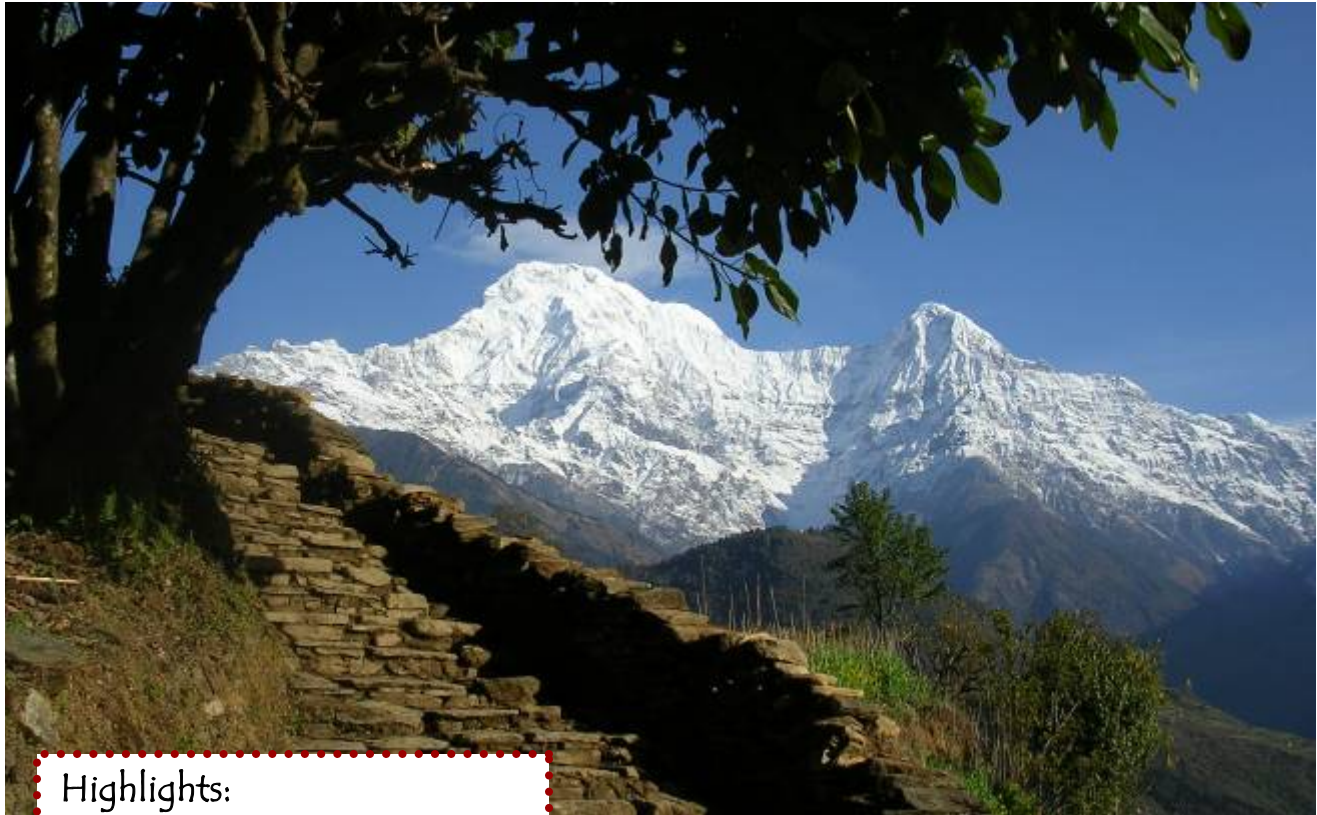




The Responsible Travellers

www.theresponsibletravellers.com

Volunteer Holidays: Community Project & Annapurna Trails Trip Notes



Highlights:

- Sightseeing UNESCO sites in Kathmandu
- 5 nights teahouse trek
- 4 nights family home stay
- 5 Nights B&B Hotel
- Average daily walking 4-6 hours
- Internal Flight Pok - Ktm

Grade B 15 days

This is graded "B" as it includes:

- Undulating trails in the Himalayan foothills
- Teahouse & family home stay accommodation
- Well defined trails
- Good underfoot conditions
- Maximum altitude 3120m

Introduction

This imaginative itinerary is an example of how to combine adventure and compassionProviding you lasting memories of the Himalaya and allowing you to make a difference to a community in Nepal, one of the poorest countries in the world.

In Kathmandu you will have a chance to visit some of the major sights before transferring to your community project. You then have the opportunity to experience a family home stay & community project in a rural village. What better way to get to know your destination than stay with a local family and work alongside the local community? You should be prepared for the facilities to be quite basic whilst on your home stay. If you are happy to muck in and get involved you'll have a great experience.

The second part of your holiday, an introductory trek in the Himalaya walking for five days through beautiful terraced villages and enjoy viewing the majestic Machhappuchare, Dhaulagiri, and Annapurna mountains. The highlight of the trek will be a sunrise walk to the view point at Poon Hill, a classic place from which to enjoy the snow capped peaks of the massive Himalaya.

We hope you will take away from this not only a deep understanding of the culture and way of life, but also a great feeling of satisfaction and an experience to treasure.

Detailed Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival in Kathmandu

Arrive in Kathmandu (5hrs 45mins ahead of GMT winter time, 4 hrs 45 mins ahead of GMT in the summer). Transfer to the hotel from the airport. Evening will be spent settling in and relaxing in the hotel, group dinner will be arranged in a restaurant in the evening. Accommodation: City Hotel Bed & Breakfast



Day 2: Kathmandu Sightseeing

This morning there will be a full trip briefing by the leader. Today then incorporates a guided sightseeing tour of two of Kathmandu's major sights. Our first destination is the country's most important Hindu temple- Pashupatinath. The temple is situated on the banks of the Bagmati River in the outskirts of the city. The cobbled streets are bustling with ladies selling flowers, incense and other offerings, and colourful Sadhus (holy men) roaming the surrounds of the temple. Pashupati, lord of the animals is a manifestation of Shiva is believed to still roam the forests in the form of a deer. The temple dating back to many hundreds of years makes it one of the most important Shiva locations across the Indian sub continent. As well as a place of worship, it is also the most important cremation site for the Hindus in Nepal. Our second visit takes us to Boudha - a Buddhist monument and the largest of its kind. As you wander round the shops surrounding the stupa, you will find yourself mingling with monks in their maroon and saffron robes, and traditionally dressed Tibetan refugees who live here – the religious center for Himalayan Buddhists. You can join the locals to circumambulate the stupa, bargain for artifacts in the shops or sit on a rooftop restaurant and absorb the atmosphere.

Accommodation: City Hotel Bed & Breakfast

Day 3-7: Community Project Work

Early in the morning you will be transferred to the project location beyond Pokhara. Leaving Kathmandu, we drive westward over a small pass from where there is amazing view of the Ganesh Himal, the Manaslu Range and even the Annapurnas on a clear day. The road drops from here until we reach the Trishuli valley and follow the Trishuli River. Approximately 3 hours into the drive, at Mugling we cross the bridge and follow the Marshyangdi River for about 1 ½ with great view of the Manaslu mountains ahead of us. Today lunch will be at a roadside café providing an opportunity to absorb the countryside of terraced fields. If you are on the lookout you should be able to spot plenty of kingfishers on the cables running along the road. After lunch we will then drive to the village.

While working with local residents and youth groups on community development projects, you are placed in a home stay to encourage integration and cultural exchange. You will gain an insight into the typical daily life of the Nepali people, whilst gaining an understanding for the environmental and social issues faced in a developing country. This program allows you to collaborate with locals on a project that develops the community and improves the overall way of life. After the arrival greetings and introductions to your hosts, there will be a briefing and opening ceremony. The following morning the project work will commence. You do not need any particular skills, only a willingness to participate. You should be prepared that the facilities in rural Nepali homesteads are relatively basic compared with western standards. Food will be provided and safe water stations will be set up for participants to use.

On the final day there will be a closing ceremony at lunchtime and then following farewells with your new found Nepali community, you will be transferred back to Pokhara.

In the evening the group will meet for dinner to celebrate the project and new found friendships.





Day 8: Pokhara to Birethanti

This morning we have free time in Pokhara until after lunchtime. A chance for everyone to have laundry completed and relax by the lakeside of this lovely slow city. Then we depart and drive through Pokhara and drive over a pass at Lumle and then descend down to Naya Pul. A short 30 minutes walk from here will bring us to Birethanti situated on the confluence of the Modi and Burundi Khola. This will be our home for the night.

Walking Time: 30 minutes

Accommodation: Mountain Lodge

Day 9: Birethanti to Ghandrung

We start the morning with a climb out from Birethanti. After ascending for approximately 500metres we then start to traverse through terraced villages. This gives a wonderful opportunity to see traditional rural life in the low altitude areas of the Annapurna Himalayas. The larger of these communities is called Kimche where we may take some refreshments. Walking amongst these beautifully cultivated hillsides takes you on a journey back in time, and allows you appreciate the basics of life. The local people are self sufficient and hardy working as farmers cultivating maize, millet, mustard seeds and potatoes. Sheep are also kept as village herds grazing on high pastures in the summer and coming down to the lower areas for the winter months. After harvest times ladies will be working in the fields preparing the terraces for the next crop. As you pass through these medieval type villages you will hear the greeting Namaste from families huddled together in their house entrances. Today continues as a steady climb until reaching Ghandrung where we will rest for the night. This town perches on the hillside with stone paved paths and handsome slate roofed houses. It is one of the largest settlements of the Gurung people who are renowned for their services in the British Gurkha regiments – a profession which brings a relatively higher income and prosperity to the village. The Gurung Museum displays items of basic house-hold wares and tools used for living in this region and is worth a visit in the afternoon.

Walking Time: 5 ½ hrs

Accommodation: Mountain Lodge



Day 10: Ghandrung to Tadapani

Earlier in the morning is usually the best time for viewing the mountains. The peaks that can be seen from here are – Annapurna South (7219m), Hiunchuli (6441m) and Machapucchhre (6993m), undoubtedly one of the most beautiful and distinctive mountains of the world. Sunrise on the mountains is very good from here.

Today's trek is a relatively shorter day allowing you to enjoy the surrounding landscape. The trail climbs gently from Ghandrung, arriving to cross a river. We continue trekking to Bhainsi Kharka where we can stop for refreshments. A further one hour from here through thick rhododendron forest will have us arrive at Tadapani in time for lunch. In the afternoon we can take an optional nature walk in the forest, in search of the resident birdlife. This is also a great location from which to see the mountains and explore the surrounding nature.

Walking time – 4 ½ hrs, Final altitude – 2700m, Accommodation: Mountain Lodge

Day 11: Tadapani to Ghorepani.

Today the trek continues in lush rhododendron forests starting with a steep descent before a short climb to a small tea house. The trail undulates all morning to a clearing called Banthanti and we then climb steadily for the rest of the morning to Deurali Pass, a good place for lunch. From here, we continue ascending for about 20 minutes and arrive on the ridge from where on a clear day the view is breathtakingly beautiful of the mountains to the north. The path ambles along the ridge for a while and then drops down towards the houses of Ghorepani, which means horse watering place. Traditionally this point used to be a main resting place on the trade route between Pokhara and the prosperous Kali Gandaki Valley leading up to Mustang and onto Tibet. Walking time – 7 hrs, Final altitude – 2855m, Accommodation: Mountain Lodge



Day 12: Ghorepani to Tirkhedunga

There is an early start today to climb up to Poon Hill – a viewing point for the sunrise over the mountains. After a quick tea/coffee we climb for about forty five minutes to the top of the hill. Getting there at dawn before sunrise allows us an amazing experience. You will see the daytime slowly creeping in over the mountains and as the first ray of sunlight touches the peaks, the world below is just awakening. This is one of the highlights of the trek. After breakfast we depart from Ghorepani descending through mossy forests of rhododendron until Ulleri where we take a lunch break. For the next hour the trail drops steeply down a stone staircase and cross two bridges in order to reach Tirkhedunga, situated above the Bhuringdi Khola.

Walking time – 4 1/2 hrs, Final altitude – 1577m, Accommodation: Mountain Lodge

Day 13: Tirkhedunga to Pokhara

We make a good start today in order to benefit from the opportunity for bird-watching and allow time to enjoy the afternoon in Pokhara – the second city of Nepal. After leaving the lodge we walk along the Bhurundi Khola where it is possible to sight Kingfishers, Redstarts, Forktails, Himalayan Dippers, Blue Magpies and Treepies. A short walk on to Nayapul, at the road head we meet up with our transport to Pokhara. There is a good part of the afternoon free to explore the lakeside and shop around or

even go for a boat ride. Tonight will be our last with the trekking crew, so we can celebrate and say farewell in one of the lakeside restaurants.

Walking time – 3 1/2 hrs, Final altitude – 820m

Accommodation: Hotel Bed & Breakfast



Day 14: Pokhara to Kathmandu

In the morning we take an internal flight to Kathmandu. Weather permitting; this should be a spectacular journey with a bird's eye view of the Himalaya from Dhalaugiri in the west, across the Annapurnas, Manaslu, Ganesh Himal and finally Langtang. You arrive at the hotel to enjoy the luxury of fresh change of clothes! We then have a relaxing afternoon to either relax at the hotel, do further sightseeings or go shopping for souvenirs and Nepali handicrafts. Return to Thamel for an evening of celebration for the last night of the trip.

Accommodation: Hotel Bed & Breakfast

Day 15: Depart for the UK

Today we will transfer you from the hotel to the airport for your international departure. This will have been a special journey into the Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal. We hope you return with memories of your trek in the Annapurnas and a sense of achievement in participating in a community program. The best memory will be that the Nepali community will benefit from your holiday.



Volunteering in Nepal

Central to a successful volunteering experience in Nepal is most importantly a sustainable development project. Too often programmes are focused on “do good” activities which can actually have a detrimental affect on the local communities. That is why we work with professionals in the development field to ensure that we add value to a local community project. We have a policy to ensure community engagement and ownership of programmes we work on. The areas are selected strictly on the basis of neediness and so you are likely to be well off the beaten track in areas not used to seeing or hosting westerners. You will be working with the community and so this is also a great cultural exchange opportunity. Typical projects include renovation and construction of school buildings, installing household renewable energy facilities and establishing and improving potable water sources. It is not necessary for you to have any previous experience, only a willingness to roll up your sleeves and get stuck in! Projects can be tailored according to specific areas of interest for bespoke groups and health posts can be set up for medical practitioners wishing to use their skills whilst here in Nepal.

Living conditions: You should be aware that whilst on the community project you will be living in a traditional Nepali household. Given you will be in the developing world, please remember standards are not the same as those back home. For example you may need to use a local squat toilet and may only have a “bucket shower” facility. We will provide safe drinking water stations for you to ensure potable water is available at all times. The home stays will be selected and reviewed by one of our staff members who will provide liaison with the community during your stay in the village.

Recommended Extensions

We suggest the following extensions which can be added to the end of this itinerary:

- i) 2 days chitwan Safari
- ii) 2 day Spa in Kathmandu

please contact us at:

info@theresponsibletravellers.com



Additional Information

What's included in your holiday?

- ✓ Professional Group Leader
- ✓ Carbon Balancing of international flights
- ✓ Internal flight return Pokhara - Ktm
- ✓ 5 nights hotel B&B accommodation
- ✓ 5 nights teahouse trek accommodation
- ✓ 4 nights home stay full board
- ✓ Management and funding of community project
- ✓ Guided sightseeing, transport and entrance fees in and around Ktm as specified in the itinerary
- ✓ All transportation included in the itinerary
- ✓ Porterage and guides fees
- ✓ National Park Entrance fees & permits
- ✓ 100% profits donated to charity

What's not included:

- ❖ International flights & airport taxes
- ❖ All Meals not included in the itinerary
- ❖ Incidental extra personal expenses
- ❖ Nepal Tourist Entry Visa
- ❖ Single persons supplement
- ❖ Additional sightseeing not specified in the itinerary
- ❖ Travel Insurance
- ❖ Staff tips

Travelling alone.....and don't want to pay a single supplement? No problem, you will be paired up with someone of the same gender to share a room. If you would prefer the privacy of a single occupancy the Single Supplement for this trip is £125. Please note that single rooms in the mountain lodges will be dependant on availability and **can not** be guaranteed. We will do our utmost to meet your needs.

Thought of Funding raising for charity?

You may choose to take this opportunity to raise sponsorship for one of our affiliated charities. If you wish to do so please contact us at: info@theresponsibletravellers.com and we will forward details to you.

First class staff & service levels

We are a highly credible tour operating organisation specialising in the Himalayan countries. All our staff are specially selected based on their experience, expertise and qualifications. We pride ourselves on a highly personalised airport to airport service with quality of care. The trip Leader will be an experienced professional leader working full time in the Himalayas & Central Asia with many years of experience. He/she will have full mountain wilderness & first aid qualifications and will have received training from either Himalayan Mountaineering Institute, Nepal Mountaineering Association or one of the European Alpine Clubs. As a responsible employer we pride ourselves on hiring local staff and paying wages higher than most organisations. If you want to read more about our employment policy please go to: www.theresponsibletravellers.com/our_ethics/employment_policy.html

Further Information:

If you have any queries regarding this trip, whether it is about preparation, the itinerary or general travel information please do not hesitate to contact us. To discuss the community project write to Tina at info@theresponsibletravellers.com. Or to discuss the general programme write to Naran Pandey at: sales@samratnepal.com

Administration & Practicalities

Insurance: It is compulsory to take full holiday insurance which covers trekking to the maximum altitude of your trek/trip, and also covers full rescue and repatriation costs. You will need to provide a copy of your insurance details, including an emergency 24 hour telephone number to the trek leader before departing Kathmandu. This should include any correspondence stating clarification of the required cover. If your policy documents are not available or prove to provide insufficient cover you may not be able to continue your trip. Please ensure that your policy also covers any extra activity outside of the stated itinerary you wish to do if you are extending your trip.

Passport: Passports need to be valid for a minimum period of 6 months from the date of visa application if you are applying in the UK and from the date of entry into Nepal.

Visa Details: Visas are available in advance from the Nepal Embassy online at:

http://www.nepembassy.org.uk/visa_information.html

You can also have the visa processed at Kathmandu airport. If you intend to wait until your arrival at the airport please remember to bring two passport photos and US\$40 dollars in cash (N.B US dollars - is the only accepted payment).

Money: The local currency is Nepali Rupees (approx exchange rate 120 NRS - £1 - subject to daily fluctuation) Please note this can not be purchased in the UK. It is advised to take either sterling or US Dollars. Traveller's cheques and cash can be exchanged for local currency in Kathmandu. Credit cards are not generally accepted. In Kathmandu there are ATMs available to access cash via Cirrus / MasterCard / Visa.

Flight Information: This trip is land only and operates Ktm to Ktm. Please contact us if you want advice about international flight options and how to purchase.

Health: It is important you are prepared & fit and healthy for your trek. We strongly recommend you visit your local GP and ask advice regarding any vaccinations required.

Itinerary: All that is possible will be done to ensure the trip follows the outlined itinerary. However, due to factors beyond our control such as local weather, politics and airlines it may be necessary to vary one or more of the days. If this does occur we shall do our utmost to ensure minimal impact to you.

What to expect

Weather

October to April is the dry season. During this time you should have warm days with temperatures between 15 - 25 degrees Celsius depending on altitude with relatively clear skies and little precipitation. During the winter months temperatures may reduce to -15 degrees Celsius during night-time at higher altitudes.

Group Size

Due to the remote locations that are visited, we remain sympathetic to the local culture and environment by limiting our trips to a maximum of 12 places. This may be slightly smaller than other operators, and we believe it ensures the maximum enjoyment and fulfilment of our trip members and minimize the pressures on the environment. This also avoids the feeling of "herding" from being part of a large group. There is a minimum of 6 to operate the trek.

Wildlife

In the annapurna foothills you are likely to get sightings of the Himalayan birds of prey such as Griffin vultures and lammergeyers. If extending your trip to visit chitwan national park you can experience elephant safari in search of Rhino, crocodile and deer amongst many other bird and mammal species.

Baggage:

You should use a Rucksack or Kit bag that is strong enough to withstand the rigors of transportation in the mountains. Suitcases or rigid bags can not be used as these are a difficult and awkward load for porters. The weight limit for your trek bag is 15kg. The limitation for luggage on the internal flight is 15kg for the hold and 10kg for hand luggage. Please see your airline for details of your international flight luggage allowances.

More about us & Our Ethics.....

Here at **The Responsible Travellers** we take great pride in the fact that we are **doing the right thing** by you our customers, by our staff, and by the people, country and environment in which we operate.

We believe actions speak louder than words, over the next few pages you can read how our ethics are put into practice.



Our Guarantee:

100% of profits are donated to Charitable Projects

- ✓ We pay the cost to Carbon Balance your international flight to the Himalayas
- ✓ Through a committed Environmental Policy we work to ensure minimal impact of our activities
- ✓ We have a simple and fair Pricing Policy with no extra fees charges – price us up against other companies!
- ✓ Have a fair and ethical Employment Policy which is committed to employing local staff and paying fair wages

Are you ready for a change in the way you approach your holiday?

Before you go.... we start to take responsibility for your trip by carbon balancing your flights.



The impact on climate change from the way in which we live today is a topic we have all heard about, and is under much debate from the world's scientific community. This is something that we can not and should not ignore. This is why when you go on holiday with "The Responsible Travellers", we commit as part of our Responsible Tourism policy to ensure your trip contributes towards renewable energy technologies in the Himalayas. Given the great "green debate", we have chosen to implement this policy in a way that ensures we know we are making a difference. For every traveller to the Himalayas we donate twice the amount it costs to purchase commercial carbon credits to either Nepal's Renewable Energy support programme BSP, Or Ladakh's Ecological Development Society depending on your destination. Travel with peace of mind with **The Responsible Travellers**

Whilst you are there.... Our Employment and environmental policies demonstrate our continued sense of responsibility. Firstly, our belief in aid through trade and therefore the generation of local employment and how this is managed is at the very heart of our operation. This is why we have a 100% commitment to employing only local staff. Our customers benefit from this by being able to get closer to the culture and learn more from the experience in the Himalayas, travelling with those who are born and bred in the area. By employing this policy we are also ensuring that the local economy benefits as much as possible rather than commercial organisations. We take great pride in ensuring fair wages to all our local staff and protecting our porters from exploitation. Secondly, our environmental policy

addresses waste management, water usage, and encourages and supports the use of renewable resources. In addition, we have developed our trips in close consultation with the Nepal Sustainable Tourism Development Unit and WWF to ensure the strongest commitment to the local environment. Read more at: www.theresponsibletravellers/ethics.html



The choice is easy when you are...

After you've gone..... The Responsible Travellers donates all profits from its travel operations to charitable projects in Nepal. We believe the most effective way to invest is with the help of specialist organisations. We work with our partners to find suitable projects and locations to invest and then all the funds go directly to the local project. Our partner charities and areas of investment include:



Education

We believe all development starts with educating the people. We support community education programmes, child support programmes, and interest free loans for adult education through our beneficiary charity CHANCE Registered UK charity. 1107201..



Community Development

We help communities to provide themselves with improved facilities and encourage this to be done in an environmentally friendly way. Our volunteer programs allow visitors to experience this first hand when they opt for a family home stay and participate in the community project holidays.



Re-Forestation & Renewable Resources

Our third area of work involves working with BSP – the national biogas organisation in Nepal. The WWF estimate that only 29% of the original forest covers in Nepal still remains. Between 1990 and 2005, Nepal lost 1.2 million hectares of forest We work with BSP Nepal in order to help the communities develop Biogas – a renewable energy resource which provides clean fuel, stops deforestation, and offers far reaching health and sanitation benefits.



*To see more details of our charitable giving please go online to:
<http://www.theresponsibletravellers.com/ethics/projects.html>*

Our commitment to **Doing the Right Thing** extends from investing in local charitable projects, to making sure that our customers also get a good deal.

To help you have a hassle free holiday, we provide a fair and simple **pricing policy**:

- ✓ We charge a fair price: to make sure the holiday is as satisfying as possible; we charge what we believe is a fair price, not what we can get away with – compare us to other companies!
- ✓ No extra land charges or hidden fees: To keep life simple we make a single charge
- ✓ No profiteering from single supplements: we charge a fair price based on cost & do not charge excessive premiums for single supplements
- ✓ No nagging for donations: We do not request charitable donations from you in order to justify our responsible tourism policy. We work hard on your behalf so you can just concentrate on having a great time!

....Doing the right thing