

# What You Need to Know before Travelling to Nepal



# Outline

- Travel in Nepal
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  - Drinking water
  - Accommodation
  - Getting around
  - Guides and porter
- Preparing for trekking trips
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  - Altitude sickness
  - Packing suggestions
  - Medicine suggestions
  - Money exchange and ATM

**Food**

# Nepalese traditional food



## Dal-bhat

(lentil soup, rice, spicy pickle, curried vegetable, curried meat, etc.)

# Common food ingredients

- Rice, wheat (bread and Tibetan bread), corn, millet, etc.
- Vegetables: potatoes, cauliflower, lentils, beans, cucumbers, tomatoes
- Meat: chicken, pork, buffalo, yak, sausages
- Other: eggs, cheese, yoghurt

# Typical restaurants food

- Nepali food
  - Dal-bhat
  - Momo (dumplings)
- Chinese-influenced food
  - Porridge
  - Chow mein and fried rice
  - Noodle soups (sometimes instant noodles used)
- Western-influenced food:
  - Omelette
  - Pancake
  - Sandwiches
  - Burgers
  - Pizzas
  - Pastas

# Food on trekking routes

- A decent selection of food is available at each teahouse and it usually tastes good
- Meat is available at most teahouses except on high altitude
  - Choose with caution as teahouses usually do not have fridges
- Food pricing:
  - Most entrees are priced at \$5 - \$8 USD
  - Tea is at \$1 - \$1.5 USD per cup
- No need to pack all food for the whole trip
- Guides serve their groups (no waiter at teahouses)

# Beverages on trekking routes

- A variety of tea
- Coffee (mostly instant coffee)
- Jard (home made beer made from rice)
- Coke / sprite



# Suggested snacks to pack

- Dried meat, dehydrated vegetables,
- Dried fruits and nuts
- Chocolate
- Energy bars

*Note: It is better to pack snacks with you before leaving your country as you may not be able to find what you need in Nepal*

# Drinking water

- Tap water is not drinkable
- Options
  - Purchase bottled water (\$1 - \$3.5 USD/1-litre bottle)
  - Purchase boiled hot water (\$2 - \$4 / litre)
  - Use water filter or chemical disinfection

*Suggestion: Pack one or two thermal bottles. Hot water and tea help keep your body warm and maintain energy level during trekking.*

# **Accommodation**

# Accommodation in Kathmandu

- Most hotels are located in Thamel
- A variety of room choices: from hostels and budget hotels to luxurious hotels
- Double room at comfortable level:
  - \$40 - \$100 per night
  - Includes good buffet breakfast

# Teahouse on trekking routes

- Double rooms, usually without washroom
- Rooms are not heated (could go near 0°C at high altitude)
  - A blanket is provided for each bed
  - A light weighted sleep bag (for 3-season or winter camping) is necessary
- No toiletry is provided
- During peak season teahouses could get really busy



*Note: One room costs only a few dollars. Teahouses make money from food only. So consume food to support the teahouses.*

# Facilities in teahouses

- Many teahouses are solar powered (limited time for room lighting)
- A dining room (also a place to socialize)
- Shared washroom
- Available with charges
  - Hot shower: \$2 - \$5 USD
  - Wifi: prices vary (a few \$ for a couple of hours, unavailable at some teahouses)
  - Battery charge: \$2 - \$5 USD per charge (electrical outlet: 230V, 50Mhz, plug type C, D, M, same as in most countries in Asia, Europe and Austrilia)

# Getting around (with current prices)

- Kathmandu airport to Thamel
  - by taxi: 30-60 minutes depending on traffic
- Kathmandu to Lukla : by plane only (30 minutes)
- Kathmandu to Pokhara
  - by plane (25 minutes)
  - by bus (5-6 hours)
- Kathmandu to Chitwan:
  - by plane (25 minutes)
  - by bus (5-6 hours)
- Kathmandu to Lumbini: by bus only (7-8 hours)
- Hire private transportation

# Guides and Porters

- Hire from agency (tour operators):
  - Trekking guides (licensed): Provide guide service throughout the trip, and arrange rescue and evacuation in case of emergency
  - Porters: carry clients' luggage, provide no guide service, and speak little English
  - Porter-guide: carry clients' luggage, provide limited guide service, and usually speak limited English and do not walk with clients if carrying heavy bags
- Hire from streets
  - Prices could be lower but usually with no insurance



# **Preparing for trekking trips**

# International Flights to Kathmandu

Airlines	Destinations
Air Arabia	Sharjah
Air China, Sichuan Airlines	Chengdu, Lhasa
Air India	Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata
Cathay Dragon	Hong Kong
China Eastern Airlines	Kunming, Shanghai-Pudong
China Southern Airlines	Guangzhou
Etihad Airways	Abu Dhabi
FlyDubai	Dubai
Jet Airways	Delhi, Mumbai
Korean Air	Seoul-Incheon
Malaysia Airlines, Malindo Air	Kuala Lumpur
Thai Airways	Bangkok-Suvarnabhumi

Over 30 international airlines from Asia and Middle East

# Tourist Visa

- Two ways to obtain tourist visa:
  - “On-arrival” visa at Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu
  - Getting visa from Nepalese Diplomatic Missions stationed abroad before your arrival
- More information on Tourist Visa on the Department of Immigration website:  
<http://www.nepalimmigration.gov.np/page/tourist-visa>

# Physical Requirement

- Trekking trips: from moderate to challenging
  - On average, walk 5- 6 hours per day at a speed of 2 – 3 km/hr
  - In some days it can be 8-10 hours of walking
  - It gets more challenging at higher altitude
- Hiking trips: from easy to moderate
- Sightseeing tour: easy
- ***It is important to start your trekking training at least 2 months before your trip on terrain with elevation.***
- ***If you can hike for 20km at a speed of 4-5km/hr, you will enjoy EBC trips.***

# Altitude Sickness

- Caused by acute exposure to low amounts of oxygen at high altitude. Physically fit individuals are not protected
- Usually develops at above 2,500 m
- Two risk factors
  - Ascend faster than 500 per day
  - Exercise vigorously
- Three forms
  - AMS
  - HAPE
  - HACE

# Three forms of altitude sickness

- AMS (Acute Mountain Sickness): mild altitude sickness  
Symptom: headache, nausea, dizziness and fatigue (similar to a bad hangover)
- HAPE: excess fluid in the lungs  
Symptom: breathlessness and maybe a fever
- HACE: fluid on the brain  
Symptom: confusion, clumsiness and stumbling  
drowsiness and loss of consciousness occur shortly before death

# Prevention of altitude sickness

- Go up slowly and give your body time to acclimatize to altitude
- Drink lots of water
- Take the drug Acetazolamide (Diamox)
  - Side effects: tingling fingers, dizziness, an increase amount of urine, changes in the sense of taste, etc.
- Nepali remedy: garlic soup (every teahouse on trekking routes serves garlic soup)
- Discuss with your guide if you start to have symptoms

# Treatment for AMS

- Descent immediately
  - may use a rescue helicopter in some situations)
- Rest for a day or two to give your body time to recover
- NEVER go up higher if you have AMS
  - painkillers may ease the headache but do NOT retreat the condition)



# Travel Insurance

- Travel insurance is very important for trekking trips
  - In case you need helicopter or other emergency services
- Tour operators require you to provide insurance contact
- Insurance policy needs to cover air ambulance cost
- Available at most insurance companies
  - It is quite affordable
  - Some employer-sponsored benefit plan provides travel insurance coverage
  - Some credit cards have some coverage as well

# **Packing Suggestions**

# Clothing

- Light weighted layers are recommended
- Base layer: synthetic or wool (cotton is not recommended)
- Outer layer: at least one jacket is windproof and waterproof or water resistant
- A warm hat or hoodie and bandana (keep warm and protect face and neck from sun exposure)

*Note: Teahouses usually provide space for hanging laundry but it takes a few days to dry up clothes*

# Footwear

- Hiking boots with ankle support and good traction (waterproof is better)
- Sandals with rugged bottom (wear in town and in showers)
- A few pairs of synthetic or wool socks (no cotton)
- Nice to have: a pair of comfortable casual shoes to wear after trekking

# Gear

- Daypack
- Good sunglasses, sunhat, and sunblock
- Thin and thick gloves, one pair each
- Hiking poles
- Sleep bag and liner
- Headlamp or torch
- Travel towel (microfiber preferred)

# **Medicine Suggestions**

# Vaccine recommendations

- Get travel vaccines
  - About two months before your travel date, go to see a travel doctor if your family doctor cannot prescribe them
- CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) recommended vaccines:
  - Hepatitis A
  - Hepatitis B
  - Typhoid
  - Malaria (when traveling in late spring / summer months to places with mosquitos)
  - Rabies (when doing outdoor activities and working with or around animals)
  - Traveller's diarrhea (e.g.:Dukoral)

# Medicines to Pack

- Your normal medication (if any)
- Painkiller (for headache caused by high altitude)
- Medication to prevent or control nausea and vomiting caused by high altitude
- Medication for cold, cough and sore throat



# Money Exchange and ATM

- There are many money exchange shops in Thamel
- US dollar is the most popular currency, although other currencies are accepted
  - Small bills get lower exchange rates
- Some shops in Thamel accept certain foreign currencies (eg: RMB)
- ATMs are available with a minimal withdrawal of USD 300

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