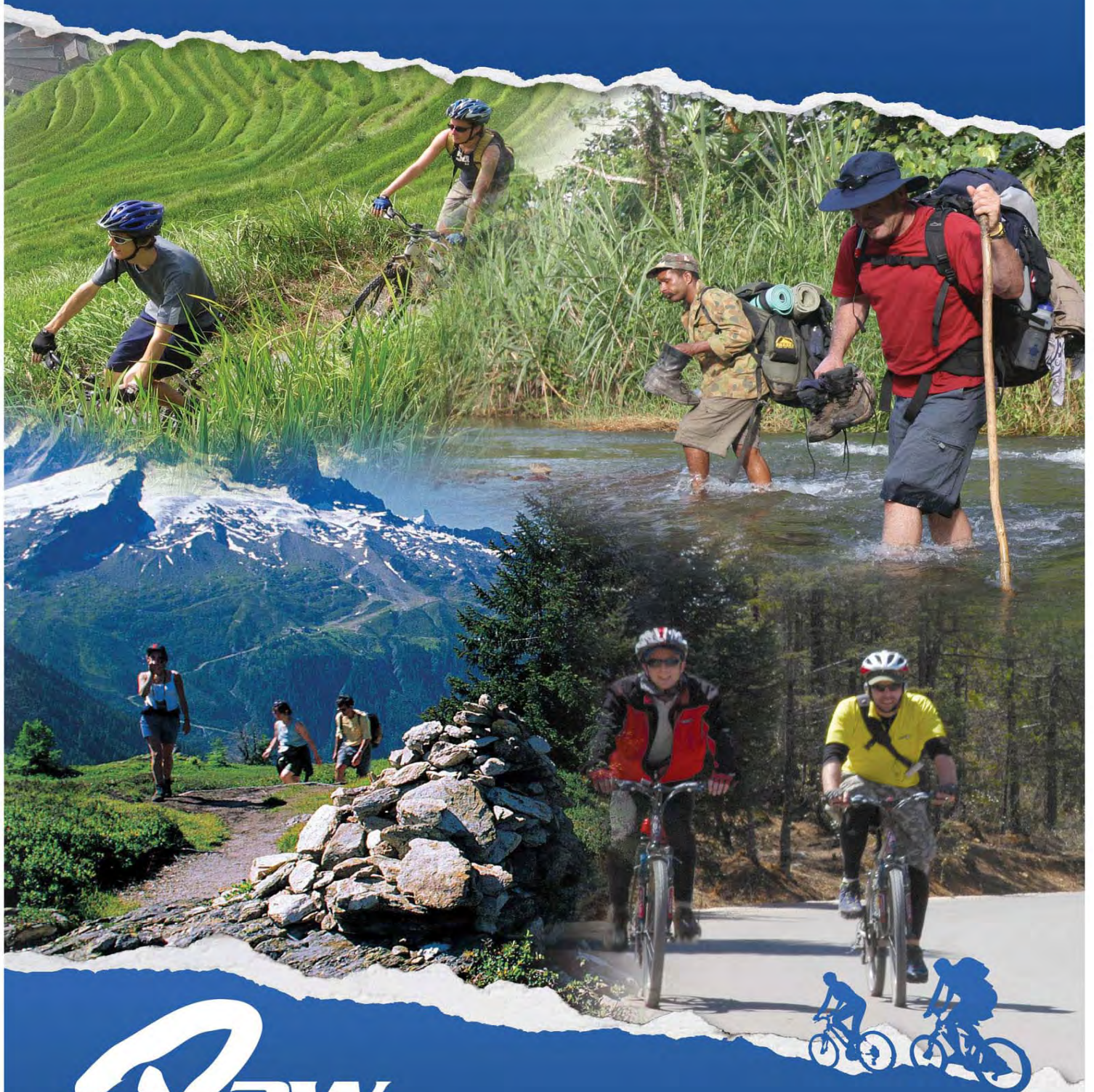


Experience is Everything



Windermere Challenge –
Helambu Trek Nepal

(03) 9787 4366 ■ www.rawtravel.com ■ www.rawchallenges.com



Windermere Challenge – Helambu Trek Nepal

This is a fascinating trek that will get you off the well-worn trails with stunning views of the high Himalayas whilst trekking through a variety of scenery.

The Helambu trek gives you an insight into Nepalese ancient culture and a taste of life without traffic, pollution or technology. Some strenuous days trekking means that people will feel challenged by this itinerary but no technical skills or equipment are required.

Prior to the trek time will be spent exploring the highlights of Bhaktapur city and the Kathmandu Valley. You will have free time to wander around the historic squares with their temples and narrow streets.

Maiti visit - MAITI Nepal was born out of a crusade to protect Nepali girls and women from trafficking, child prostitution and child labour. On your visit to the Maiti Foundation in Kathmandu you will hear firsthand about how MAITI actively works to find justice for the victimized women by engaging in criminal investigation and waging legal battles against the criminals. It has highlighted the trafficking issue with its strong advocacy from the local to national and

international levels. This will be an inspiring and educational visit that you'll never forget! Once back in Kathmandu after your rewarding trek you will also be given the unique opportunity to visit a school in the old town of Bhaktapur and spend the day helping with some classroom renovations and engaging with local school children.

Itinerary Overview

- Day 1: Arrive in Bhaktapur.
- Day 2: Visit to Maiti.
- Day 3: Trek Bhaktapur to Chisopani.
- Day 4: Chisopani to Gul Bhanjyang.
- Day 5: Gul Bhanjyang to Tharepati.
- Day 6: Tharepati to Malemchigaon.
- Day 7: Malemchi to Tarke Gyang.
- Day 8: Tarke Gyang to Sermathang.
- Day 9: Sermathang to MalemchiPul Bazaar.
- Day 10: Project Work - Bhaktapur
- Day 11: Depart Kathmandu

Itinerary

Day 1 Bhaktapur

Transfer to our hotel in the old Bhaktapur city in the Kathmandu Valley. Bhaktapur is a beautifully restored medieval town located in the Kathmandu Valley several kilometres from the main city of Kathmandu. That afternoon you will have time to wander around the historic squares with their temples and narrow streets. In the evening we have a full briefing and dinner and if time permits, we will pay a visit to the Great Buddhist Stupa at Bodhnath and the Tibetan community that resides there. We will stay overnight in Bhaktapur.

Meals included: Dinner

Day 2 Visit to Maiti

Today we'll be having a visit to the Maiti Foundation in Kathmandu. MAITI Nepal was born out of a crusade to protect Nepali girls and women from trafficking, child prostitution, child labor and various forms of exploitation and torture. A group of socially committed professionals like teachers, journalists and social workers together formed Maiti Nepal in 1993 and in 2011 its Founder Anuradha Koirala was awarded the CNN hero of the year award for MAITI's role in rescuing 12,000 women and children from traffickers and brothels and rehabilitating them. We'll be hearing firsthand about how MAITI actively works to find justice for the victimized girls and women by engaging in criminal investigation and waging legal battles against the criminals. It has highlighted the trafficking issue with its strong advocacy from the local to national and international levels. This will be an inspiring and educational visit that you'll never forget!

Afternoon at leisure and for you to explore around the many sights of the Kathmandu Valley, such as the 'monkey temple' at Swayambunath, the palaces of Durbar Square, historic Patan, return to Bhaktapur, shop till you drop or just hang out in one of the myriad of cafes in Thamel.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Day 3 Bhaktapur to Chisopani

3 1/2 hr - 4 1/2 hrs trekking. 1150m ascent 150m descent.

Excitement today as we start our trek into the hills! We depart Bhaktapur in the morning for the drive to Sundrajial. Following a trail that climbs continuously into farmland and delightful scenes of village life, Mulkarka is the first sprawling settlement with panoramic views and a handful of tea shops. Continuing to Shivapuri ridge a protected dense pine forest of oak and rhododendron, the trail slowly descends through forests to Chisopani where we spend the night. Chisopani has superb views over the distant Himalayas and farming valleys below. We will spend the night in Chisopani 2140m.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Day 4 Trek Chisopani to Gul Bhanjyang / Khutumsang

5-6 hrs trekking. 890m ascent, 970m descent

Today will involve a steep descent and ascent as we climb down into a valley then up the side to the hilltop opposite Chisopani. We have started ascending though the trekking today will still be through fertile, agricultural areas where there are villages and terraced fields. We will pass through the Buddhist village of Gul Bhanjyang then it's downhill to Khutumsang, a small farming village perched on a ridge overlooking two valleys. Overnight will be spent in Khutumsang. 2450m.



Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 5 Gul Bhanjyang / Khutumsang to Tharepati
6 - 7 hrs trekking. 1650m ascent, 210 descent

Today's trek is quite a long hard one as the trail proceeds into alpine meadows used by herders for pasturing Yaks and other livestock and is beautiful walking. The paths on this section can be very eroded and steep at times and care is needed. Following the trail winding steeply through lush Rhododendron and Fir Tree forest and clusters of shepherd's huts, commands impressive views once we reach Tharepati, the highest point on the Helambu trek. The night is then spent in Tharepati 3640m.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Day 6 Therapati to Malemchigaon
4-5 hours trekking. 1160m descent

Tharepati sits on a ridge at 3,640m and the views from here are exquisitely expansive, on a clear day you can see mountains, distant snow-capped peaks stretching all the way from Langtang to Tibet and the Khumbu district of Nepal. Vegetation changes with descent from aged firs to oaks, rhododendrons and scrub bamboo. We descend 1000m through forests, past waterfalls into the prosperous Sherpa village of Melamchigaon.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Day 7 Malemchi to Tarke Gyang
5 - 6 1/2 hrs trekking. 610m descent, 670 ascent

We descend into jungle crossing a suspension bridge spanning the Malemchi Khola ascending to Tarke Gyang. Through fields past schools and villages crossing a log bridge surrounded by forests and fields of Dozum. We reach Tarke Gyang the largest village in Helambu with its cultivated Malemchi valley fields, stone houses, tiny alleyways and water driven prayer wheel. Overnight spent in Tarke Gyang 2590m

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Day 8 Tarke Gyang to Sermathang
3 - 4 hrs trekking. 140m ascent, 120m descent

The trail sweeps around wide valleys and Sherpa villages, meanders and climbs through streams and thick dense forests where wild boar may be seen rooting for food in the undergrowth along the trail. A gentle climb leads us into Sermathang. Today we will aim to visit one of the local schools for an insight into how local Children are educated in a mountain environment. Overnight Sermathang 2610m.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Day 9 Sermathang to Malemchi Pul Bazaar / Nagakot
5 - 6 1/2 hrs trekking. 1730m descent

Sermathang is a Sherpa village which lies at 8700 feet on a picturesque ridge of the Himalayas from the village there are views over the Helambu valley. We follow the undulating ridge passing chorten and teashops through pine forest, descending into Kakani the last Sherpa village on the trek we cross a large suspension bridge taking us over the Indrawati



and into Malemchi Pul Bazaar a bustling market town where we drive to Nagakot for a final night perched high on the rim of the Kathmandu Valley with magnificent views across to the Himalayas. Tonight we will have a celebratory dinner to mark the completion of our trek.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Day 10 Project Work - Bhaktapur

Today we visit a school in the old town of Bhaktapur where we'll spend the day assisting with some classroom renovations and engaging with local schoolchildren. Overnight will be spent in Kathmandu prior to international departure the following day.

Meals included: Breakfast and Lunch

Day 11 Depart Kathmandu

There will also be an opportunity to take an early morning flight over Mount Everest (optional extra, approx. \$175). Our Flight from Kathmandu departs early afternoon with a Flight back to SE Asia where you will change planes for the onward journey to Australia arriving the next morning.

Meals: Breakfast

Accommodation

Accommodation is a mixture of hotels and guest houses and we have chosen the best that are available in the more remote locations. In Kathmandu we use good hotels which are very centrally located with comfortable rooms and facilities. Generally speaking, the accommodation on this trip is a good standard though some patience may be required in the smaller guesthouses where the plumbing and standards of English may not always be as you like it!

Meal Inclusions

Most meals are included in this trip and the food is generally of an excellent quality. The only exclusion is on free days in Kathmandu. Please refer to the itinerary for exact inclusions:

We like to sample the best of local dishes and produce so you enjoy an authentic taste of the region which you're travelling through. Nepalese food is a mixture of different influences from India and Tibet, though western dishes are very widely available and there is a tremendous variety of restaurants in Kathmandu where you can find almost every cuisine at very reasonable prices.

In the Itinerary (B, L, and D) stands for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Transport

Any transport required is generally by private vehicle. You will have a support vehicle travelling with you in Nepal throughout the trip.



Physical Rating

Introductory to Moderate

You don't need to be a highly experienced walker to join these multi-day trips but a reasonably good level of fitness is required to participate fully. Be prepared for moderate physical activity as you will be walking for between 5 and 7 hours each day on average and some pre-trip training is recommended to get the most from your adventure. You will follow clearly marked trails up to a high point of 3700m and no demanding technical skills needed to enjoy the trip.

Visas

Please note that visas are the responsibility of the individual traveller. The visa requirements for your trip vary depending on where you are from and where you are going. We keep the following information up to date as much as possible, but rules do change. It is important that you check for yourself.

If you would like someone to take the hassle out of your visa application please visit the following website:

www.visalink.com.au

Nepal:

You can easily obtain a visa on arrival by air (bring 2 passport photos), cost US\$30 for a single entry visa. Alternatively apply via the Nepalese consulate before you go which has offices in Brisbane and Melbourne. Please visit the following site to download forms:

<http://www.nepalconsulate.net.au/downloadforms.php>

Important Notes

1. Project clothing

Please ensure that you bring old clothes for the project work as you may get dirty.

2. Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is compulsory for all our trips.

We strongly recommend that you take out insurance the moment you register for a trip as you are then covered should you not be able to go in the event of illness or accident. Please send these details (name of insurer, policy number and their 24 hour emergency contact number) to RAW prior to departure.

We require that, at a minimum, you are covered for medical expenses including emergency repatriation. We strongly recommend that the policy also covers personal liability, cancellation, curtailment and loss of luggage and personal effects. When travelling on a group trip, you will not be permitted to join the group until evidence of travel insurance and the insurance company's 24 hour emergency contact number has been seen by your leader. If you have credit card insurance your tour leader will require proof of purchase of the trip and its insurance (a receipt of credit card statement) with a credit card in your name. Contact your bank for details of their participating insurer, the level of coverage and emergency contact telephone number.

Our preferred insurance company is CoverMore as they provide an excellent service.

You can apply online directly by clicking on this link or visiting our www.rawtravel.com site and following the insurance link on each page.

<https://b2c.covermore.com.au/index.jsp?alpha=AAV0231>

What to take?

You should pack as lightly as possible. You will only need a day pack to carry your personal items when trekking. You are expected to carry your own luggage on & off the bus and though you will not be required to walk long distances with your luggage we recommend keeping the weight under 12kg. Suitcases are not acceptable as they are impossible for porters to carry.

Most travellers carry their luggage in a backpack, although an overnight bag with a shoulder strap would suffice if you travel lightly. Smaller bags can be used to leave luggage in Kathmandu.

Checklist (suggested list):

Travel Documents:

- Passport (with photocopies) and Nepal visa
- Copy of travel insurance
- Airline ticket
- Cash
- Credit card

** Tip: use a money belt for security (put documents inside a plastic bag)

Personal Items

- First Aid kit (see the health section)
- High factor sunscreen
- Mosquito repellent & prophylactics
- Sunglasses
- Toiletries & clothes washing liquid (biodegradable)
- Watch or alarm clock
- Ear plugs (in case roommate snores!)
- Plastic bags for wet or dirty clothing
- Wet wipes or antiseptic hand gel

Clothing

- 3 T-shirts (lightweight quick drying fabric) / long sleeved T-shirt
- Shoes to relax in at end of day, e.ge crocs or sandals
- 4 pair of socks (wash as you go)
- 1 pair of knee length shorts
- 1 pair long trousers
- Lightweight waterproof top
- Warm Sweater/fleece for evenings
- Warm hat & gloves for evenings
- Sun hat
- Thermal underwear



Please note that a tremendous variety of outdoor gear - aimed towards Trekkers - is widely available in Kathmandu at cheap prices. If you need fleeces, jackets, thermals etc these can be picked up very cheaply there.

Trekking Equipment

- Good pair of broken in boots
- 1 water bottle (min. 1.5 l capacity recommended) or 'Camel Bak' hydration pack
- Small day pack for carrying items when trekking
- Gardening Gloves for project work

Optional:

- Walking Poles
- Favourite snacks for energy boost e.g. 'PowerBars', sports gel (a concentrated carbohydrate that delivers immediate energy when you feel tired or flat), dried fruit or nuts

Other Suggestions:

- Camera and plenty of film
- Adapter for recharging digital camera (Can be bought locally)
- Spare batteries
- Reading / writing material
- Penknife (put in main luggage at airport)
- Torch
- Small calculator (when out bargaining!)
- Photos of family or postcards of Australia (great way to have fun with locals you meet)
- Phrase book, map and Lonely Planet guide
- Small padlock for securing your luggage during flights

Local Dress

When packing please be aware that dress standards are conservative throughout Asia. We will be spending a lot of time in the more conservative rural regions of Nepal. Please remember that as visitors to someone else's home it is our responsibility to fit with the local customs by wearing appropriate clothing (irrespective of what other travellers are wearing). Loose, lightweight, long clothing is both respectful and practical, as it provides protection from the sun. Please remove any headwear and shoes when entering Temples or people's homes. Your guide will give you more information on local etiquette.

Health

All RAW travellers need to be in good physical health in order to participate fully in the group travel experience. If, in the opinion of our group leader, any traveller is unable to complete the itinerary without undue risk to themselves and/or the rest of the group, RAW reserves the right to exclude them from all or part of a trip without refund.

Please let us know of any medical conditions on the registration form and if you are currently taking prescription medicine as it is important that our leader is aware of your circumstances. We therefore ask that you read the itinerary in these trip

notes thoroughly and then realistically self-assess your physical ability to complete the trip as described. Please consult with your doctor if you have any doubts.

There are no specific health requirements for entry into Nepal. However, you should consult your doctor or travel clinic for up-to-date information and prescriptions for vaccinations and anti-malarial requirements. We would suggest that you are up to date with immunisation protection against typhoid, polio, tetanus and hepatitis. Lowland Nepal also a malarial risk area and we recommend that you take a course of suitable malarial prophylactics. As some vaccinations require a course over weeks or months, contact your doctor as early as possible prior to departure. Generally, six to eight weeks' notice is adequate.

We recommend that you carry a First Aid kit as well as any personal medical requirements (such as a spare pair of prescription glasses). Please be aware that for legal reasons our leaders are prohibited from administering any type of drug including headache tablets/antibiotics etc. Your first aid kit should include:

- Headache tablets
- Diarrhoea treatment (both a blocker to bring relief from the symptoms and an antibiotic)
- Band-aids
- Antiseptic for cuts & scrapes
- lip balm
- Insect repellent
- High factor sunscreen.

Given the physical nature of this trip we strongly advise bringing some sachets of an oral rehydration solution (available at chemists) as this aids recovery following activity and dehydration and also helps replace lost body salts should you suffer from 'gastro'. Just add a sachet to your water bottle each day. Please scroll down to the Special Safety Notes below for information on dehydration.

If you are 65 years or older a completed Medical Certificate is required.

Please let us know and we can post you a copy which then needs to be signed by your GP and posted or faxed through to 03 9787 0136 prior to departure.

Physical Preparation

In order to physically prepare yourself to trek for up to 5-7 hours on successive days it is so important that you undertake a fitness program. Getting yourself fit is all part of the experience and one that you'll benefit from long after your trip is over. It is really worth putting in the effort before you go to condition the body (backside, neck, shoulders & leg muscles) as it means you'll enjoy the event rather than it being a struggle.

Build up your base endurance by long and frequent walks- preferably uphill! - this will ensure that you are in peak condition for the trip. It's important you practice walking in a mountain environment to build up your strength & confidence. You can also mix this up by taking other forms of regular exercise which you currently do such as yoga, spinning classes, walking and swimming.

Money Exchange

Currency exchange rates often fluctuate. For the most up to date rates please refer to the following website:

www.oanda.com



Nepal: \$1 AUD = approx. 76 Rupees. The Nepalese Rupee is the unit of currency. There are many moneychangers in Kathmandu and Pokhara. Clean bills with no tears are best. ATM's are widely available in larger cities where you can withdraw money in local currency if you have a visa / mastercard or cirrus card. Credit cards can be used to advance cash in banks in major towns but attract a high fee. We recommend that you don't use money changers on the street. When changing money try and get a mix of denominations (your leader will advise you on this). Keep smaller notes with you when on the trek as it can be difficult to change larger notes once out of the city.

Spending Money

Every traveller is different and therefore spending money requirements will vary. Some travellers may drink more than others while other travellers like to purchase more souvenirs than most. Please consider your own spending habits when it comes to allowing for drinks, shopping and tipping.

Any tip that you wish to give to your local guides or leader in recognition of excellent service is always appreciated. We recommend approx. US\$30 to go into a kitty to be distributed to the local team at the end of the trip. Usually we do this on the last night at the celebration dinner.

Emergency Funds

Please also make sure you have access to an additional \$400, to be used when unforeseen incidents or circumstances outside our control (e.g. a natural disaster, or an outbreak of bird flu) necessitate a change to our planned route. This is a rare occurrence but it is well worth being prepared!

Keeping In Touch - communication while on the road

If you need to be contacted while travelling we recommend that you set up an email address that can be accessed on the road. Email cafes are commonplace throughout the regions we visit. If someone wishes to contact you in an emergency we recommend that they refer to our Emergency contact. We don't recommend that family and friends try to contact you through hotels, as they are subject to change and the reception staff may not speak English.

Emergency Funds

In the case of a genuine crisis or emergency, please call the RAW Office.
Tel: +61 3 9787 4366. Outside of office hours please call 0413 703 632

Your Fellow Travellers

As you travel on a group trip you will be exposed to all the pleasures and maybe some of the frustrations of travelling in a group. We ask you to be understanding of the various needs and preferences of your group - patience with your fellow travellers is sometimes required for the benefit of everyone's travel experience.

Remember too that you have responsibilities to the group. If you are requested to be at a place at a certain time, ensure that you don't keep the rest of the group waiting. We have found time and time again that the very best trips we operate are those where the dynamics within the group work well - this takes just a little effort on your part.



Group Leader

RAW has both resident western and local leaders who lead our trips in this region. Generally speaking you will have a western leader with a larger group size supported by local leaders as well. Where the group size is smaller or with a private booking for a few persons you will have a local leader. All our staff are first aid trained and experienced with the special nature and demands of trek tours and are able to give you support and insights into the local culture.

The aim of the group leader is to take the hassle out of your travels and to help you have the best trip possible. They will provide information on the places you are travelling through, offer suggestions for things to do and see, recommend great local eating venues and introduce you to our local friends.

While not being tour guides in the traditional sense you can expect them to have a broad general knowledge of the countries visited on the trip, including historical, cultural, religious and social aspects. We also use local area guides where we think more specific knowledge will add to the enjoyment of the places we are visiting - we think it's the best of both worlds.

Responsible Travel

We believe strongly in low impact or rather positive impact tourism. Broadly speaking this means that we try to minimise the negative aspects of tourism on the local cultures and environments that we visit and highlight the positive aspects. When we are trekking children will ask you for pens, money etc. It is always hard to resist giving them a small gift. However we ask you not to do this as it encourages a culture of begging and often parents will take their children out of school and get their children to prey on tourists. Ask your leader what is the best way to give.

A Couple of Rules

Illegal drugs will not be tolerated on our trips. Possessing or using drugs not only contravenes the laws of the land but also puts the rest of the group at risk. Smoking marijuana and opium is a part of local culture in some parts of the world but is not acceptable for RAW travellers.

RAW's philosophy of travel is one of respect towards everyone we encounter, and in particular the local people who make our destinations such special places. The exploitation of prostitutes is completely contrary to this philosophy. Our group leader has the right to expel any member of the group if drugs are found in their possession or if they use prostitutes.

Safety

Many national governments provide a regularly updated advice service on safety issues involved with international travel. We recommend that you check your government's advice for their latest travel information before departure.

We strongly recommend the use of a neck wallet or money belt while travelling, for the safe-keeping of your passport, air tickets, cash and other valuable items. Leave your valuable jewellery at home - you won't need it while travelling.

Many of our hotels have safety deposit boxes, which is the most secure way of storing your valuables. A lock is recommended for securing your luggage.



Your leader will accompany you on all included activities however during your trip you will have some free time to pursue your own interests, relax and take it easy or explore at your leisure. While your group leader will assist you with the available options in a given location, please note that any optional activities you undertake are not part of your itinerary, and makes no representations about the safety of the activity or the standard of the operators running them. Please use your own good judgment when selecting an activity in your free time.

Please also note that your group leader has the authority to amend or cancel any part of the trip itinerary if it is deemed necessary due to safety concerns.

Dehydration

Dehydration is the biggest risk when undertaking a physical challenge such as trekking over undulating terrain. It is so important to be aware of your fluid intake especially at altitude and to constantly drink water throughout the day (even when you do not feel thirsty). Symptoms of mild dehydration include:

- Flushed face
- Extreme thirst, more than normal or unable to drink
- Dry, warm skin
- Cannot pass urine or reduced amounts, dark, yellow
- Dizziness made worse when you are standing - weakness - cramping in the arms and legs
- Sleepy or irritable
- Headaches
- Dry mouth, dry tongue; with thick saliva

The simplest way of monitoring your fluid intake is by checking the colour of your urine. If it is clear or slightly yellow you are well hydrated but once it is a dark yellow you are in the danger zone and need to increase your fluid intake immediately. Ensure that you bring some Gastrolyte sachets as these help your recovery after trekking with the replacement of electrolytes. Gastrolyte is also the recommended treatment for dehydration caused by diarrhoea ('gastro').

RAW Newsletter

We have a free email newsletter full of travellers stories and experiences as well as news on new trips that we are running.

Please send us an extract from your travel journal at the end of the trip. We would also love to receive any photos after the event as we are starting to build up a travellers album for each of our destinations on our website. We need resolution of around 1MB.

Please could you send a CD to: RAW Travel Photo album, Suite 1 / 7 Davies Ave, Mount Eliza, VIC 3930.

If you have any suggestions to add more information to our trip dossier that you think other travellers would find useful please email: adventure@rawtravel.com. And of course email us if you have any questions leading up to the event.

We hope you will love Nepal as much as we do and we look forward to you joining us on other RAW experiences.



The information in these trip notes 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 RAW Travel.