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Mustang Trek & Cultural Adventure

September 3 - 21, 2019 (19 days)

Lying on a high and austere beautiful plateau behind the snowy Himalayan massifs of Dhaulagiri and Annapurna, the kingdom of “Lo,” as Nepal’s Mustang region was once known, is an enclave of Tibetan culture. Known as *Lopas*, the people of Mustang maintain centuries-old traditions, and, indeed, this hidden kingdom was completely closed to foreigners until 1991. On this adventure, join Cathy Ann Taylor for a discovery of this fascinating and rugged land. Our itinerary offers scenic panoramas of some of the sacred peaks of the Central Nepal Himalaya, countless opportunities to meet local folk in their picturesque villages and farms, and explorations of ancient temples and monasteries lost in time. Cathy Ann last visited Mustang in 2017 and is eager to return. A road is in the process of being built from the Tibetan border to Lo Manthang, the 500-year-old walled city and capital of the Kingdom of Mustang, which will undoubtedly have implications for the people of this land. Join us this year and see it before it changes forever. In addition, we’ll be donating funds to the Himalayan Children’s Care Home in Pokhara Nepal. Cathy Ann/Cattara has been involved in raising money for this non-profit since 2010. The home is dedicated to preserving the rich cultural heritage of the remote Mustang area, where the Tibetan culture and traditions are on the brink of extinction. Himalayan Children’s Care Home is a non-profit organization that aims to provide health services, education, food, and shelter to the children of Mustang, many who have lost their parents due to the harsh conditions in the region. The home was founded in 1996 and currently houses 75 children with ages ranging from 4-18. Please see their website at: www.hchmustang.org. Cathy Ann’s longtime friend Stan Armington, who has lived in Nepal for many years, is passionate about this project and has been involved in raising funds. We’ll be presenting the donation to Lama Pasang at our festive Welcome Dinner with the children in Pokhara.

TRIP DETAILS

Moderate to Strenuous ▶ 13 days moderate to strenuous trekking at medium to high elevation (maximum 14,186'); 1 ½ days driving & cultural immersion, 11 nights camping, 3 nights lodges, 4 nights hotels

ITINERARY

(You will need to leave the U.S. on September 1 or 2, depending on which route you take, in order to arrive in Kathmandu on September 3.)

Day 1, Sept. 3 ▶ Arrive in Kathmandu, Nepal (4,385')

Welcome to Kathmandu! A Cattara representative will meet you outside the customs and immigration area at the airport and escort you to the Shangri La Hotel. Besides the gorgeous gardens and pool area, the hotel also has fantastic restaurants, a bar, and several shops. Later in the afternoon, there will be a briefing on the trek arrangements and important information about your stay in Nepal. This evening you'll enjoy a welcome dinner with the group.

D...Shangri La Hotel

Day 2, Sept. 4 ▶ Kathmandu – Pokhara

In the late morning, we take a scenic flight to Pokhara (2,700'), passing over the deep valleys and rivers of central Nepal and taking in views of the Ganesh, Dhaulagiri, and Annapurna Himals. After checking into our lovely hotel we'll enjoy a poolside lunch. This evening, you'll enjoy a "Welcome" dinner with the group and all the kids at Stan Armington's Tibet Resort.

B,L,D...Temple Tree Resort

Day 3, Sept. 5 ▶ Jomsom – Kagbeni (9,315')

From Pokhara we take a very early flight up the spectacular Kali Gandaki Gorge lying between the peaks of Dhaulagiri (26,788') and Annapurna (26,538') to Jomsom (9,053'), the administrative center of the Mustang district. Upon arrival, we meet our trekking staff and begin hiking along the banks of the Kali Gandaki River to Kagbeni (9,315'), a medieval-looking village that is the

"gateway" to Mustang. We are now in the rain shadow of the Himalaya, and it's easy to see how closely this area geographically resembles Tibet. The peak of Nilgiri (23,166') dominates the southern skyline. (3-4 hours hiking.)

B,L,D...Red House Guesthouse



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Day 4, Sept. 6 ▶ Kagbeni – Samar (11,874')

We travel by jeep to the village of Tangbe (10,037') and take in our first views of the uniquely colored chortens and landscapes of Upper Mustang, where beautiful red, yellow, and brown sandstone pillars rise from a barren, desert-like terrain. We'll continue driving to Chhuksang (9,774'), at the confluence of the Kali Gandaki and Narshing Khola rivers. From here we leave our jeep and start hiking north. We'll cross the Kali Gandaki before a short steep climb brings us to the village of Chele (10,168'), from where we'll have a magnificent view of the southern valley of the Kali Gandaki. Continuing west from Chele, we make a steep climb that leads to a cairn from where we'll see the village of Ghyakar (11,683') and its surrounding fields across a massive canyon. The climb continues on a long, steep, dry trail and winds up the side of a deep canyon. After crossing a ridge, we enter a large side valley, gradually descending to our lodge at Samar (11,874'). Once a trading post for horse caravans, Samar is an oasis surrounded by groves of poplar trees amid the arid landscape. Overnight at camp. (Jeep ride: 2 hours. Hiking time: 3-4 hours.)

B,L,D...Camp

Day 5, Sept. 7 ▶ Samar – Geling (11,710')

After breakfast, we take an alternate route to the main trail in order to visit an ancient cave that houses the Rhangchung Chorten (meaning "the chorten that built itself or appeared by a miracle"), hidden away in a deep canyon. We take a sharp descent to cross a ravine, then we deviate off the main trail, cross an even deeper ravine, then start the long hike up to a pass from where we will have a great view of the canyon to our north and east and of the snowcapped mountains to the south.

After a very steep descent, we finally reach the cave monastery, which looks as if it's growing out of the vertical wall. The cave, decorated with khatas (ceremonial scarves), numerous chortens, and other ritual items, is believed to have been visited by Padmasambhava, the Indian saint who brought Buddhism to Tibet. After visiting the cave, we head north to Syangmochen. The trail passes through an area of small trees and green bushes in the narrowing gorge before it broadens into a valley. After a gradual and long climb we arrive at Shyangmochen where we stop for lunch. After lunch we head to our camp at the scenic village of Geling (11,710') with its poplar trees and vast, fertile fields. The main monastery overlooks the whitewashed houses that dot the valley. (6-7 hours hiking.)

B,L,D...Camp

Day 6, Sept. 8 ▶ Geling – Drakmar (12,530')

From Geling, we climb across the Nyi La pass (13,186'), the southern boundary of Mustang proper, and descend to the large village of Ghemi (11,513'). If time permits, we can stop for a cup of tea at a local teahouse. We'll then cross the Drakmar Chu River over a suspension bridge and walk past the most impressive and longest stretch of mani wall (boulders with carved Buddhist prayer inscriptions) in Upper Mustang. Leaving the main trail, we ascend to the



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secluded village of Drakmar (12,529'), set under magnificent red sandstone cliffs dotted with numerous cave openings. We may possibly see blue sheep from this camp! (5-6 hours hiking.)
B,L,D...Camp

Day 7, Sept. 9 ▶ Drakmar – Ghar Gompa (12,956')

A morning hike brings us to Ghar Gompa. After crossing a stream, we climb up a rocky gully to arrive at Muila pass (13,677'), from where we get our first view of the famous gompa, also known as Lo Gekar, meaning “true virtue of Lo.” This is the oldest monastery (Nyingma sect) established in the 8th century by Padmasambhava, in an effort to pacify the “demons” that were hindering the construction of the Samye monastery in Tibet, which is often considered to be the first monastery in the Tibetan region. The gompa is being restored with the funding of the American Himalayan Foundation. We’ll camp near the gompa and make time for a visit. In the afternoon, we’ll take an optional side hike to the ancient town of Tsarang (11,677'), with its picturesque entry portal. Nearby is a five-story dzong (fortress-monastery), formerly the home of the kings of Mustang, and the vast red Dorje Dhen Gompa, which we will visit as time permits. Return to our camp for overnight. (7 hours hiking.)
B,L,D...Camp

Day 8, Sept. 10 ▶ Lo Manthang (12,595')

After crossing several valleys, we reach the Chogo La pass (14,186'), the highest pass on the entire trek. After a long gradual descent, we finally get our first view of the walled city of Lo Manthang in the distance, set among the fields and poplar trees. A steady descent brings us to our camp just outside the town. (5-6 hours hiking.)
B,L,D...Camp

Day 9, Sept. 11 ▶ Lo Manthang (12,595')

We take a day off from hiking to explore Lo Manthang, one of the last walled cities in Asia. We’ll start with visits to its two major 15th century monasteries: Thugchen Gompa and Champa Lhakhang. Because of their remoteness, these monasteries have remained unaffected by modern times and entering them is like walking into another world, one heavy with incense and flickering yak butter lamps. When the chanting of monks or the moan of the long Tibetan horns is added to this, it’s possible to lose oneself in reverie for a long period of time!



Thugchen Gompa, located near the center of town, contains fine Buddhist murals in its massive assembly hall that is supported by 35 tall, wooden columns. Sakyamuni, the main deity of Thubchen, is depicted with other deities such as Avalokiteshwara and Padmasambhava. The three-storied Champa Lhakhang, whose walls are painted with intricate mandalas, opens to a central courtyard supported by carved wooden pillars and contains a fifty-foot-tall image of Maitreya, the future Buddha. It sits on a pedestal that occupies the entire ground floor and is the largest clay statue in

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Nepal. A team of conservation architects has restored both monasteries with funding provided by the American Himalayan Foundation. We also visit the Choedhe monastic school. Although the monarchy of Mustang officially ended in 2008 by order of the Government of Nepal, the former official Raja Jigme Dorje Palbar Bista was recognized by Mustang residents as the king until he passed away in December 2016. He traced his lineage back to Ame Pal, who founded the kingdom of Lo in the 14th century.

(Note—The PBS documentaries *Journey of Transformation* and *The Lost Treasures of Tibet* are about Mustang and the restoration projects of this fragile area.)

B,L,D...Camp

Day 10, Sept 12 ▶ Lo Manthang

A day to explore further in Mustang with a visit to Cathy Ann's friend Lama Tashi's village of Chhosar. We will transfer by jeep and spend the day touring the village. Return to Lo Manthang for the night.

B,L,D...Camp



Day 11, Sept. 13 ▶ Return trek – Yara (11,742')

We leave Lo Manthang today, climbing up the pass overlooking Lo Manthang and continuing a while before walking down toward the Kali Gandaki Gorge.

The dry and dusty trail is steep and winding, with a clear view straight down to the rooftops of the village below. The final section of the trail drops sharply to the village of Dhi (11,119'), set by the banks of the Kali Gandaki River. Like most of the settlements along this river, Dhi is marked by a patchwork of fertile fields and trees. After a well-deserved break here, we'll hike up to the village of Yara to camp. Just before reaching Yara, we will see an incredible series of gigantic 300-foot-high wind-scoured cliffs resembling giant organ pipes. The cliffs are dotted with numerous cave openings and offer one of Upper Mustang's most spectacular sights. (7-8 hours hiking.)

B,L,D...Camp

Day 12, Sept. 14 ▶ Yara – Luri Gompa

Today we enjoy a side hike to the ancient Luri Gompa cave monastery (13,317'), one of the few remaining cave monasteries in the world. Luri remains one of the only monasteries in the region belonging to the Kagyu sect of Tibetan Buddhism and consists of a series of interconnected chapels covering various levels, all carved out of the cliff. The inner room contains a large chorten painted with deities. Kashmiri-style paintings of exquisite flowers, deities, and various figures of Indian origin cover the dome-shaped roof and the west wall. We return to camp at the end of the hike. (5-6 hours hiking.)

B,L,D...Camp

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Day 13, Sept. 15 ▶ Tangge (10,627')

From Yara, we head south to Dhechyang Khola, our trail winding steeply uphill before opening to magnificent views of the landscape below. We'll then continue downhill into the village of Tangge, a hamlet whose homes form a fort nestled below cliffs eroded into massive columns. The view of the settlement with its groups of chortens and mani walls of various sizes and shapes is stunning! Our camp is set in a walled compound to protect us from the dry winds of Mustang. (7-8 hours hiking.)
B,L,D...Camp

Day 14, Sept. 16 ▶ Pha (13,835')

On our way out of Tangge, we'll take an atmospheric walk through town past narrow rows of houses, under buildings, and up alleys, and past the mani walls and chortens to join the trail leading down to the Tangge Khola, where we'll cross a wooden bridge. We'll hike above the village and then descend again to the wide rocky plain of the Yak Khola. After one more river crossing, we'll begin a steep ascent. Once we reach the prayer flag-adorned summit of Pha, we'll take in our first view of Dhaulagiri—a sight that will no doubt leave everyone speechless. Tonight, we'll camp below the other side of the pass near the only water source on this part of the trek. (5-6 hours hiking.)
B,L,D...Camp

Day 15, Sept. 17 ▶ Chhusang (9,774')

Today, the trail winds uphill, opening to exceptional views of the whole of Mustang Valley, extending to the northern border beyond Lo Manthang. Some sections of the trail are fairly narrow, and care must be taken here, as the scenery is so dramatic you may be tempted to venture too close to the edge of the 3,000-foot gullies dropping down to the river below. Soon, the trail veers away from the rim and opens to the extraordinary southern view of the Kali Gandaki Valley below as it cuts between the Annapurnas, Nilgiris, and Dhaulagiri. To the east, an array of peaks surrounds the famous Thorang La pass (17,764'). From this viewpoint, our descent begins along a steep and rough trail with loose scree. Eventually the trail flattens out on a plateau and splits in two. The right fork leads to Chhuksang, while the left one leads on to Tetang. Tonight, we'll stay in a lodge in the village of Chhusang. (6-7 hours hiking.)
B,L,D...Lodge

Day 16, Sept. 18 ▶ Jomsom (8,922')

From here we drive two hours to Jomsom, enjoying wonderful views of the Nilgiris (23,160' and 22,763'), and overnight at a guesthouse. (Jeep ride: 2 hours. Hiking time: 1 –1 ½ hours.)
B,L,D...Om's Home Lodge

Day 17, Sept. 19 ▶ Pokhara

Fly from Jomsom to Pokhara (weather permitting)*. Transfer to hotel. Lunch and dinner at hotel. The afternoon is free to shop and explore Pokhara.
B,L,D...Temple Tree Resort

Flights in and out of Jomsom's tiny mountain airstrip are commonly delayed. We have scheduled an extra day at the end of the trek so as not to interfere with your homeward-bound flights.

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Day 18, Sept. 20 ▶ Kathmandu

A 30-minute flight brings us back to Kathmandu. The afternoon is free to relax or do some last-minute shopping or sightseeing on your own. Tonight, we'll enjoy a festive farewell dinner.

B,D...Shangri La Hotel

Day 19, Sept. 21 ▶ Fly home

Transfer to the airport and depart Kathmandu on homeward-bound flights.

B...

LAND COST

\$6,695 per person (6-7 members)

\$6,495 per person (8-9 members)

\$6,195 per person (10-12 members)

\$650 per person Nepal Government Permit Fee

*Should you choose to pay with credit card there will be a service charge of 3%, the fee we incur from the bank.

Rates quoted are per person, based on sharing double accommodations at the Shangri La Hotel in Kathmandu, the Shangri La Village Hotel, and in the Lodges.

Single Supplement—\$850. If you prefer single accommodations, you must pay the Single Supplement Fee. If you wish to share accommodations, we'll try to match you up with a roommate. If that's not possible, we will still have to charge you the single supplement. At the lodges in the mountains we will try to accommodate the single requests there are a limited number of rooms.

LAND COST INCLUDES...

- Expert leadership of Cathy Ann Taylor
- Accommodations in hotels in Kathmandu and Pokhara, and lodges in Kagbeni, Samar, Chhusang, and Jomsom
- Two round trip flights Kathmandu-Pokhara-Kathmandu and Pokhara-Jomsom-Pokhara
- All trek arrangements, including tents, foam sleeping pads, community camping and commissary equipment, services of camp and commissary crew, including camp and cook staff
- Meals as noted (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner)
- Airport transfers
- Sightseeing as noted in the itinerary
- Ground transportation
- Additional guides and porters where necessary
- Trek permits

LAND COST DOES NOT INCLUDE...

International airfare to Kathmandu and return; accommodations en route to Nepal (depending on airline, you will need to overnight in Hong Kong, Singapore, Korea, Delhi, the Middle East or

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Bangkok en route to Kathmandu); meals not noted on itinerary; special government permit fee; trip insurance (it is required that you purchase emergency evacuation insurance to visit Mustang), Cattara offers travel insurance which includes evacuation and trip cancellation insurance; optional tipping to leader, guides and local staff; excess baggage charges; visas; cost of medical immunizations; and items of a personal nature (sodas, alcoholic beverages, laundry, etc.).

TRIP PAYMENT SCHEDULE

At time of reservation25% of land cost
 120 days prior to departure25% of land cost
 90 days prior to departure.....Balance

CANCELLATION FEE SCHEDULE

From time of reservation
 until 90 days prior to departure25% of land cost
 89-60 days prior to departure.....50% of land cost
 59 days of fewer prior to departure.....100% of land cost

EXPERT LEADERSHIP

Expert leadership is the key to every successful trip. Cattara attracts knowledgeable and gifted leaders who are passionate about guiding trips and truly enjoy sharing the experience with others. They understand the cultures and traditions they work in and are a fountain of information. In addition to making sure everything runs smoothly and safely, Cattara guides enhance your experience by being educators, companions, and the best of friends.

TRIP LEADER



Cathy Ann Taylor, a high altitude trekking & cultural guide for the last 29 years will be leading his trip. Cathy Ann has trekked all over Nepal, Tibet, India and Bhutan, with well over 200 trips in the Himalayas (she still considers the Himalayas her “second home”)! She has also hiked extensively in the European Alps (Tour du Mont Blanc—six times, The Haute Route, Gran Paradiso, Scotland—two times, and the Dolomites—two times), the Georgian Caucasus—four times, South America (15 trips in Peru, 1 in Patagonia), and Uganda & Rwanda—three times. A devout hiker and mountain biker, she leaves no trail undiscovered, and her passion for the mountains, caring nature, and boundless energy are renowned. Her experience, knowledge, positive attitude (she can find the good in anything!), and her wonderful rapport with the local staff will enhance your experience. With the help of caring and like-minded individuals she has been able to manage the sponsorship of nineteen remote village children, all of whom are in boarding school in Nepal or in universities in India, Nepal, and the United States. She consistently gets rave reviews from members of her groups and has quite a following. Cathy Ann is active in the Breast Cancer Prevention Partners and has participated in sixteen expeditions, including Mount McKinley, Mount Cho Oyu, Mount Fuji, Mount Shasta, and Mount Rainier, which helped increase awareness of breast cancer (she alone has raised over \$750,000 for the cause!). Cat’s special trekking program, Sacred Treks, benefits Breast Cancer Prevention Partners (formerly the Breast Cancer Fund). Past trips include Bhutan, Mont

Blanc, Peru, Everest, Ladakh, Mustang, Georgian Caucasus, Sikkim, Dolomites, Cordillera Blanca, and Annapurna Sanctuary treks, and the program has raised over \$750,000. Cathy Ann has also been active in the American Himalayan Foundation and has helped raised \$20,000 for their STOP Girl Trafficking project. She has also reached the summit of Ama Dablam (22,500') in Nepal and Argentina's Aconcagua (22,834'), the highest peak in South America. Cathy Ann received an honorable mention in *Hooked on the Outdoors* magazine's Outdoor Person of the Year Awards, and also received a letter of recognition for her fundraising and environmental work from former Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi.

PHYSICAL EXPECTATIONS

This trip is strenuous and designed for those who are fit and experienced in the outdoors. We expect you to be a strong, experienced hiker and in great physical condition. On this trip, you will hike anywhere from five to eight hours a day, up and down mountain trails that are steep and rocky, and mostly at elevations above 9,000 feet. Medium to high altitude trekking can be very physically taxing and may create discomfort. You may experience symptoms of illness that you do not experience while exercising at sea level, such as shortness of breath, restlessness or sleeplessness at night, and headaches. You should be aware of the demands and risks imposed by high altitude, be in excellent underlying health, and prepare by training rigorously. We recommend you have a thorough physical exam and evaluation to uncover any general medical problem that might flare up while trekking in the remote areas of Nepal, where medical care may be many days away.

While on trek, you should drink a lot of water—this helps to avoid dehydration. Consult with your physician for advice on trekking at high altitude and any prescription medications you may need.

For physical preparation for this trek, we strongly suggest regular cardiovascular exercise for one to two hours at least 4-5 times a week. We recommend stair climbing, running, and mountain biking on hills, or elliptical or treadmill training in the gym with 10- to 15-pound day packs. This gets the heart rate going, which will be very beneficial for the type of high altitude trekking you will be undertaking.

LIFE ON THE TRAIL

Your trekking day typically starts at 6:30 a.m., when the camp staff will bring you “bed tea” to start the day, along with a large bowl of hot water for washing. (Bring along a washcloth and you can have a full sponge bath in the privacy of your tent!) After packing your bags, you’ll enjoy a hearty breakfast of porridge, eggs, and toast. By 8:00 or 8:30 you're off on the trail.

During the morning’s hike you’ll have time to visit local teashops, stop for a view or a photo, and exchange a smile or greeting (Namaste!) with the friendly Nepali people who share the trail. A hot trailside lunch breaks up the day, giving you time to rest and refuel before heading out on the trail for the afternoon hike.

You arrive in camp by 4:00 p.m. and have time to wash up and get settled in your tent before enjoying tea and snacks in the dining tent. While waiting for dinner, you can write in your journal, read a book, play cards, or simply relax. The day ends with a hot, multi-course dinner, which often

includes ethnic cuisine as well as American favorites. After dinner you can gaze at the stars (incredible viewing in this part of the world) and the moonlit ridges and distant peaks, go over the events of the day, or retire to your tent to read for a while before heading off to sleep.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

In addition to a passport, valid for at least six months beyond the date of completion of the trip, you will need a visa for Nepal. You can get it upon arrival at the airport in Kathmandu or contact the Nepalese Consulate in DC or NY. If you prefer to use a visa service you will find many by searching on the internet, one in particular we have found reliable is CIBT: <http://cibtvisas.com/>. If you prefer to get your visa on arrival in Kathmandu, you'll need one passport photo and \$40 cash (US dollars are accepted, please have exact change) for a 30-day visa. You may have to wait in a longer line if you arrive without a visa, but it's less expensive than using a visa service. A good tip is to make a photocopy of the photo page of your passport and carry it separately from your passport. If your passport is lost or stolen, a photocopy will help the local consulate speed up authorization for replacement. Also bring several spare passport photos—they're handy in case of unexpected visa or permit requirements.

If you plan to travel to Kathmandu via Thailand, Hong Kong, Korea, or the Middle East, you don't need a visa for those countries. If you plan to travel to and from Kathmandu via India, you will need to get a multiple-entry Indian visa in advance. Indian visas *cannot* be obtained upon arrival in India.

Note—most countries requiring visas require a completely blank page on which to stamp the visa, so your passport should contain at least one blank page for each country you plan to visit.

AIR TRAVEL

Airfare is not included in the land cost of the trip. For air reservations, please contact the airlines directly, either by phone or via the Internet. Plan your arrival in Kathmandu by the early afternoon of Day 1 (September 3). Many travelers elect to use their “frequent flyer” miles when traveling, but please check with us before purchasing or obtaining your tickets. We need to verify your arrival and departure schedule and ensure we have enough participants to operate the trip. Note—Names on air tickets and passports must match!

MEDICAL MATTERS

No vaccinations are currently required to enter Nepal, but immunizations for typhoid, tetanus, hepatitis A, and polio are *recommended*. These regulations and recommendations change frequently, so please check with your local health department or the CDC for more information (www.cdc.gov). In addition, the CDC sometimes recommends meningococcal meningitis vaccine for travelers to Nepal and Delhi, India, if there has been a recent outbreak. Confer with your physician for further advice.

Please advise us of any pre-existing medical conditions that may affect your health on the trek (recent injuries or surgeries, chronic illnesses, etc.). Hospital facilities for serious medical emergencies may be far away and evacuation can be difficult (and expensive).

To avoid intestinal problems while on the trip, do not drink tap water or even use it to brush your teeth. In Kathmandu, drink bottled water only. While on trek, the camp staff will provide boiled water for daily use. You must be careful when eating out in Kathmandu, too. That said, there are many wonderful restaurants and your trip leader will recommend a few to you. She will also give you more guidelines on staying healthy while in Nepal.

We recommend you bring your own personal first-aid kit, which should include antibiotics (Cipro or other), pain killers, and allergy medicines if you are prone to allergic reactions. The trip leader will also carry a basic kit for emergencies, but will not have any prescription medications.

MONEY MATTERS

You should bring enough money for any souvenirs you may buy, plus a few meals that are not included in the cost of the trip (e.g. various meals in Kathmandu, or meals and accommodation en route to Nepal). Depending on how much of a shopper you are, \$500-\$600 is usually enough for incidentals and souvenirs. You should bring an additional amount for optional gratuities to the trip leader and local trekking staff. At least US \$450 is recommended for the trip leader (presenting this personally rather than collectively gives you the opportunity to give thanks individually and is greatly appreciated); at least \$250 toward a group tip for the trekking staff, preferably paid in local currency, as traveler's checks are impossible for the trekking staff to exchange.

Bring USD or an ATM card. Bring along your credit card in case of emergencies and for use at the larger hotels and some shops. Credit cards are also becoming more widely accepted in the small tourist shops of Thamel and at the large hotels. There are many ATM machines throughout Kathmandu now; near our hotel, in Thamel (the shopping district), downtown and Durbar Marg. The local currency in Nepal is the *rupee*.

WEATHER & CLIMATE

Because our trek is in the rain shadow of the Himalaya, we shouldn't see much rain. It is probable we will encounter some windy and dusty conditions, especially in the afternoons. Daytime temperatures should be comfortable to warm, depending on clouds or sun, ranging between 50° and 80° F with cool to cold nights ranging between 35° and 55° F. Temperatures are relatively moderate and skies are usually brilliantly clear. Rain or snow is always possible in the high mountains.

INCIDENTALS

Laundry: Laundry service is available at the Shangri La Hotel. While on trek, wash basins are available for any laundry you may want to do yourself in the afternoon, but it's usually too late or cold for garments to dry very quickly. If we experience good weather in Lo Manthang our local staff will offer to do our laundry and everyone can contribute rupees to a pool. Synthetic fabrics are the easiest to wash, and they dry quickly. Please make sure you bring biodegradable soap.

Electricity: Nepal is on the 220V system. Sockets are usually the three-pin variety, but they vary. If you are planning to use something like a hairdryer or electric shaver at the hotel, bring a converter and a selection of plug adapters (you can buy these in drugstores or travel specialty stores in the U.S.).

Time Zones: Nepal is Greenwich Mean Time plus five hours and 45 minutes. That means if it's 8:00pm in Kathmandu, it's 9:15am in New York and 6:15am in California.

Environmental Responsibility: We ask you to **carry out whatever you carry in**, including non-biodegradable items such as batteries, flashlight bulbs, empty plastic containers, and so on. Nepal does not have the proper facilities to process this kind of waste and your throwaways will end up in the river or tossed down a hillside.

SHOPPING

Kathmandu is a fun place to shop—street vendors and emporiums are everywhere you look. Craft items to buy include beautiful hand-woven Tibetan carpets, traditional brass cooking vessels, semi-precious gemstones, Tibetan prayer wheels, and *thangka* paintings. The markets of Kathmandu also serve as an outlet for items from Bhutan and Tibet. You'll need to sharpen your bargaining skills to get the best deal.

WHAT TO BRING: CLOTHING & EQUIPMENT LIST

Packing Notes

It's best to go as light as possible and take only the essentials. Excess baggage can be a burden, not only to you but to support personnel.

Your trekking duffel and backpack combined must not weigh more than **33 lbs.** for the Jomsom flight. This includes all items you will need while on trek as well as your sleeping bag. We suggest you bring an additional small duffel to store non-trek clothes and items at the hotel in Kathmandu or Pokhara.

Overweight baggage is *not* accepted on these flights even if you are willing to pay excess baggage charges.

Luggage

- Duffel bag. A good size is about 14" x 15" x 36" (7,560 cu. in)—large enough to hold your sleeping bag plus your trekking clothes and gear. It should have a full-length zipper (for easy access) and be sturdy and water-resistant or waterproof.
- Daypack with a capacity of 2,000 to 2,500 cubic inches, with a good padded waist belt. It can double as your carryon bag. Always bring all irreplaceable items, such as camera, medications, important documentation, and trekking boots in your carryon luggage.
- Spare roll-up duffel. This is essential if you wish to store your city clothes while on the trek and to bring home those great souvenirs! It should be lockable.

Clothing Notes

Because you will be mainly be trekking at medium to high elevations, the weather could be hot during the day or cold if the clouds come in. Nighttime temperatures are likely to be comfortable to just above freezing.

Bring comfortable clothing that will protect you from heat, wind, cold and possible wet weather. Synthetic fabrics (such as polypropylene, capilene, or fleece) are the most effective barriers against the cold. They provide the best insulation, are light in weight, wick away perspiration, and dry quickly if wet. Wool and wool/synthetics are also suitable. (Cotton garments are not good in cold or wet mountain conditions.)

Layering is the way to go. Your innermost layer should be a T-shirt and pants or long underwear (depending on the weather, it may be too warm during the day). The middle layer can be a synthetic long sleeve top. The outermost layer should be a synthetic jacket, and/or a good quality wind/rain jacket and over-pants.

We suggest women and men trek in comfortable, loose-fitting long pants.

Underwear

- Regular underwear. Synthetics are easier to wash and dry. Depending on the weather, you may be able to hand-wash some on your rest days during the trek.
- Thermal underwear (one lightweight, one medium-weight) top and bottoms, of a polyester-type fabric. Wool and wool/synthetic blends are also suitable. You can use them to sleep at night and as layers for maximum warmth.

Socks

- Athletic socks (synthetic for easy washing and drying) that are suitable for your walking (not hiking) shoes. You can store them in your extra duffel while on trek.
- Medium weight hiking socks (synthetic or wool/synthetic).
- Synthetic or silk sock liners—optional. Some people wear sock liners to help prevent blisters, and some wear the same pair of hiking socks for three days in a row and achieve the same result.

Shirts

- Long-sleeved, synthetic or wool shirt.
- Short-sleeved, synthetic T-shirts.

Pants

- Full-length pants, preferably of quick-drying synthetic fabric.
- Fleece pants, ideal for camp time or layering for warmth.

Outerwear

- Medium-weight jacket of synthetic fabric, such as fleece.
- Light to medium-weight down or synthetic-fill jacket, ideal for camp time.

- Rain/wind parka (must fit over bulky clothing).
- Light weight rain/wind pants, preferably with full-length side zipper (must fit over your other pants).
- Gloves or mittens (fleece or combination of fleece with waterproof shell overmitt or glove).
- Glove liners (synthetic).

Head Gear

- Sun hat with wide brim, preferably with a chin strap to keep it from blowing off.
- Fleece or wool hat.
- Bandanna or Buff. A generally useful item—it will keep your neck from getting sunburned and can double as a hand towel in the field.

Footwear

Please break new boots in well before the trip.

- Medium-weight, hiking boots with padded ankle, good arch support, and lug sole for traction. Your hiking boots should be waterproofed, well broken in, and suitable for prolonged walking on rough dirt trails with rocks.
- Tennis shoes, teva-type sandals, or slip-on clogs to wear in camp

Sleeping Gear

- Medium-weight sleeping bag. We recommend a rating of about 5° to 20°F, depending on whether you sleep hot or cold; everyone is different.
- We provide thick foam sleeping pads, but for added comfort, you may wish to bring your own ultra lightweight pad.

Other Items

- Water bottles, 1 or 1.5 quart capacity. Make sure they are leak-proof, wide mouthed, and heavy duty. Bring 2 and mark them with your name or initials as several people may have the same bottle. **Note—CamelBaks or other bladder hydration systems are not recommended, as they often break or leak, are difficult to fill with boiled water, and are hard to keep clean.**
- Hiking sticks—highly recommended. They help relieve the impact on your knees during long downhills; they are also useful on uphills. Practice with them before the trip.
- Cord to use as a clothesline inside your tent.
- Set of casual city clothes that are dressier than your trekking clothes. You will store these in your extra duffel while you are on trek.
- Toiletry kit—biodegradable soap, toothbrush, etc.
- Roll of toilet paper (1). Toilet paper is provided at camp, but you need to carry your own on trek during the day.
- Purell hand sanitizer for quick hand washing and hygiene (a must!).
- Personal medical kit.
- Throat lozenges (antiseptic menthol or hard candies), about 20 of them. Good for soothing sore or dry throats.
- Body lotion for dry skin at higher altitudes.

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- Small towel of synthetic-type fabric.
- Sponge or washcloth to wash up at camp.
- Ace bandage or brace if you're prone to sore knees or ankles.
- Sunglasses (100% UVA/URB protected). For high altitudes, it's good to have glasses with a special dark lens and side shields that block reflected UV.
- Spare pair of prescription glasses, prescription sunglasses, or contact lenses.
- Sunscreen lotion and lipstick of SPF 25 or higher.
- Small headlamp with spare batteries.
- Stuff sacks to waterproof and sort out clothes and other items in your duffel. Ziploc bags are great for small items and camera gear.
- Heavyweight plastic garbage bag to use as a waterproofing liner inside your duffel and daypack.
- Small padlocks or combination locks for your duffels.
- Extra passport photos. Keep them with your travel documents as you may need them throughout your journey.
- Money belt or neck pouch to store cash.

Optional Travel Accessories

- Camera and plenty memory cards, extra batteries.
- Swimsuit for hotel in Bangkok, Kathmandu, and Pokhara.
- Repair kit with needle, thread, and safety pins.
- Pair of compact binoculars.
- Swiss Army-type pocket knife.
- Powdered electrolyte mixes for your water.
- Your favorite trail snacks.
- Reading and writing material.

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