandu, Nagarkot & Lhasa (Western, Nepali & Chinese/Tibetan cooking). Camp cooked breakfasts & dinners, picnic lunches on river. Your assistance is needed in cooking & meal preparation while on the river. (Local fresh vegetables, fruit, meat, eggs, cereals, bread, cheese, preserves, canned & dried goods). Similar on trek except all meals are prepared by Sherpas & Nepali cooks—an interesting mix of Western & Sherpa dishes. Western & Nepali dishes from cook at Chitwan permanent tented camp. Small local restaurants in main towns of Tibet, roadside teahouses or picnic lunches en route.

Food in rural Tibet ranges from pleasant to quite basic, with reliance on canned/dehydrated Chinese goods. A small staple of biscuits, jams, chocolate, cheese etc, along with cups & cutlery, are carried from Nepal as a supplement.

Evening meal on Day 28 in Kathmandu is not included. Occasional lunches whilst sightseeing are taken at ones own expense.

PASSPORTS & VISAS

You will need a passport that is valid for not less than 6 months after the end of the project, and which contains not less than 4 blank pages. All nationalities require visas for Nepal which should preferably be obtained before you leave home. Their costs vary according to your nationality. EO or your agent can advise you of up to date visa details & their costs applicable to you. We can also help you in obtaining one. Chinese visas and entry permits for Tibet are obtained on a group basis in Kathmandu.

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. No vaccinations are required for Nepal & Tibet but a few are strongly recommended. Their up to date details are given in our pre-departure information. You will also need to obtain a small supply of malaria tablets. The most effective types for this area, as recommended by the UK Tropical Disease authorities are also detailed in our pre-departure information.

PERSONAL SPENDING MONEY

On arrival in Kathmandu you will need to pay approx. US\$290 in cash or recognised travellers cheques for the Lhasa–Kathmandu flight (approx. \$200), your Chinese visa/Tibet Entry Permit (approx. \$80) & your rafting & trekking permit (\$10). Credit cards cannot be accepted for payment. Otherwise, to cover personal day to day expenditure—drinks, snacks, occasional small souvenirs, individual museum entry fees etc. Good buys can include woodcarvings, Hindu deity bronzes & statues, Buddhist prayer wheels, religious items & thannka paintings, jewellery, Tibetan carpets made by refugee villages in Nepal. Small & interesting ‘treasures’ need not cost much at all. Credit cards accepted by most hotels & well-established merchants in Kathmandu only. Other than the above, EO has no hidden expenses, funds or kitties to surprise your spending money.

ARRIVING AT START OF THE PROJECT

There will be a pre-departure meeting at our Kathmandu hotel at 6.00pm on the evening of Day 1. If you are arriving earlier there is still a lot to see & do in the Kathmandu valley: shopping & city bazaars; palaces, museums & outlying temples, amazing selection of cafes, restaurants & bars, nature reserve (45 mins bicycle). Simple bicycles may be hired at small cost from most Kathmandu hotels.

LEAVING AT END OF THE PROJECT

Arrangements end on arrival back at our Kathmandu hotel on the afternoon/early evening of Day 28. You could fly out late on this same evening but international flights are often overbooked, and late or un-reconfirmed check-ins will be denied boarding with little prospect of another flight out for several days. Unless you are on very tight timings you might prefer to arrange your homeward flights for the following day.

MODULES, CONNECTING & CONCURRENT PROJECTS

“Nepal & Tibet” is a combination of the “Nepal Dekho” (rafting, trekking & Chitwan) & “The Lhasa Highroad” (Kathmandu

to Lhasa & the flight back to Nepal). You may therefore be travelling with some group members who are leaving or joining the project on Day 14 in Kathmandu. Maximum group sizes remain the same.

OTHER COSTS/EXPENSES

Return international flights
Kathmandu–Lhasa flight
(payable at Kathmandu)
Visas & Permits
(Double entry visa required for Nepal)
Vaccinations
Insurance
Personal spending money
TOTAL.....

CLIMATE

Climate chart is for **Kathmandu**. Add approx. 5°C/10°F for temps on river & in Pokhara. Daytime temperatures on trek similar to Kathmandu, but much cooler in cloud cover and occasionally down to -10°C/14°F at night. Add approx. 7°C/15°F for equivalent temperatures in lowlands of Chitwan.

NEPAL		JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
CELSIUS	High	18	19	25	28	30	29	29	28	28	27	23	19
Daily Average	Low	2	4	7	12	16	19	20	20	19	13	7	3
FAHRENHEIT	High	65	67	77	83	86	85	84	83	83	80	74	67
Daily Average	Low	35	39	45	53	61	67	68	68	66	56	45	37
Relative Humidity		70%	68%	53%	54%	61%	72%	82%	84%	83%	81%	78%	73%
Rainfall in mm		15	41	23	58	122	246	373	345	155	38	8	3

Climate chart is for **Lhasa** at 12,000ft/3,700m. Colder at higher altitude. (e.g.—at 17,000ft/5,000m in mist or cloud cover, subtract 8°C/15°F from the readings below). Night temperatures can drop to -8°C/16°F.

TIBET PLATEAU		JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
CELSIUS	High	7	9	12	16	19	24	23	22	21	17	13	9
Daily Average	Low	-10	-7	-2	1	5	9	9	9	7	1	-5	-9
FAHRENHEIT	High	44	48	53	60	67	75	74	72	70	62	55	48
Daily Average	Low	14	20	28	33	41	49	49	48	45	34	23	16
Relative Humidity		71%	71%	72%	67%	59%	64%	71%	72%	71%	64%	71%	71%
Rainfall in mm		0	13	8	5	25	64	122	89	66	13	3	0

AGENT'S STAMP

INTERESTING READING

The Snow Leopard (Peter Matthiessen), Tiger for Breakfast (Michel Peissel), Trespassers on the Roof of the World (Peter Hopkirk). A full list of recommended reading in history, guide-books and fiction is given in our pre-departure information.