



The Responsible Travellers

www.theresponsibletravellers.com

Off the Beaten Track: Gurung Heritage Trek Trip Notes



Highlights:

- Sightseeing UNESCO sites in Kathmandu valley
- 7 Nights fully catered mountain home stay trek
- 4 Nights B&B Hotel
- Average daily walking 5-6 hours
- Maximum Altitude 4600m
- Internal Flight Pok - Ktm

Grade C 16 days

- This is graded "B" as it includes some trails with
- Well defined trails
 - Good underfoot conditions
 - Trails undulate throughout the trek

Introduction

We start the trip with a day enjoying two of the most revered sites in the Kathmandu Valley. Paspatinath is one of the most important Hindu sites and Boudanath is a major Buddhist pilgrimage centre.

After a most scenic drive from Kathmandu, we start early the next morning in this timeless region. The trail passes through traditional villages where culture, and crafts have remained unchanged since settlement began. This is a unique trek offering the opportunity to lodge with locals in a family home stay. This allows a superb opportunity to really experience the way of life in these remote villages. We trek to Ghalegaon from where we can view Annapurna ii and iv, Lamjung and Manasulu Himal. From here we progress to Bhujung, Pasgoan, and Pakorikot, witnessing the traditional lifestyle of the Gurung people. This region is home to the dynasties who have served in the British Gurkha Regiments. The highlight of this trek is most definitely the opportunity to get off the beaten track and get a true insight into "real Nepal". It is also the only trekking trail where you can see the two story round houses as pictured below. We also ascend two good viewing points from which we see a vista across the Annapurna Himalaya.

There will be several culture programs where the women's association will provide entertainment in the form of local cultural dancing, singing and general merry making! You may also receive a blessing for your onward journey to the next village. Joining in is most definitely encouraged!

Detailed Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival in Kathmandu

Arrive in Kathmandu (5hrs 45mns 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. The day then incorporates a guided sightseeing tour to two of Kathmandu's major sights. Our first destination is one of the country's most important temples – Swayambhunath popularly known as the monkey temple due to the large population of macaque monkeys resident here. Believed to be self created thousands of years ago, the temple is a very large whitewashed dome with a gilded spire top which is surrounded by a complex of smaller temples. It sits atop a hill and thus can be seen from many miles away. The balcony there provides a good view overlooking the valley and the mountains in the north. A good part of the morning will be spent here enjoying the view and mingling amongst the pilgrims who come here to worship in the various temples.

Our second visit will take us to Kathmandu Durbar Square. The old palace stands here amidst a complex of temples dating back to the 17th Century. However, the Kasthamandap, a building which supposedly had been built from a single Sal tree and given Kathmandu its name, is thought to date back to the 12th century. Some of the major highlights in the Square are the Taleju Temple standing tallest to the north of the palace, Kumari Bahal – home to the Living Goddess "Kumari", and Kala Bhairav which is the most fearsome aspect of Lord Shiva depicted on a huge slab of stone. From the window of the Shiva and Parvati temple the image of the divine couple benignly looks down upon the subjects. After the tour you can walk amongst the back streets of Thamel enjoying the shops and bazaar atmosphere.

Accommodation: City Hotel Bed & Breakfast

Day 3: Drive to Besisahar

We make an early departure from Kathmandu this morning for Besi Sahar. It is a beautiful journey to the trek road head. First following the Trishuli gorge and then the Marshyangdi, you will be taking in the amazing landscape with fantastic mountain views. Leaving Kathmandu we drive west on the Tribhuvan Highway towards Pokhara for approximately 3 ½ hours. We shall break the journey for lunch at a roadside café. At Dumre we leave the highway and continue following the Marshyangdi River for about 2 ½ hours. This journey takes us through stunning scenery along the river, with the first opportunity to see typical Nepali village life, terraced fields and stunning gorges to the trailhead at Besi Sahar.

Accommodation: Mountain Lodge
Food Included: Breakfast, and dinner



Day 4: Besi-Sahar - Ghalegaon

We leave the high street of Besi Sahar through the paddy fields then climb up to the chautara (resting place) beside the monastery. From here we follow the seasonal dirt road for a while, then as the road does a U turn we climb into the forest. Passing a small stream beside a chautara the jeep track crosses the trail, but ignoring this we continue climbing. There is nice view of the valley down below as the trail gets steeper. Approximately an hour and a half later we arrive on the crest of the hill and follow wide track for a while before climbing up a meadow and reaching the small village of Baglungpani. After passing through the village the trail is along a ridge with fantastic views of the Manaslu Range and the Annapurnas to Kapuragaon. Emerging from the village we follow the main trail for a short while then take the small trail branching up to the right. This trail contours the mountainside for about thirty minutes, then, from the jeep track small steps can be seen leading up into the woods. For the next hour to hour and a half we climb steadily up to Ghalegaon. If the afternoon weather is clear you can walk up to the viewpoint for sunset with superb views of the mountains including Lamjung, Annapurna II, Manaslu and Himalchuli.

Walking time: 6 hours

Accommodation: Home-stay

Food Included: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Day 5: Ghalegaon to Bhujung

We will spend the morning exploring the village and after an early dal bhat (traditional Nepali meal) we will trek on to Bhujung. As we leave the village we will be passing one of the most sacred temples of the area, Uttar Kanya Mandir. The temple is built over an ancient well. Ghalegaon hosts an annual festival when Gurung people even from far away villages come to celebrate and bathe in the holy water of the temple. We trek past the school and through lower Ghanpokhara then after a small patch of forest the trail is on a steep mountainside high above the valley with views of villages atop hills.

After about two and a half hours of walking the trail descends on stone steps past a secondary school to Bhujung Village. This village is one of the biggest Gurung settlements.

Walking Time: 3hrs

Accommodation: Home-stay

Food Included: Breakfast, lunch and dinner



Day 6: Bhujung to Pasgaon

We descend through the village with fantastic view of the paddy terraces to cross the bridge over the Midam Khola. After a small climb past the micro hydro power house the trail is very gentle along paddy fields and dry stone walls, then after crossing a small bridge over a stream running from a waterfall we start to ascend. Initially the climb is through terraced fields and scatter of village houses, then after the final chautara (resting place) we enter the forest and continue climbing. The forest is usually alive with noise of bird calls, the commonest and most distinct being of the black bulbul that may be in their hundreds. You may like to take it slow here and have your binoculars out if you are a bird enthusiast. We finally arrive on the pass that is a small clearing in the forest from where we descend emerging out of the woods at the school ground. Pasgaon is a short distance from here.

Walking time: 5 hrs

Accommodation: Home-stay

Food Included: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Day 7: Pasgaon to Pakhurikot

The day once again begins with a steep descend on stone steps to the bottom of the valley to the Rudi Khola this time. After the bridge crossing the trail to Pakhurikot follows the river awhile amidst paddy fields then starts climbing through smaller settlements and up to Rebedanda. From the chautara past the school ground Pakhurikot and the adjoining villages can be seen across the valley. We descend from here for the second time today and cross a small stream and start climbing again. Arriving on the crest of the hill we continue past the village towards the monastery and the village proper of Pasgaon that is quietly tucked away behind the monastery hill.

Walking time: 5hrs

Accommodation: Home-stay

Food Included: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Day 8 & 9: Pakorikot to Begnas Tal

From Pakorikot we take a newly reced route to Begnas Tal. These two days we spend ascending Rupa Kot – a superb view point which was the highest point of the acclaimed Royal Trek (undertaken by Prince Charles and Lady Diana). On completion of the trek, we meet the lake of Begnas Tal and take a boat ride across to our eco lodge where we enjoy locally grown products and take rest overnight.

Accommodation: City Hotel B&B

Food Included: Breakfast and lunch

Day 10: to Pokhara

After a slow breakfast we head out on the 30 minute drive to Pokhara in order that we can have the rest of the day free to enjoy this Lakeside town. Shopping, relaxing in Cafes, boating on the lake or exploring the sights, you can enjoy some free time here at the second city of Nepal.

Accommodation: City Hotel B&B

Food Included: Breakfast

Day 11: Return 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 Dhaulagiri 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 in Kathmandu for additional sightseeing or Thamel has many shops for those who like to dabble in a little trading for souvenirs!

Accommodation: City Hotel B&B

Food Included: Breakfast





Day 12: International Departure

This will be undeniably a journey like no other into the Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal. Your sense of achievement trekking to the Sanctuary and the culture you will have experienced along the way will touch you deeply. However, the best memory will surely be that as a result of your holiday the Nepali community will benefit from development projects through our affiliated charities.

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 Resort

Independent & Bespoke Group Trips

This trip can be tailor made for either an independent trek or for your own group.

You can select any departure date and adjust the itinerary if necessary to suit your needs.

please contact us at:

info@theresponsibletravellers.com



Here at The Responsible Travellers we are defining a new dimension of responsibility within the travel industry. 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 we offer a unique opportunity: a trip to the Himalayas in the knowledge that as a result you will contribute to the local community, your flight travel will be carbon balanced and you will save money by travelling with us.

The Responsible Travellers' guarantee

We are a non-commercial organisation donating 100% of profits to [charitable projects](#) in Nepal

We will pay the cost to [carbon balance](#) your flights in order to neutralise the impact on the environment

Through a committed [environmental policy](#) we work to ensure minimal impact of our activities

Have a fair and ethical [employment policy](#) which is committed to employing local staff and paying fair wages

Have a simple and fair [pricing policy](#) with no hidden extras- price us up against other companies!

To book e-mail: info@theresponsibletravellers.com

Additional Information

What's included in your holiday?

- ✓ Carbon Balancing of international flights
- ✓ Internal flight return Pokhara - Ktm
- ✓ 4 Nights hotel B&B accommodation
- ✓ 7 Nights mountain home stay full board
- ✓ 1 day 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
- ❖ Meals: lunch and dinner whilst in City B&B
- ❖ 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 / tent. If you would prefer the privacy of a single occupancy the Single Supplement for this trip is £120 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. If this trip is not for you perhaps you would like to contact us for details of alternative trips. All our trips and additional extensions can be viewed online at: www.theresponsibletravellers.com or write to us at info@theresponsibletravellers.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 Leh. 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 -10 degrees Celsius during night-time.

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

You are likely to get sightings of the Himalayan birds of prey such as Griffin vultures and lammergeiers. If you travel in the spring the rhododendron forests will be in full bloom. In the forests and around temple of Kathmandu you will also come across Macaque and Langur monkeys.

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 work closely 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