

# BEST OF NEPAL AND BHUTAN

Departing Ex Australia 9<sup>th</sup> March 2019



## NEPAL

Without a doubt this country is a potpourri of culture and diversity. It boasts as having the highest mountain in the world Mt Everest mixed with unique wildlife and exotic culture. Discover yourself amidst this strange world of mystical beliefs and incredible history. Every aspect of life is tainted with spiritual reasons. You will have many opportunities to witness this aspect of life, and to share with people your own ideas about it. The art and craft of Nepal are basically based on the religious themes taken from Buddhism and Hinduism. Nepalese art has been influenced and promoted since the earliest recorded times by the Newars. In Nepal, ethnical cultural groups are diverse and many of them have their own languages and customs. The country's capital Kathmandu and largest city simultaneously reeks of history and the wear and tear of increasing modernity. The tightly packed historical centre, with its squares and temples, continues to preserve a world light years away from shantytowns, expensive hotels, restaurants and shops on the city's outskirts. Kathmandu's core is Durbar Square, with the Vishnumati River to the west and Ratna Park to the east, The Bagmati River forms the southern boundary, whilst Thamel, the popular tourist hangout sprawls to the north. This would have to be one of the most exciting cities in the world today.

No other area in Nepal has such a splendid variety of natural beauties as the Annapurna region. It is a rare combination of long arrays of snow-capped peaks, crystal lakes, and turbulent rivers with deep gorges, Tibetan monasteries, and picturesque villages, inhabited by simple and friendly ethnic people.

## BHUTAN

Nestled in the Himalayas is the idyllic nation of Bhutan - the world's only democratic monarchy. Bhutan cautiously emerged from isolation in the 1970's and has since embraced a policy of strictly controlled tourism and development.

Bhutan is a rare gem. In 2006 approximately only 12,000 tourists were permitted to enter and taste the delights of Bhutan's wonderful Buddhist culture, marvel at her magnificent scenery, trek through a stunning array of mountains and valleys and to view some of the world's rarest flora and fauna in a totally unspoiled environment. Bhutan offers sensational opportunities for Eco-friendly visitors and will continue to refrain from

indulging in mass-market tourism, although a small increase in visitor numbers has been approved.

Bhutan has resisted globalization and therefore has protected its strong Buddhist culture and way of life. There is little crime, a stable government and exceptionally friendly people. Whether you are a bird-watcher, trekker, weaver, culture seeker or scenery lover... Bhutan is a must see destination, unlike no other.

The country boasts a glorious mosaic of botanical treasures and with its pristine environment these remain largely untouched and in some cases undiscovered. Bhutan is home to an enormous diversity of flora with over 50 species of rhododendrons alone and over 600 species of orchids. Bhutan is famous for the legendary Blue Poppy which blooms only once and then dies. With few people in the world ever setting eyes on it, a mystique surrounds this beautiful species and it is now the national flower of Bhutan.

## **PROPOSED ITINERARY**

**Day 1 Depart Australia** – Kathmandu with China Southern Airlines. Met by our ground staff and transferred to your hotel situated in the tourist district of Thamel. Free Afternoon to explore the city area. **(B) 9/3**

**Day 2 Kathmandu.** After breakfast you will have a guided ½ day sightseeing tour of Bhaktapur. Free afternoon. **(B) 10/3**

**Day 3 Kathmandu – Pokhara** After breakfast you will depart to the airport for your flight to Pokhara approximately 20 minutes. Transfer to your hotel. **(B) 11/3**

**Day 4 Pokhara -Naya Pul –Tikedunga - (5 hours) (2050)** Today we have a very earlier departure by car to the town of Naya Pul and the start of our trek. From Naya Pul the trail is quite flat as we follow the south bank of the river. After several hours we will pass through sub-tropical valley forests, the trail in some places is carved along the side of the cliff. After lunch we cross the Modi Khola river via a suspension bridge to the village of Tikendhunga (4hr walk) where we will have lunch. After lunch the trail is frequently used by pony caravans the trail is very difficult because it is quite steep at times -with many steps almost stairs of rock, but as you get used to the trail and learn to climb slowly and regulate your breathing, the hike becomes easier. Every 20 minutes or so, there is a stone ledge built for porters to rest their loads, and you will be grateful to take advantage and rest often. We should reach the lodge leri by late afternoon **(BLD) (Lodge) 12/3**

**Day 5 Tikedunga to Ulleri** – After breakfast we will depart our lodge on a trail that is frequently used by pony caravans the trail is very difficult because it is quite steep at times -with many steps almost stairs of rock, but as you get used to the trail and learn to climb slowly and regulate your breathing, the hike becomes easier. Every 20 minutes or so, there is a stone ledge built for porters to rest their loads, and you will be grateful to take advantage and rest often. We should reach the lodge Ulleri for lunch the afternoon is free to relax. **(BLD) 13/3**

**Day 6 Ulleri to Ghorepani (2850 mtrs) (3 hours)**

Still we ascent but only for the next 3 – 4 hrs before reaching the village of Gorepani means "Horse Water". This village is an important campsite for traders before becoming a trekker's stop. There are two parts to this town - one in a saddle and the other a few hundred feet lower. This is a fascinating place with small shops and stalls selling local craft. Now that we are higher it will begin to get much cooler especially in the evenings. **(BLD) 14/3**

**Day: 7 Ghorepani - Poon Hill - Tadapani (3200mtrs) (7- 8 Hrs)**

Up before the sun to climb the steep trail to Poon Hill (3200mtrs). Here you will be rewarded for your efforts with spectacular views of Machhapuchhre, Dhaulagiri, Nilgiri, and the Annapurnas. After taking many photos and having that much needed steaming hot cup of coffee, tea or hot chocolate, we return to Gorepani for breakfast. After breakfast we head east from Ghorepani and climb a nearby ridge with views to match Poon Hill's. Descend through beautiful rhododendron forest, passing spectacular waterfalls along the way. As we descend to Tadapani meaning "away water" the trail at times can be quite slippery so watch your step. Keep an our for monkeys or lamur on the trail Tadapani has lovely views of Machhapuchhre and Annapurna South (BLD) O/N 15 March

**Day 8 Tadapani – Jinwa Hot Springs Approx 5 hours** In the afternoon take a short hike to bath in the hot springs. **Overnight Lodge (BLD) 16 March**

**Day 9 – This can be used as a rest day or you may like to take a hike to Chomprong village and return to Jinwa (BLD) 17 March**

**Day 10 Jinwa – Landruk- Tolka** Today you will descent about 2-1/2 hours to the Modi Khola where you will cross another suspension bridge, and join the trail that leads to Annapurna Base Camp. It is a steep 2-hour climb to the village of Landruk, another large Gurkha settlement. Lunch at Landruk before hiking along the ridge to Tolka. **Overnight Lodge. (BLD) 18 March**

**Day 11 Tolka - Deurali- Australian Camp (1980 mtrs) (5 hours)** Leave Tolka and contour south through several tributary valleys before climbing to Deurali, it is then an easy walk to the village of Potana where you will have lunch before a short climb to Australian Camp where you will be rewarded with fabulous views of Machhapuchhre. (BLD) (Lodge) 19 March

**Day 12 Australian camp Potana – Dhampus - Pokhara 2-1/2 hours**

This morning we follow the ridge on a relatively flat trail, there are more magnificent view of the great giants. As you get closer to Dhampus and see Pokhara in the foreground you will be impressed with the uncut forests so close to Pokhara. The people of Dhampus have traditionally protected this forest, and government programs are only now realizing that this traditional, social forestry should be encouraged. Leaving Dhampus you descend steeply through the forest for approximately 1-1/2 hours.to Phedi and sadly the end of your trek. From Phedi it is approximately 1 hour by bus to Pokhara and your hotel for the night (B) 20 March

**Day 13 Pokhara – Kathmandu** transfer to the airport for your flight to Kathmandu. Met and transferred to your hotel. Free time. (B) 21 March

**Day 14 Kathmandu - Paro** with Druk Air Bhutan's National Air Carrier. The green wall of hills known as dooars, or gateways into Bhutan from the plains climb continuously higher as the plane flies north towards the Tibet border. Silver rivers thread the valleys, waterfalls plunge down the forested mountain- side, and to the north, the great snow-capped peaks of the inner Himalayas rise up into the sky. As the aircraft enters the Paro valley, look down and you will see the Paro Dzong overlooking Paro Chu (river) with Ta Dzong, watch tower. On arrival at Paro airport you will be met by your guide and driver who will take you on a sightseeing excursion of Paro. After lunch drive to the capital Thimpu. **Overnight Thimpu 22 March (LD)**

**Day 15-16 Thimpu** Your next 2 days will be spent in Thimpu the capital of Bhutan, with a short hike to the Cheri Monastery one of the most popular monastery's in Bhutan. You will be taken to see Bhutan's National animal the Tarkin, a visit to the Textile and Cultural Museum, School of Fine Arts, Queen Mothers Chorten and the *Great Buddha Dordenma* which is a gigantic Shakyamuni Buddha statue in the mountains of Bhutan celebrating the 60th anniversary of fourth king Jigme Singye Wangchuck. The statue houses over one hundred thousand smaller Buddha statues, each of which, like the *Great Buddha Dordenma* itself, are made of bronze and gilded in gold. **O/N Hotel (BLD) 22-24 March (BLD) Overnight Hotel**

**Day 17 Thimpu - Wangduephong** After breakfast we will depart for Wangduephong and en-route you will stop at Dochula Pass (3050 m) where you will have a fascinating view of the snow-capped eastern Himalayan mountain peaks. In the afternoon you will visit Chimi Lhakdang, the divine mad monk's temple. It is a beautiful walk through a lovely village and outside the temple you will see a tree which is supposed to have sprouted up after Drukpa Kunley sent a thunderbolt from an adjoining valley to kill some evil spirits who had gathered at the site. Check in to your hotel overnight **in Wangduephong (BLD) 25 March**

**Day 18 Wangduephong – Punakha Dzong – Wangduephong** After a leisurely breakfast you will depart from your hotel to visit the sacred Punakha Dzong, a superb example of Bhutanese architecture. Fire, earthquake and floods have inflicted their devastating influence on this Dzong which under the direction of the king has been restored completely. **Return to Wangduephong (BLD) 26 March**

**Day 19 Wangduephong – Gantey 4 hour drive** After breakfast you drive to Gantey which will take approximately 4 hours. You will pass through dense forests of oak trees and rhododendrons and on arrival in Gantey village where you will visit Gantey Gompa, the only Nyingmapa monastery in western Bhutan. From Gantey, you can see the picturesque Black Mountain range as well as Phobjika Valley, the winter habitat of the black-necked cranes. **In the afternoon we will take a 2 hour hike in this beautiful valley. Overnight in a hotel in Gantey. 27 March (BLD)**

**Day 20 Gantey – Thimpu – Early departure for your return journey to Thimpu. Afternoon free to explore this unique town. 28 March (BLD)**

**Day 21 Thimpu - Paro** After breakfast you will drive 2 hours to Paro to the famous Taktsang Monastery. It's a good half day hike, but as we have special permission to visit the monastery the tour should take between 5-6 hours. In the afternoon witness the Festival or you may also like to take a hot stone bath please suggest this to your guide. There will also be time to stroll around the town of Paro. **Overnight Hotel Paro 29 March (BLD)**

**Day 22 End Paro – Transfer to the airport for your onward journey to Kathmandu and transfer to your international flight home 30 April**

**Day 23 Arrive Australia 31 April**

**Cost: \$7914 twin share**

**Nepal Trip Inclusions**

- \*International flights Australia/Kathmandu/Australia
- \*2 internal flight Kathmandu/Pokhara
- \*Airport transfers
- \*2 Nights Pokhara including b'fast
- \*3 Nights Kathmandu including bfast
- \*9 Day Fully assisted trek including all meals, Guide and Porters.
- \*Trek Permits and National Park Permits
- \*Sightseeing Pokhara and Kathmandu
- \*Private transfer start of trek and finish.
- \*1/2 day Sightseeing Bhaktapur including, entrance fees, guided tour
- \* airport transfers

**Bhutan Inclusions:**

- \*Kathmandu/Paro flight
- \*Paro/Kathmandu flight
- \*9 nights Bhutan hotel accommodation
- \* All meals
- \* All Airport Transfers
- \*Excellent ground transport in Bhutan
- \*Bottled Mineral Water
- \*Bhutan Visa
- \*All Sightseeing
- \*Entry into all Monasteries
- \*English speaking Bhutanese Guide.
- \*Comprehensive Trip Notes:

**Not Included:**

Nepal Multiple entry Visa , Soft and Hard Drinks, Grattitudes ,



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