

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Stuff You Need To Know

The following is designed to give you as much background information as possible to answer many of the numerous questions that immediately come to mind when thinking about embarking on adventurous trips. If you are in any doubt or need a specific question answering, please do not hesitate to call or e-mail.

International Flights

International flights are not included in the price of my trips (except Druk Air with trips into Bhutan). I do offer a free service to assist you to source the flights through a designated ATOL licence holder or an airlines website to get the best flight that suits your requirements. Download Travel and Trek's useful guide to flying to Nepal and India (website Homepage).

Internal Flights

In the vast majority of cases, internal flights are included in the price of the trips; please refer to the exclusions on any specific trip.

Passports and Visas

Passports must be valid for at least 6 months on the day of departure. Visas are required for most countries that I operate in and in most cases details will be provided on precisely what you need to do to obtain one.

Money

Credit cards, traveller's cheques or local currency cash are all generally accepted in the cities/towns we visit. Some planning may be required for your time in the hills (ie small denominations). More specific advice is given with the Trek Briefing Notes.

Local Payments

Travel and Trek does NOT use any form of 'local payment' to make the advertised prices appear lower than they actually are!

Group Size

No group will exceed 16 people (including the Group Leader). Treks will run with a minimum number of people, clearly stated with each trek summary.

Fitness

Fitness, or perceived lack of(!), is the first concern of most non-regular trekkers. Provided that you can walk for several hours over varied terrain for several consecutive days carrying a daysack containing essentials such as water, camera, sun screen, etc..., then you should be perfectly capable of completing any one of these treks. Whilst it is best to be as walking fit as possible, the pace is self controlled and you will undoubtedly find a group of like paced walkers. The weekend training gatherings are an excellent way to gauge if this is for you BEFORE you book.

Age

Age is no barrier provided you feel fit enough. The age range to date has been between 18 and 72. Most people join these treks because they have a passion for this type of travel and will therefore be very like-minded with all the other members of the group. It is a great advantage to have a good age range as it provides a good base for varied conversation.

How Far?

Distance in mountainous areas is generally measured in time, not miles or kilometres. Expect to walk between 4 and 8 hours and occasionally more on a daily basis dependent on numerous factors. Between 5 – 6 hrs is normal. These treks are not a test of endurance; sufficient rest is factored in and flexibility is key.

Clothing and Equipment (non trekking peaks)

Very little specialist clothing or equipment is required for these treks. A good sleeping bag, daysack, boots and perhaps a duvet jacket are the only items that I would single out for special attention. Feel free to call and discuss any items that you feel unsure of. Again, the training weekends are very useful to gain ideas of what suits you and what

is required. A comprehensive kit list is provided on booking.

Trekking Peaks

Some basic climbing equipment is required for all of trekking peaks. Ice axes, crampons, harnesses for example will all be required for safety. This equipment can be hired either in country (inexpensive) or in the UK prior to departing. More advice is given in the trek notes or call Travel and Trek.

Altitude

Whilst some of these treks attain a significant altitude, do not be overly concerned. Provided that the rate of ascent is controlled responsibly and in accordance with general guidelines, then serious problems should not occur. Your Guide/Leader will be well versed in the symptoms of Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS) and will help and advise you as you progress. Should you experience serious symptoms, then descent is the safest and only option. Additional advice is contained in the Trek Briefing Notes. Download Travel and Trek's guide to Trekking at Altitude (website Homepage).

Weather (and the cold)

Weather conditions are unpredictable, we all know that! If you are going on a trek that attains significant altitudes then you should expect cold (if not very cold) temperatures at night. Women tend to feel the cold more than men so equip yourself accordingly. A very good sleeping bag is a worthwhile investment if you are going higher than 4000m for example, even more so if you are on a tented trek. Do not underestimate the cold, most lodges do not have heaters and you will spend many hours sitting and talking or playing cards or writing so a good duvet jacket, warm hat, etc... are essential to your comfort. Each one of us is different in terms of the cold weather tolerance at night and it is also extremely difficult to gauge the quality of a sleeping bag these days. Don't always believe the ratings on cheaper bags, you get what you pay for!

Accommodation

Accommodation used is a mix of hotels, B&B's, mountain refuges (some dormitory), tea-houses or occasionally tents (Morocco and Bhutan only) and my prices are based on sharing a twin room. All accommodation is clean and comfortable. Most of the trekking accommodation is basic with communal ablution facilities.

Single Rooms or Tents

In general terms, trips of this nature do require you to be prepared to share accommodation with a fellow group member of the same sex. I will try and accommodate those who prefer to be accommodated singularly without financial penalty. Availability will depend on which trip you have chosen. Should you wish to take up this option, please call and discuss your requirements.

Travelling Alone?

Over 50% of bookings are from people travelling by themselves. It is a great way to meet new people from all walks of life. You can remain as independent as you wish on trips of this nature and yet feel safe as part of a group.

Freedom of Travel

Everyone will have his/her own agenda of what they want to see and do. Through experience, it is on that basis that I allow as much freedom as possible for you to do as you wish throughout the trip. The framework is there for all within which to work and I will assist you as much as you require but should you wish to do so, when the opportunity arises you may explore as much as you wish.

Food and Water

Please check each itinerary to see whether the cost of food is included or not; it does vary. In general terms it is not in Nepal (breakfast in hotels is included), but is in Bhutan, India and Morocco (these are tented treks and therefore there is no choice).

Travel and Trek's policy of not providing food on treks in Nepal is borne out of experience and for very good reason. Companies that provide food inclusive treks vary from providing just breakfast to 3 meals a day (not snacks or mineral water). On the face of it, they are good value and indeed without the affect that altitude has on your appetite, they are. They are set menus and you eat at set times. The food is good and there is plenty of it.

Most people begin to lose their appetite at about 4000m (it does vary from person to person) and as you progressively ascend, you may lose it altogether. Many get nauseas even at the thought of food.

In order to maintain your energy, you need to eat and if it means only eating cornflakes or chocolate bars, then so be it, at least it is food. If you were on a 'food inclusive' trek, you would have to pay extra for this.

Travel and Trek's policy of not including food allows you to eat what you want, when you want it and in what quantities.

For budgeting purposes, £12 per day in the Everest region, £10 for the Annapurna region is reasonable and includes snacks and mineral water. If you purify/filter your own water instead of buying it in plastic bottles, those figures will reduce.

Points to remember:

- This policy gives you control over your diet (what food (good mix of local and western dishes), how much and when)
- This policy gives you control over your budget
- This policy is practical, flexible and cost effective
- If the whole group eats the same food; the whole group can go down with the same sickness

Water can be obtained from tap sources but must be purified/filtered. The alternative is to buy mineral water in plastic bottles (it has to date proven perfectly safe to drink). The DIY option is recommended as it reduces the amount of plastic bottles in the region; far better environmentally.

Download Travel and Trek's Guide to Safe Drinking Water to see what options are open to you.

Rest and Recouperation

Whilst without doubt the primary aim of most of my trips is the trekking, there is always a balance to be struck between work and rest. The itineraries will show where those rests are, which generally come towards the end of the trip but will occur at other times, should the need be there.

Vaccinations

Travel and Trek is not a professional medical organisation and therefore cannot formally advise you of which vaccinations you should have. You should therefore consult your local medical centre and/or visit one of the numerous websites that offer such advice such as the excellent www.traveldoctor.co.uk

Through experience however, the following are a good indication of what you should be considering for all countries that Travel and Trek operate in:

Tetanus, Polio/Diphtheria, Hep A, Typhoid. Consider Anti-Malarias and Rabies dependant on the area that you are visiting and the time of year.

If you are travelling for longer than 1 month, seek further advice.

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