

etiquette & customs

Photography - Always ask permission before taking anyone's photograph and respect their decision if they say no. Often people will ask for a few rupees in return for a photo so carry a supply of small notes if you intend on taking lots of 'people' shots. Camera film and memory cards/sticks can be found in good photography shops in all cities and sizable towns but it is best to bring your supply from home to be sure of the quality. Don't buy these items from hawkers or street stalls. Many sites also levy camera fees (sometimes up to US\$2 for cameras, US\$7 for videos) and these are not included in your tour cost.

Local customs - in most cases, your Guide will brief you on etiquette; please also feel free to ask them during your tour. Roughly 80% of Nepal's population is Hindu, 10% Buddhists and the remainder a mix of Muslim and ethnic minorities who practise shamanism. The laws, regulations and behaviour in Nepal are affected by this colourful mix and we ask you to respect them by following some simple rules:

- Don't step over someone's feet - walk around them.
- Don't touch anyone on the head.
- Do not point the soles of your feet towards people or religious objects. You could inadvertently do this while laying down or sitting with your feet up.
- Cameras are not allowed in some sightseeing spots, particularly temples and pagodas. Please consider the reason behind this before getting upset just because you may miss a souvenir photograph.
- Public displays of affection are generally not acceptable.
- Women should never touch a monk, or their robes.
- Never offer or accept anything with the left hand, use the right or both hands.
- Remove your shoes when entering houses (especially kitchen areas), shrines, pagodas or temples. If you do not want to remove them, you should remain outside. It is a good idea to pack a spare pair of socks for this reason.
- Move around chortens, other shrines, alters and all religious objects in a clockwise direction, if you are unsure observe before commencing.
- Things happen in their own time in Nepal and punctuality really has no meaning. Having patience and a sense of humour will be essential and only add to the enjoyment of your holiday.
- DRESS APPROPRIATELY.**
The locals in this region dress conservatively and find revealing clothes, or men going without a shirt, offensive no matter the weather. For men, full-length cotton trousers are preferable, while shorts that cover the knees are acceptable. For women, skirts or pants that reach below the knee are ideal, worn with long sleeved tops (or at least tops that cover the shoulders). A "modesty shawl" - either a large shawl or sarong - can be useful to carry in your daypack while sightseeing, to cover up in these places.

duty free

200 cigarettes, 50 cigars or equivalent of other tobacco articles; 1x1.5l bottles of alcoholic beverage; a reasonable amount of perfume for personal use. Export certificates need to be obtained from the Department of Archaeology for the export of any metal statues/ sacred paintings/ objects over 100 years old.

keeping in touch

Phone - International and domestic calls can be made from your hotel room but can be expensive - always check the procedure and costs with reception staff beforehand. If the hotel does enforce a call charge, you'll be unable to refute it after making your call. There is no such thing as international or pre paid phone cards in Nepal. You can also make IDD calls from private call shops (look for IDD/STD signs) that charge approx NRs 130 per minute to most countries. Nepal's international country code is 977. To call Australia the international access code is 00, followed by the country code 61, then the local area code (omitting the first 0), then the number. To call Wendy Wu Tours, for example, would be 00 61 2 9224 8888.

Mobile phones - Coverage is sporadic and variable. Check with your mobile company about roaming agreements and associated charges with Nepal.

Internet - Internet cafes can now be found in most cities and sizable towns. Finding a café is not usually a problem, but speed can be. Connection times are often painfully slow although this does vary from city to city.

electricity

Three large round pin plug in a triangular pattern.



220 volts AC, 50Hz. There are frequent power cuts all over the country. Sockets are generally the round three pin (India) kind, which means you can use either this or the round two pin (Europe) plug. You can buy adaptors, also known as conversion plugs, from hardware, department and Duty Free stores all over Australia.

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nepal

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE YOU GO



transport

Our Groups use 18-35 seater coaches as well as local transport. The road system is of unpredictable quality, with many of the mountain and hill roads impassable during the monsoon season (June to September). Local transport includes rickshaws and taxis. Before taking either mode of transport independently, agree on the price of the fare and check that you have enough small change as the drivers are unlikely to have much cash on them. Hagglng on the fare can be fun, but it's a good idea to find out, from your National Escort how much the fare should be for the journey you propose. You will have to accept paying more than locals.

pharmaceutical goods

It is recommended that you take any pharmaceutical products that you may require on your tour. Suggestions include sleeping pills, tablets to relieve stomach upsets, headaches, motion sickness and any other medication usually taken. For any prescribed medication we strongly recommend that you have a letter from your doctor.

accommodation

Our group hotels are generally 'medium range' and can vary greatly between one region to the next. In remote areas we utilise properties that are the best available, and who can accommodate the size of our groups. All hotels have private bathroom and generally air conditioning and/or a ceiling fan with bar/restaurant facilities. All levels of hotels can sometimes suffer from minor problems and technical difficulties. If you are travelling as a couple, please note that we cannot guarantee the availability of double beds. If you have a problem with your room please advise your guide.

tipping

Tipping is a firm and expected element in the tourism industry today this region is no exception. We strive to establish trust with our guides, who rely on and expect tips from passengers. If the guides are keen to work with our passengers regularly, they become familiar with our itineraries as well as the Wendy Wu Tours' philosophy and expectations we have of their work.

Many passengers are often uncertain about how much to tip so we have established a tipping kitty system. Every passenger gives a set amount to the National Escort at the start of the tour so they can discreetly arrange tips as appropriate. All group tour passengers are expected to contribute to the tipping kitty. The amount for the kitty is calculated for each tour depending on the length, group size and services used during the trip. Your final documents will specify the exact tipping amount for your group. This amount will not be paid in Australia to your travel agent or Wendy Wu Tours. It is paid locally to cover the tips for your main service providers such as the Guides and drivers in each city/ province, local and site guides.

For those passengers travelling independently, or group passengers with pre/post tour arrangements, you should allow USD\$5-7 per person for day for Guides and USD\$5 per person per day for drivers. It is recommended to tip the guide more favourably than the drivers. Smaller amounts of 20-30 Nepalese Rupees should be given to waiters, porters etc.

hagglng, begging & hawkers

Hagglng is a way of life in Nepal. In many shops there is no fixed price so the shop keeper will start with a high price which you are then expected to haggle down. Hawkers can be relentless, particularly getting on and off the bus or leaving and entering the attractions. If you choose not to buy simply say 'no' with a smile and keep on walking. Begging is also a way of life in Nepal and donations are ultimately a travellers personal choice, however in line with initiatives and government policy, our recommendation is NOT to give money, pens, gifts or sweets as this encourages a begging mentality and is largely ineffective. If you do want to help it is probably better to give to a recognised charity.

shopping

Whilst shopping can be fun and entertaining, Wendy Wu Tours, our staff and guides are not qualified nor permitted to guarantee the quality or value of any goods purchased during your holiday. All passengers who make purchases during their holiday must accept responsibility for their decision regarding the good's value, as well as the risk involved with processing of the credit card purchase or shipping. Unfortunately, we cannot assist in returning or refunding goods once you have left Nepal. In keeping with most people's interest whilst on holiday, your tour will include a reasonable number of opportunities to shop for local goods and souvenirs but this may vary depending on local conditions.

luggage

All passengers are limited to two (2) items of luggage each:

One (1) suitcase or backpack, with a maximum weight of 20kg. Your main luggage must have a lock on it.

One (1) piece of hand luggage, with a maximum weight of 5kg. It is advisable that your hand luggage consist of a 'daypack' – a small bag which you can access during the day and carry items like your camera, drinking water, toilet paper, hat, etc.

climate / what to wear

Nepal's weather is generally predictable and pleasant. There are four climatic seasons: March to May (spring), June to August (summer), September to November (autumn) and December to February (winter). The Kathmandu Valley has a mild climate; the daily average temperature ranges from 19-27°C in summer, and 2-20°C in winter. In the Terai (Chitwan), there is a monsoon from the end of June to the middle of September. Higher elevations have much colder temperatures. Clothing should be lightweight, hard-wearing and easily washed. For summer, loose fitting, non-revealing, cotton clothing is ideal. For colder months and colder evening or mornings around the year, layers of light jumpers or thermals and well as wind/waterproof jacket are good.

safety & security

Most people find that Nepal is a very friendly and hospitable country and feel quite comfortable wandering around alone however, we advise you to exercise more caution at night and generally take taxis rather than walk. Always be aware of pick pockets in local markets and crowds. Your passport will be continually checked by security at airports.

insurance, health & sanitation

We strongly encourage all travellers to take copies of their travel insurance documents (especially relevant international contact numbers) with them whilst on tour. These documents should be stored separately from the originals. All travel insurance providers require you to contact them ASAP in the unlikely event that you need medical treatment, hospitalisation or change travel plans (evacuate) to inform them of your situation. They will then decide the best course of action in regards to further treatment and/or repatriation and make appropriate booking arrangements.

Our partners on the ground will be able to assist you in contacting your travel insurance company ASAP. You must check your policy for exact inclusions and procedures. If clients receive any service, or out of pocket expenses that will result in an insurance claim such as medical treatment, they should keep all receipts they receive as proof for the claim. In all cases it is imperative that you obtain a medical report in English, from the treating doctor outlining the outcome of your consultation so that your claim can be processed. Public Toilets are nowhere near the same standard as found in Australia and generally do not have toilet paper. While driving, we will stop at 'good' facilities designed for tourists when available but it's a good idea to carry your own toilet paper and some disinfectant hand wash or wipes.

Drinking water - All water should be regarded as being potentially contaminated. Water used for drinking, brushing teeth or making ice

should have first been boiled or otherwise sterilised. Milk isn't pasteurised and should be boiled. Powdered or tinned milk is available, but make sure that it is reconstituted with pure water. Bottled drinking water and soft drinks are widely available and cheap. Some hotels provide free bottled water whilst others only provide boiled local water in plain bottles.

Food - The Nepalese cuisine is influenced by the nation's mixed cultures. However, you can expect mainly vegetarian based dishes; typically a dish called daal bhat tharkari, which translated literally means lentil soup, rice and curried vegetables. Chicken, mutton or pork is also typically served in most hotels. Newari (culture from the Kathmandu Valley) food is quite spicy with chilli a favourite while Nepali food is not as spicy. Do not buy food from street vendors and make sure all vegetables are cooked and fruit peeled (after being washed).

Special dietary requirements/food preferences - Nepal is a fantastic place for vegetarians as much of the cuisine is vegetarian (see above). As your Guide is trying to cater for the entire group, it is still advisable that you make your preferences known to them at the start of your trip. **If you have food allergies or any other preferences** please also advise your Guide at the start of your trip; they will do their best to ensure that your requirements are met.

Please note: Unfortunately we can give no guarantee that special requirements can be met.

Altitude - Group tour passengers will travel at low altitude; the Kathmandu Valley is at altitude of about 1350ms and the Terai (Chitwan) is even lower, so you will not need to worry about the effects of altitude. If you are travelling independently to other areas, you should do some research to find out the altitude involved in your itinerary and consult your Doctor to confirm you are fit enough to complete it.

money

Local Currency - The monetary unit is the Nepalese Rupee. NRs1 = 100 paise, which come in coins. We recommend keeping a small supply of small denomination rupee notes handy. Exchange rates will always vary but to give you an indication approx AU\$1 = NRs86.94 and US\$1 = NRs85.14. Larger expenses (hotel bills, trekking permits, etc) are payable in USDs only.

We recommend that that you have access to more than one source of money while travelling – bring a combination of USD cash (or Indian rupees), and a credit /debit card in USDs - this will give you the most security and flexibility while travelling.

Exchanging foreign cash or travellers' cheques - To avoid additional exchange rate charges and confusion, we advise you take cash in US Dollars. Banks are found in most towns in the Kathmandu Valley that exchange cash. Banks usually close at 230pm. Many hotels also offer currency exchange at similar rates. If you are travelling to remote areas, you should organise ahead, taking mainly NRs and some USDs. If you are travelling from India into Nepal through Kathmandu, you are not able to bring in 500 or 1000 INR notes. It is recommended to either change these into smaller denomination or to exchange into NRs, prior to departing for Nepal. You will need to present your passport to exchange any form of currency. You can bring an unlimited amount of foreign currency into Nepal, but you must declare this on arrival except where mentioned above.

Keep some of your exchange receipts. You can exchange local currency (up to 10% of the amount of foreign currency you brought in) back into USDs when you are exiting Nepal at the downstairs airport exchange on presentation of your passport, airline ticket and some receipts.

Credit cards and ATMs - Taking one credit card is recommended in case of emergency and may be used for large purchases in most of your hotels & upmarket souvenir stores. Visa, MasterCard and Amex are the most widely accepted credit cards. ATMs are available in Kathmandu and Pokhara but we recommend that this is not relied upon.