TOUR CODE

XNP

ADVENTURESABROAD

THE NEPAL EXPERIENCE

Featuring Annapurna Panorama Hike & Chitwan Park

13 days

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Day 1 *Arrive in Kathmandu*

Today we arrive in Nepal, a country with spectacular geography and a rich cultural diversity. Within its narrow borders we will find a complete climatic range, from tropical to temperate, alpine to arctic. As many as 30 different languages and dialects are spoken among the many ethnic groups. Kathmandu is the capital and, with close to one million inhabitants, the largest metropolitan city in Nepal.

Overnight in Kathmandu. Meal plan: Dinner, if required.

Day 2 *Kathmandu: City Tour*

This morning we travel to Kathmandu's central meeting area, Durbar Square, a profusion of temples reflecting the different architectural styles dating from the eleventh century. The area also includes the Royal Palace with its gilded gates and elaborate statues. The square is alive with a multitude of nationalities, intermingled with stalls displaying a wide variety of Nepalese and Tibetan handicrafts. We will also see "Freak Street" -- a famous hippie meeting place from the 60's.

We then proceed to Swayambhunath Temple, Nepal's most significant centre of Buddhist worship. There has been a temple on this site since at least the 5th century. Swayambhunath is also known as the "Monkey Temple" due to the large population of monkeys that make the grounds their home. The temple buildings are set atop a hill and offer an excellent view of Kathmandu and its valley.

Our next stop is the Pashupatinath Hindu Temple, a very interesting place located on the sacred Bagmati River where there may be cremations taking place on the ghats. We also visit Boudhanath Stupa, one of the holiest Buddhist sites in Kathmandu and one of the largest spherical stupas in Nepal.

Overnight in Kathmandu. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 3 *Kathmandu - Pokhara*

After an early breakfast we drive to Pokhara, the rural capital of Western Nepal. We drive through winding gorges and along the Trisuli River from Kathmandu to Pokhara, located on the shore of a blue lake with Himalayan peaks filling the skyline, including Machhapuchare (Fish Tail Mountain), a peak that has never been climbed.

Pokhara is an extraordinary landscape and one of the most attractive destinations in Nepal. The treasures of Pokhara include Phewa Lake, spectacular views of Annapurna range, green hills, terraced farm slopes, countless species of vegetation, and rushing rivers in a tropical-like environment. Pokhara is, since ancient times, the traditional export center for trade with India and Tibet. Merchants from remote Himalayan regions of Nepal, such as Muktinath and Mustang, still come here with mule trains.

The evening is free to wander among the shops or take a boat out on Lake Phewa.

Overnight in Pokhara. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 4 *Pokhara - Birethanti*

Breakfast and then transfer with our guide to Nayapul, about an hour and half drive from Pokhara. Nayapul is our trek start point. There will be a trek briefing with by your group leader and you will be introduced to your porters. Your walk will follow a ridge-line in the lower foothills of the Annapurnas with surrounding views of the Pokhara Valley. In the beginning the trail passes through the busy trading routes where you will see merchants, traders, villagers, hikers and mule and donkey trains. As you near Birethanti village the trail splits many ways, but we follow the trail by the Modi River crossing the newly built suspension bridge and the entrance of ACAP (Annapurna Conservation Area Project) where all trekkers have to sign in. From here the trail follows the Modi River upstream passing through several farm villages till we reach the village of Birethanti.

Evening is free to explore Birethanti (Trek time-1 hr).

Overnight in Birethanti (comfortable local lodge). Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 5 *Birethanti - Ghandrung*

Leave the lodge walking out through the outlying farms following the Modi River Valley. Soon you begin to climb out of the valley and up towards the mountains. The trail is an undulating path for an hour until the village of Syali from where the trail winds up a steep climb for 1 1/2 hrs on paved stone steps to Kimche village. After Kimche the trail winds up gradually passing through cool rain forest for few hours with a few ups and downs. Lunch is en route with spectacular views of the landscape. In the afternoon we continue through beautiful countryside reaching the village of Ghandrung, one of the largest Gurung settlements in West Nepal located at an altitude of 6,560 feet in the early afternoon (Trek time -5 hrs).

Overnight in Ghandrung (comfortable local lodge). Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 6 *Rest day in Ghandrung*

Today is a free day in Ghandrung to explore this mountain village which is not only a major recruitment centre for the famous Gurkha soldiers with most men of this village enrolled in either in British Gurkha or Indian Armies. This is also the hub of the Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP), which promotes many varied ecological projects. The ACAP head-quarters is well worth a visit. The women of Ghandrung maintain a local industry of weaving traditional Nepalese rugs making this a unique opportunity to buy locally made goods. Both Ghandrung and Landrung are villages inhabited by the Gurung people.

Overnight in Ghandrung (comfortable local lodge). Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 7 *Ghandrung - Landrung*

After Ghandrung the path descends on stone steps towards the fast flowing Modi River and then, after crossing the river on a bridge the trail climbs for about 2-3 hours through scattered villages with beautiful views of the Himalayas to Landrung village. The winding stone trail passes through small farm villages and terraced farm fields with a few stops

and has grand views of the surrounding landscape and snow capped peaks of Glacier dome, Annapurna South, Huinchuli and the upper portion of Machhapuchare. On reaching Landrung, we will check into one of the best lodges in the area. Landrung to Ghandrung hike is from 6,500 feet to 5,100 feet and about 4-5 hours of walking.

Overnight in Landrung (comfortable local lodge). Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 8 *Landrung - Australian Camp*

Trekking from Landrung back to Pokhara via Kande and the Australian camp offers stunning views of the Central Himalayas. From Landrung the trail is a gradual uphill path to Tolka village. From Tolka, the trail winds through farm terraces towards the last uphill ridge at Deurali, highest spot of this hike. The climb takes less than an hour in the cool shade of the forest and on reaching Deurali ridge, you can enjoy the grand scenery sweeping from the Pokhara valley below towards high snow capped peaks and the rolling hills of the middle Himalaya. A great spot to halt for lunch depending upon time as this place has some nice lodges. It is down hill from this point through the cool forest till Pothana village is reached, a spot known for the panoramic views of the Annapurna, Manaslu and Machhapuchare (Fish Tail) peaks.

Another 45 minutes of walk in the cool shade of the rain and alpine forest till Thulo Kharka or Australian camp is reached for the overnight stay. One of the most scenic spots on this trip, it offers wide views of the Himalayan ranges with grand sunset and sunrise views.

Overnight at comfortable lodge. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 9 *Australian Camp - Kande - Pokhara*

After a wonderful stay at Thulo Kharka, a morning walk downhill through small villages passing through patches of forest and farm terraces till the path reaches the Pokhara-Baghlung highway at Kande after a good hours walk. Here we will board our bus for an hours drive back to Pokhara. This will conclude one of the best treks in the area around Pokhara with everything from the sweeping mountain views to the villages and terraced farms along the trails being superbly beautiful.

Overnight in Pokhara. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 10 *Pokhara-Trisuli River Rafting - Chitwan National Park*

After breakfast you will drive through the Nepali countryside to Fishling for the starting point of your rafting journey. Here you will be met by your experienced boat crew who will give you a full briefing prior to launch. Boating in Nepal is a fascinating way to see the country. It's an incredible opportunity to travel to places very few tourists visit. Starting in an open valley beneath the Annapurnas our rafts drift over the Trisuli's silty green waters into a lush jungle corridor. A warm water river the Trisuli is lined with beautiful white sand beaches and has plentiful bird life on its shores.

On completion of the rafting experience at Muglin, we will drive 2 hours to the Chitwan National Park. The next two days will be spent on safari exploring the Chitwan National Park and viewing wildlife including the rare Greater One Horned Rhinoceros, several species of deer, sloth bear, wild boar, river dolphin, leopard, the marsh mugger and gharial crocodiles, over 450 species of birds and the elusive Bengal Tiger. Our naturalist guide will lead activities including elephant safaris, boat trips, and bird watching excursions. Walking through the tropical jungle it is hard to believe that the world's tallest mountains and this tropical plain are so close together.

Overnight in the vicinity of Chitwan (comfortable lodge). Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 11 *Chitwan National Park*

With our naturalist guide we explore the area and learn about the inhabitants of this complex ecosystem. Bird watching is excellent in this area. One of the highlights of our Chitwan explorations is a wildlife viewing expedition on elephant back. Moving effortlessly through the tall grasses and underbrush, the elephants provide the best vantage point from which to see Chitwan's abundance of birds and animals. We may even be lucky enough to see a rhino or a tiger. There are also lectures on the wildlife of the park and walks for bird watching.

Overnight in the vicinity of Chitwan (comfortable lodge). Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 12 *Chitwan National Park - Bhaktapur*

After an early morning of game viewing and breakfast at camp, we drive back to Kathmandu and 20 kms onwards to the World Heritage town of Bhaktapur, also located in the Kathmandu Valley - the cultural and economic heart of Nepal.

Stretched along a ridge above the sacred Hanumante River, Bhaktapur grew from a collection of villages strung along the old trade route between India and Tibet. Like an island, the city rises out of lush green fields of rice-huddled red-tiled roofs punctured by the soaring spire of the five-storied Nyatapola temple. Bhaktapur is virtually 100% Newari and very rural at heart; about 60% of its 80,000 residents are farmers, among the country's best.

Bhaktapur's deep roots in the land are apparent in the people on its streets; farmer women in their characteristic red-border black saris pleated in the front and raised high in back, revealing blue tattoos above their ankles; farmers with double baskets of giant radishes suspended from their shoulders. Overnight in Bhaktapur with the remainder of the afternoon free.

Overnight in Bhaktapur (comfortable lodge). Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 13 *Kathmandu - Departure*

The morning is free for the OPTIONAL Everest flight, the most spectacular mountain flight in the world (weather-permitting!). The plane departs Kathmandu and flies eastward along the Himalaya giving you eye level views of the highest peaks on earth including Mount Everest. The flight lasts an hour.

Most international flights depart Kathmandu in the evening.

BON VOYAGE! Meal plan: Breakfast.