



# PROJECT DOSSIER

## *MOUNTAIN AND WILDLIFE*

### KATHMANDU TO KATHMANDU

14 days  
100kms on trek  
350kms by road

#### Itinerary Guideline

##### *FROM KATHMANDU*

- Day 1.** In Kathmandu for the morning bicycle Tour to Swayambhunath Temple & Durbar Square. After lunch we fly to Pokhara to overnight at a lakeside lodge.
- Day 2.** Trekking (Days 2 to 9, approx. 8 hrs walking per day incl. stops and breaks) Through Mardi Khola valley, padi fields & villages, ascend to Dhampus 1,800m. Camping.
- Day 3.** Ridges & high valleys, to upland birch & rhododendron forests. Views of Machhapuchare 6,999m & the Annapurna peaks. Camping.
- Days 4 & 5.** Hard climbs beyond & above tree-line to highest point at aprox. 4,600m on southern flank of Annapurna Massif. Camping.
- Day 6.** Steep descents; terraced hillsides to Modi Khola Valley, narrow cable bridges above river, easier walking along valley floor. Camping.
- Day 7.** Descend to Modi Khola Valley.
- Day 8.** Short day to Mardipul. Rest. Modi Khola Valley & villages.
- Days 9 & 10.** Descend down valley to Pokhara & lake. Overnight at lodge.
- Day 11.** Drive to the remote town of Bandipur. Lodge.
- Days 12 & 13.** To Chitwan Nat. Park. In park game viewing on elephant-back, guided walks and canoe safari. Safari Lodge.
- Day 14.** We return to Kathmandu – late afternoon arrival.



#### **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 the constraints of weather, road, river & trail conditions may sometimes alter our exact timings.

## Highlights & Route

### KATHMANDU

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 Patan are a feast of temples, pagodas and courtyards.

### POKHARA

We drive out of Kathmandu valley and along the Trisuli and Marsyandi Valleys to Pokhara, under the shadow of the Annapurna massif and the giant "fish-tail" peak of Machapuchare, the holy mountain. Pokhara 900m 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.

### THE TREK

Much of the Himalayan chain distances itself from any easy access, but in western Nepal the Seti Khola valley pushes deep into the encircling high Annapurnas. With most of the peaks here in the 7900m range, our maximum attained height of 4600m defines this as a "mid-altitude" trek. The walking is not easy but the pace is relaxed. 13 kms a day is an average distance. We are accompanied by Sherpa guides, and porters. 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 and 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 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. Our first day's walk meanders through small villages and padi fields before we climb upward on twisting mule trails to the village of Dhampus at 1800m.

In the morning we awake to stunning views of Machhapuchare 6999m and the great Annapurnas. 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 8167m, Annapurna II 7937m and Machhapuchare 6999m tower above all. Following a high ridge, the forest thins at 3,030m, and the glistening face of Annapurna South looms above our highest camp. Here we are well away from the main trails. 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 high mountain villages.

On the sixth day we descend through terraced hillsides to the beautiful Modi Khola Valley a warmer altitude and a welcome bathe in the river. It is easy walking along the valley floor, criss-crossing the river on narrow dipping cable bridges. We reach Mardipul and time to relax, ease the muscles, & explore the quiet villages of this beautiful valley. Return to Pokhara for a last night under the great shadows of now familiar peaks.

### THE TERAI LOWLANDS

We drive to the remote town of Bandipur nestled in the foothills with wonderful Himalayan views. 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 a wildlife sanctuary 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 hotel base 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.

We return to Kathmandu by road arriving late afternoon.

#### **NB**

The ground arrangements for this project are operated by Himalayan Encounters who are our appointed Nepal trekking and whitewater rafting operator. They are one of the most experienced local operators in Nepal and their services are provided to the highest standard.

#### **GROUP SIZE**

18 max. Plus: Trek Staff, local guides in Kathmandu & Chitwan National Park. The trek crew are Nepali sirdhar, sherpas, cooks & porters & the trek leader).

#### **PHYSICAL DEMANDS**

This is an active project that demands a sound level of physical fitness & stamina. No previous experience of trekking is required, or even expected. Highest altitude on trek is 4,600m and the effects of altitude and oxygen deprivation will be felt. Porters carry our equipment & supplies as well as personal gear, so all you need to carry is a medium sized 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. Within reason you are able to set your own daily pace on the trek. Turning back mid-way through the trek is not feasible.

#### **THE LOCAL PAYMENT** (as in the brochure)

This is the payment made to the Himalayan Encounters at the point of departure. This payment must be made paid in US\$ dollars, either in cash notes or recognised Travellers Cheques. This payment completes the total inclusive price of the project. This amount will be utilised by the organisation to cover a proportion but not all of the 'on the ground' running costs of this project. There are no hidden extra payments.

#### **INCLUDED IN PROJECT COST**

All transport, food-3 meals a day, accommodation & activities as detailed from Day 1 until afternoon of Day 14. Services of staff in Kathmandu, on trek & Chitwan. Local guides in Kathmandu on Day 1 & in Chitwan. Porters for personal gear on trek. Park entry fees. There are no kitties or en route payments.

#### **PROJECT COST DOES NOT COVER**

Local Payment. International flights between home & Kathmandu, transfers to/from Kathmandu airport and airport taxes. Vaccinations, visas, 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). Meals in Kathmandu on the evening of Day 14.

#### **EQUIPMENT SUPPLIED**

Lightweight 2 person tents, kitchen/dining tent, insulated sleeping mats, domestic & cooking equipment on trek. Field first aid kits on trek, permanent tented camp & camp kitchen in Chitwan,

#### **WHAT YOU NEED TO BRING**

A warm 4 seasons sleeping bag, cold weather clothing for trek, medium/large size day-pack, a soft sided bag or backpack, strong boots, water bottle, personal clothing, medicines & toiletries. If you do not already have some of the more specialised clothing or equipment above, a suitable sleeping bag, cold weather jacket, water-bottle, day-pack etc. can be hired from local suppliers in Kathmandu or Pokhara at approx. US\$7-10 total per day. Flights in and out of Nepal have a 20kg luggage weight limit.

#### **TRANSPORT**

Bicycles on Day 1 and Day 14 in Kathmandu; Domestic flight to Pokhara; by foot on trek; chartered minibus to Chitwan & back to Kathmandu; elephant back & dugout canoe in Chitwan.

#### **ACCOMMODATION**

Guesthouse/hotel in Kathmandu on shared basis (1 night), Guesthouse in Pokhara (2 nights) Basic hotel in Bandipur (1 night) Otherwise camping: 2 person lightweight tents on trek (7 nights), Safari Lodge at Chitwan (2 nights). No shower facilities but frequent opportunity for river or stream bathing on the trek section. Reservations in Kathmandu hotels before Day 1 may be made

through Encounter, with payment by you directly to hotel on arrival.

### **MEALS, COOKING & FOOD**

All meals from breakfast on Day 1 to lunch on Day 14. Restaurant, Guesthouse/restaurant meals in Kathmandu, Pokhara & Bandipur. Camp cooked breakfasts, dinners & picnic lunches on the trek are all prepared by Sherpas & Nepali cooks - an interesting mix of Western & Sherpa dishes. Western & Nepali dishes from cook at Chitwan Safari Lodge. Vegetarians should have no difficulty in maintaining a very adequate diet, but please inform Encounter in advance.

### **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 **2 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.

### **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 responsibly 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**

To cover personal day to day expenditure throughout-drinks, snacks, occasional small souvenirs, individual museum entry fees etc.-US\$300 would be quite adequate. (Other than tea or sometimes a cold drink at village tea houses there is little need for money during the trek. US\$100 would be quite adequate for day to day expenditure-including a customary, though not obligatory, small tip to the porters). You should budget an additional US\$40 per day that you spend in Kathmandu before & after the project to cover hotel, meals & incidentals. Good buys can include woodcarvings, Hindu deity bronzes & statues, Buddhist prayer wheels, religious items & thanhka 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 office at 18.00 hrs on the evening before 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, interesting 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 the afternoon of Day 14 and any flight out of Kathmandu could be arranged for that evening. 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.

### **COMBINATIONS & CONNECTING PROJECTS**

Days 1-9 of "Mountain & Wildlife" are also days 1-9 of the "Annapurna 10" trek. Therefore you may be travelling with some group members who are not continuing to Bandipur & Chitwan. Maximum group size at all times remains 18.

### **INTERESTING READING**

Annapurna (Maurice Herzog), The Mountain is Young (Han Suyin), The Face of the Tiger (Charles McDougal). A full list of recommended reading in history, guidebooks and fiction is given in our pre-departure information.

### **CLIMATE**

October: Hot days/warm nights/occasional rain in late September.

November-February:

Warm days/cool nights/rainfall rare.

March-April:

Hot days/warm nights/little or no rainfall

**OTHER COSTS/EXPENSES**

Return International flights.....

Local Payment.....

Visas.....

Vaccinations.....

Insurance.....

Personal spending money.....

**Total** \_\_\_\_\_

**The information in this dossier has been compiled with care and is provided in good faith. However, it is subject to change, and does not form part of the contract between the client and Encounter Overland Ltd.**