



PROJECT DOSSIER AND PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION

HOLY TIBET & KAILASH

KATHMANDU TO KATHMANDU

18 Days
1,200kms

Nepal, Tibet

Itinerary Guideline

- Day 1:** In Kathmandu, transfer to hotel and trip preparation.
- Day 2:** Half day sightseeing tour of city Pashupatinath & Bodhnath Stupa. Free afternoon to explore city.
- Day 3:** Drive from Kathmandu to Dhulikhel and spend the night at the Dhulikhel Lodge Resort.
- Day 4:** Through deep gorges and windy barren passes to Nyalam.
- Day 5:** Spend day acclimatising in Nyalam.
- Day 6:** Drive over two high passes from Nyalam to Saga.
- Day 7:** Drive from Saga to Paryang.
- Day 8:** Paryang to Maayum La.
- Day 9:** Maayum La to Darchen at the foot of Mt Kailash.
- Day 10:** Begin Mt Kailash circuit. Trek to Diripuri Monastery.
- Day 11:** Trek to Zutrulphuk Monastery.
- Day 12:** Trek to Darchen and the end of the kora. Drive to Lake Manasarovar.
- Day 13:** Free day in Manasarovar, visit to lakeside monastery.



- Day 14:** Manasarovar to Paryang
- Day 15:** Paryang to Saga
- Day 16:** Saga to Nyalam
- Day 17:** Return to Kathmandu.
- Day 18:** Arrangements end after breakfast.

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

Our journey begins in Kathmandu, Nepal's capital with a visit to the temple of Pashupatinath and the giant Bodhnath Stupa. Here 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 watches over the Kathmandu valley. On the third day we leave the valley. The road climbs steadily as we drive out of Nepal into Western Tibet, the most inaccessible part of the Tibetan Autonomous Region. The scenery, with its vast sweeping plains, sand dunes and the Himalayan range in the distance is majestic. We drive through lush river valleys scattered with Tibetan villages, through luxuriant gorges and ravines, over flood plains, river crossings and windy, barren and steep passes en route to Mount Kailash. Our first stop is Nyalam, a picturesque spot in which to acclimatise. Here the road drops like a stone off the Tibetan plateau into a mossy gorge of waterfalls and cascades. From Nyalam the road climbs over two passes to the start of a vast plain. To the south are views of the peak of Shisha Pangma. The road is bad but the stunning views easily compensate. We have three overnight stops and have to negotiate several river crossings before reaching the foot of Mt Kailash. A majestic snow capped mountain at 6714m in the shape of a handle of a milestone, it has sheer walls and is known as the naval of the world, from which flow the four great rivers of the Indian subcontinent that give life to everything they pass through. Hindus believe it to be the throne of Shiva, while Buddhist cosmography identifies Kailash as the mighty Mount Sumeru, central peak of the world. The circuit of Mt Kailash is one of the most important pilgrimages in Asia and we will see groups of often shivering pilgrims that have travelled from far and wide. The kora is a three day circumambulation of the holy mountain, crossing the 5630m Drolma-le en route. We partake in this holy trail in the traditional clockwise direction. Leaving the town of Darchen behind the trail climbs quickly up affording stunning views of the Tibetan plateau and distant Indian mountain peaks and the first view of the mountain's southern 'sapphire face. Then into the Lha Chu valley eventually reaching the Chuku Monastery and then the Dira-puk Monastery from where there are superb views of the impressive north face of Kailash. The second day takes you to the Zutul-puk Monastery and the third back to Darchen. All along the route are various sites of religious significance and symbolic gestures from pilgrims – rock-carved syllables or painted Buddha images, prayer flags, burial sites, four major prostration points and even footprints of important pilgrims. After completing the circuit of Mt Kailash, we drive on to Lake Manasarovar, one the country's most sacred and beautiful lakes, an ocean of

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turquoise bordered by snowy peaks. Hindus believe it to be the manifestation of the mind of the god Brahma. The Hindu classical poet Kalidasa once wrote that the waters of Manasarovar are 'like pearls' and so that to drink them erases the 'sins of a hundred lifetimes.' Accordingly, pilgrims will submerge themselves in its icy waters and circumambulate its circumference. The scenery here is breathtaking. On top of a craggy hilltop overlooking the sapphire blues of the lake is the Chiu Monastery. From here you can see the huge peak on the southern horizon of Mt Gurla Mandata, near the border with Nepal. It is Nepal to which we must return and we retrace our scenic route back to Kathmandu.

GROUP SIZE

5-10, including leader.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS

Twelve days are spent at altitudes of 3,700-5,200m and some effects of altitude sickness and oxygen deprivation will be felt by everyone. Previous experience of longer distance hiking is highly recommended. 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 the evening of Day 1 until after breakfast on the morning of Day 18 in Kathmandu. Local guides in Kathmandu on Day 2. In Tibet, porters, guide, cook helpers & Yaks on the trek section. 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. Vaccinations, visas, Tibet visa/entry permit (obtained by Encounter 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).

WHAT YOU NEED TO BRING

A warm sleeping bag (bedding supplied at some of our overnight stops is not suitable), a four seasons sleeping bag is essential if taking the trek, 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 20 kgs in Tibet.

TRANSPORT

Mini bus, truck, landcruiser and on foot.

ACCOMMODATION

Camping throughout Tibet, with basic guesthouses and hotel in Nepal (4 nights in Kathmandu and 1 night at lodge in Dhulikhel).

Reservations at our Kathmandu hotel before Day 1 may be made through Encounter, or by you directly to hotel on arrival.

MEALS & FOOD

Camp cooked breakfasts, evening meals and picnic lunches (vegetarian only). Restaurant & hotel restaurant meals Kathmandu and at Dhulikhel included. On Day 1 only dinner and on Day 18 only breakfast included.

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. Encounter 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

You must have personal Travel Insurance to cover Adventure Travel and it must cover all the aspects described on p60 of the brochure. Please bring a copy of your policy with you to the pre-departure meeting. If your policy does not cover this minimum level then Encounter will not accept responsibility for the consequences.

MEDICAL & VACCINATIONS

All vaccination requirements and medical recommendations are detailed in the pre-departure information pack at the time of booking.

PERSONAL SPENDING MONEY

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On arrival in Kathmandu you will need to pay approx. US\$80 for your Tibet Visa/Entry Permit. 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 & thankha 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, Encounter 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 18.00 hrs on the evening 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 after breakfast in the Kathmandu hotel on the morning of Day 18. You could fly out later on this same day 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.

COMBINATIONS & CONNECTING PROJECTS

September & October departures can combine well with Encounter's trekking & white water rafting projects 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.

OTHER COSTS/EXPENSES

Local Payment

Return International Flights

Lhasa - Kathmandu flight
(payable in Kathmandu)

Visas & Permits
(Double entry visa required for Nepal)
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Vaccinations.....

Insurance.....

Personal spending money

Total _____

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