



ChallengeMD! 2009 Nepal (16th - 30th October)

Trip notes

Welcome to RAW Challenges... we hope that you enjoy exploring the world as much as we do. If you want to be right in amongst Nepal's famed mountain peaks in an area that sees surprisingly few trekkers, then Langtang, the valley of the glaciers, is the place. This spectacular trek follows an old trading route with an amazing diversity of scenery. We climb from a gorge like lower valley, up through forests of hemlock and larch to massive glacial valleys complete with crystal lakes, alpine meadows, monasteries, herds of yaks and wonderful mountain views of the Langtang and Ganesh Himal. Staying in small villages along the trail is a real highlight, allowing us an insight into Tibetan and Tamang communities that have settled in the mountains.



Itinerary

Day 1 Australia to Kathmandu

Check-In at the airport in Perth 3 hours before departure. We start with an overnight flight to Singapore and then onto Kathmandu.

Day 2 Bhaktapur

After arriving in Kathmandu at lunchtime we transfer to our hotel in Nepal's best preserved town, Bhaktapur. Centred around some of the most beautiful palaces, temples and traditional Newari houses, Bhaktapur exudes a wonderful timeless atmosphere. A great place to relax and explore on your first day in Nepal. Bhaktapur is located in the Kathmandu valley several kilometres from the main city of Kathmandu. This evening we will have a welcome meeting, full briefing and dinner.

Meals included: dinner only

Day 3 Ghorka village

We depart Kathmandu in the morning for the 4 hour drive to a picturesque and very friendly Ghorka village. This is a spectacular drive on winding mountain roads that provides a thrilling introduction to Nepal as we climb through terraced hills and villages clinging precariously to the sides of mountains. On a clear day you will get a preview of the awesome 7,000m snow clad peaks of the Langtang range behind the mountains we will be trekking into. Tonight we will be staying in a teahouse in Dhunche. (1950m)

Meals included: breakfast, lunch and dinner

Day 4 Ghorka village to Syabru

Today we have a final 3 hour drive in the morning before we begin the real challenge as we descend to Syabru River and then begin trekking up hill about 2 hrs via Bharkhu. Magnificent views of Mt. Ganesh Himal, Manaslu and Mt. Kerung of Tibet can be seen from here. Trek for another 2 hrs through the forest and reach Syabru village for the overnight stay. (2470m)

Meals included: breakfast, lunch and dinner

Day 5 Chongong

For about 2 hrs we walk downward through forest and ascend for about 1 hr to reach Bombu Village (1850 m). Gradually we ascend through Bombu forest and reach Chongong (also know as Lama Hotel). (2380m)

Meals included: breakfast, lunch and dinner

Day 6 Langtang village

On today's trek we walk through Rhododendron and Pine forest for about 3 hrs. We reach Ghoda Tabela then walk for another two hours and reach Langtang village (largest community in this area) inhabited by Buddhist Tamangs and Tibetans. (3500m)

Meals included: breakfast, lunch and dinner



Day 7 Kyanjin Gompa

After 3 hrs trekking through the trail we reach Kyanjin Gompa (3817m) where we can see local the cheese factory, monastery and breathtaking mountains views. We enjoy a rest day at Kyanjin Gompa. Put your feet up and relax or spend some time exploring the area and viewpoints of the surrounding mountains.

Meals included: breakfast, lunch and dinner

Days 8 - 10 Syabru

We spend the next 3 days returning to Syabru by the same route down the Langtang valley.

Meals included: breakfast, lunch and dinner

Day 11 Dhunche

Our final destination on the trek and a great place to unwind with a few refreshing drinks to celebrate the last day of trekking.

Meals included: breakfast, lunch and dinner

Day 12 Kathmandu

A long drive back to Kathmandu will see us arriving in the capital city in the afternoon. The Harati Hotel is in a great location with everything in Thamel within walking distance. Step out of the hotel and you are in an area of traditional shops and markets but only a five minutes walk away is the Thamel area of western style shops and restaurants, the tourist's Mecca of Nepal. Five minutes further walking brings you to the cultural riches of the unusual and character filled Durbar Square. Drop by the home of the Kumari, a living Goddess and visit the Buddhist temple of Swayambhunath (the 'monkey temple'), an icon of Nepal. You will have plenty of time to explore this legendary city of Hindu shrines, Buddhist stupas, and bustling bazaars.

Meals included: breakfast, lunch and dinner

Day 13 Free day in Kathmandu

A free day to roam the bustling streets of Kathmandu and enjoy its many sights and restaurants.

Meals included: breakfast

Day 14 Flight back to Australia

We will depart Kathmandu around midday for Singapore and our onward flight to Australia.

Meals included: breakfast only

Day 15 Arrival in Australia

You'll be arriving back in Sydney/Melbourne in the early morning.

Flight Itinerary

The itinerary is subject to change. Make sure you check the flight times closer to the departure date. Please note that you'll have to be at the airport for check-in on the 16th October 2009, as the flight to Singapore leaves at 1am in the morning on the 17th October.



What happens on arrival

Collect your bags and walk through into the arrivals hall of Kathmandu airport where you will be met by the RAW leader. He will be holding an "RAW Challenges sign". You will then transfer by private bus to the start hotel in Bhaktapur.

Joining Point

Bhadagoan Guest House

Bhaktapur

Pls. contact Himalayan Encounter at + 977 1 4700426 or + 977 1 4700335 for urgent messages

Finishing Point

Harati Hotel

Chetrapati

Kathmandu

Tel: + 977-1 4257 907 / 4257 758

Fax: +977-1 426 3469

Group Size

Maximum of 25 travellers per group

Accommodation

Hotels, guesthouse and teahouses. Obviously the standard of hotels and guesthouses will vary greatly and the more remote the location the more basic the accommodation becomes, this is all part of your challenge!

Meal Inclusions

Most meals included - see itinerary.

Transport

Private bus used to transport to start of trailhead and back.

Physical Rating

You will raise your heart rate on these trips, so a basic level of aerobic fitness is required. The days trekking can involve walking of up to 6 hours per day in steep terrain. The fitter you are, the more you will enjoy your challenge. The trek will take you to an altitude of 3490m and so your body will be working harder in the thinner air (see notes below on altitude sickness).

Culture Shock Rating

Expect to rough it every now and again, whether it's very simple group-share accommodation at a homestay, the odd cold shower or an encounter with a squat toilet.

Visas

It is your responsibility to arrange visas before you travel.

Nepal: Visas are obtainable from embassies abroad or on arrival at Kathmandu's Tribhuvan airport. (don't forget to bring 2 passport photos with you)



For Victoria residents:

You can mail (or apply in person) your application to:
Royal Nepalese Consulate, Level 7, 28-32 Elizabeth St (GPO Box 5466), Melbourne VIC 3001
Tel: (03) 9810 7600

Download instructions and an application form from: www.nepalconsulate.net.au
Include a return self addressed Yellow Express Post envelope, 1 visa application form & 1 passport size photograph, your current passport (valid for at least 6 months) & visa fee. They do not accept personal cheques or credit cards.

Hours of operation are 10.00am to 4.00pm from Monday to Friday.
Cost for a 15-day multiple entry tourist visa is A\$55, which takes 5 days to process.

For NSW, ACT, SA & TAS residents:

Nepalese Consulate General
Level 5, 203-233 New South Head Road, Edgecliff NSW 2027
Postal: PO Box 474, Edgecliff NSW 2027
Tel: (02) 9328 7062
Fax: (02) 9328 0323

www.nepalconsulate.org.au

If you are applying through the post please forward:

1. Your current passport (with at least 6 months validity).
2. Fully complete two visa application forms.
3. Two passport photographs attached to your forms.
4. Return self-addressed Yellow Express Post envelope or Registered envelope.
5. Bank cheque or Money order.

Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is compulsory for all our trips.

We strongly recommend that you take out insurance the moment you register for a trip as you are then covered should you not be able to go in the event of illness or accident. Please send these details (name of insurer, policy number and their 24 hour emergency contact number) to RAW Challenges prior to departure. Email: angela.rawtravel@gmail.com

We require that, at a minimum, you are covered for medical expenses including emergency repatriation. We strongly recommend that the policy also covers personal liability, cancellation, curtailment and loss of luggage and personal effects.

When travelling on a group trip, you will not be permitted to join the group until evidence of travel insurance and the insurance company's 24 hour emergency contact number has been seen by your leader. If you have credit card insurance your tour leader will require proof of purchase of the trip (a receipt of credit card statement) with a credit card in your name. Contact your bank for details of their participating insurer, the level of coverage and emergency contact telephone number.



Our preferred insurance company is CoverMore as they provide an excellent service. You can apply on line directly by clicking on this link:

<https://b2c.covermore.com.au/index.jsp?alpha=AAV0231> to apply

Health

All RAW travellers need to be in good physical health in order to participate fully in the group travel experience. If, in the opinion of our group leader, any traveller is unable to complete the itinerary without undue risk to themselves and/or the rest of the group, RAW reserves the right to exclude them from all or part of a trip without refund.

Please let us know of any medical conditions on the registration form and if you are currently taking prescription medicine as it is important that our leader is aware of your circumstances. We therefore ask that you read the itinerary in these trip notes thoroughly and then realistically self-assess your physical ability to complete the trip as described. Please consult with your doctor if you have any doubts.

There are no specific health requirements for entry into Nepal. However, you should consult your doctor for up-to-date information and prescriptions for vaccinations, high altitude medication and any reasonably foreseeable illnesses. We would recommend protection against *typhoid*, *polio*, *tetanus* and *hepatitis*. Please seek up to date advice from your doctor on what you should take. As some vaccinations require a course over weeks or months, contact your doctor as early as possible prior to departure. Generally, six to eight weeks' notice is adequate.

We recommend that you carry a First Aid kit as well as any personal medical requirements (such as a spare pair of prescription glasses). Please be aware that for legal reasons our leaders are prohibited from administering any type of drug including headache tablets/antibiotics etc.

Your First Aid kit should include:

- headache tablets
- diarrhoea treatment (both a blocker to bring relief from the symptoms and an antibiotic)
- band-aids
- antiseptic for cuts & scrapes
- lip balm
- insect repellent
- high factor sunscreen

Given the physical nature of this challenge we strongly advise bringing some sachets of an oral rehydration solution (available at chemists) as this aids recovery following activity and dehydration and also helps replace lost body salts should you suffer from 'gastro'. Just add a sachet to your water bottle each day. Please scroll down to the Special Safety Notes below for information on dehydration.

If you are 65 years or older a completed Medical Certificate is required. Please fax this through to 03 9597 0797 prior to departure.



Physical Preparation

In order to physically prepare yourself to trek up to 6 hours on successive days it is so important that you undertake a fitness program. Getting yourself fit is all part of the Challenge and one that you'll benefit from long after your trip is over. It is really worth putting in the effort before you go to condition the body as it means you'll enjoy the event rather than it being a struggle.

For a fitness program & advice click here: <http://rawchallenges.com/guide-to-trekking.php>

Build up your base endurance by long and frequent hikes which will ensure that you are in peak condition for the challenge. You can also mix this up by taking other forms of regular exercise which you currently do such as yoga, spinning classes, biking and swimming.

Money Exchange

Currency exchange rates often fluctuate. For the most up to date rates please refer to the following website: www.oanda.com

Major credit cards are accepted in cities only, but cash withdrawals are subject to a 3% to 4% service charge. We recommend that you don't use money changers on the street.

Spending Money

Every traveller is different and therefore spending money requirements will vary. Some travellers may drink more than others while other travellers like to purchase more souvenirs than most. Please consider your own spending habits when it comes to allowing for drinks, shopping and tipping.

Please note that there is a departure tax in Kathmandu of approx. NPR 1130 (approx. AUD\$20) payable when you leave Nepal.

Any tip that you wish to give your local guides or leader in recognition of excellent service is always appreciated. We recommend an overall tip of approx. USD\$ 30 which can be divided amongst the local leaders and porters.

Emergency Funds

Please also make sure you have access to an additional USD\$ 400, to be used when unforeseen incidents or circumstances outside our control (e.g. a natural disaster or political unrest) necessitate a change to our planned route. This is a rare occurrence but it is well worth being prepared!

Keeping In Touch - communication while on the road

If you need to be contacted while travelling we recommend that you set up an email address that can be accessed on the road. Email cafes are commonplace throughout the regions we visit. If someone wishes to contact you in an emergency we recommend that they refer to our Emergency contact. We don't recommend that family and friends try to contact you through hotels, as they are subject to change and the reception staff may not speak English.

Emergency Contact

In the case of a genuine crisis or emergency, please call RAW Challenges Melbourne Office.



Tel: +61 3 9597 0798. Outside of office hours please call 0410 290 544.

Your Fellow Trekkers

As you travel on a group trip you will be exposed to all the pleasures and maybe some of the frustrations of travelling in a group. We ask you to be understanding of the various needs and preferences of your group - patience with your fellow travellers is sometimes required for the benefit of everyone's travel experience.

Remember too that you have responsibilities to the group. If you are requested to be at a place at a certain time, ensure that you don't keep the rest of the group waiting. We have found time and time again that the very best trips we operate are those where the dynamics within the group work well - this takes just a little effort on your part.

Group Leader

All RAW group trips are accompanied by one of our group leaders. The aim of the group leader is to take the hassle out of your travels and to help you have the best trip possible. They will provide information on the places you are travelling through, offer suggestions for things to do and see, recommend great local eating venues and introduce you to our local friends.

While not being guides in the traditional sense you can expect them to have a broad general knowledge of the countries visited on the trip, including historical, cultural, religious and social aspects. We also use local guides where we think more specific knowledge will add to the enjoyment of the places we are visiting - we think it's the best of both worlds.

Responsible Travel

We believe strongly in low impact or rather positive impact tourism. Broadly speaking this means that we try to minimise the negative aspects of tourism on the local cultures and environments that we visit and highlight the positive aspects.

When we are trekking children will ask you for pens, money etc. It is always hard to resist giving them small gift. However we ask you not to do this as it encourages a culture of begging and often parents will take their children out of school and get their children to prey on tourists. Ask your leader what is the best way to give.

A Couple Of Rules

Illegal drugs will not be tolerated on our trips. Possessing or using drugs not only contravenes the laws of the land but also puts the rest of the group at risk. Smoking marijuana and opium is a part of local culture in some parts of the world but is not acceptable for RAW travellers.

Our philosophy of travel is one of respect towards everyone we encounter, and in particular the local people who make our destinations such special places. The exploitation of prostitutes is completely contrary to this philosophy. Our group leader has the right to expel any member of the group if drugs are found in their possession or if they use prostitutes.



Some general advice on packing:

- Try to keep the weight and bulk to a minimum by bringing clothes made from lightweight material.
- Don't pack too much clothing; one or two changes will be all you need.
- Be prepared for all eventualities, be it rain, unseasonable cold or heat.
- Good walking boots/shoes with ankle support that are well broken-in (this means worn frequently prior to travel because new boots invariably equal blisters and discomfort).

RAW provide porters to assist with carrying your luggage but you will be expected to carry your day pack and to keep your other luggage to a minimum.

On this journey we will experience variations of weather conditions from pleasant sunshine in Kathmandu to cold and possibly wet whilst trekking the various sections as well as windy conditions (wind chill factor) on some of the higher sections. This applies to trips in the October / November time frame. It is essential that you are properly prepared for variations in weather and temperatures.

For the trek all of your gear should be packed into plastic bags to protect from rain etc. Dry clothes are essential for your comfort. A medium size, comfortable daypack will be needed. Your main pack should be big enough to carry the requirements listed below including a sleeping bag. A sleeping bag is essential for this trip. (this can be hired)

What To Take

Our best advice is to pack as lightly as possible (try to stay under 12kg). Use a backpack or overnight bag with a shoulder strap or smaller bag with wheels. A suitcase is not recommended for this style of trip. During the day you will need to carry a day pack to carry camera, sunscreen, favourite snacks, jacket etc.

Recommended Checklist

Travel Documents:

- Passport (take photocopies) and Nepalese visa
 - Travel insurance (take photocopies)
 - Airline ticket
 - USD cash
 - Credit card
- ** Tip: use a money belt for security (put documents inside a plastic bag)

Personal Items

- first Aid kit (see the health section)
- iodine based water purification tablets,
- high factor sunscreen
- mosquito repellent



- sunglasses
- toiletries (biodegradable)
- watch or alarm clock
- ear plugs (in case room mate snores!)
- plastic bags for wet or dirty clothing (waterproof items on pack)
- wet wipes or antiseptic hand gel

Clothing

- 1 lightweight waterproof & windproof jacket (Gortex or similar quality)
- thermal underwear, warm hat and gloves,
- lightweight fleece jacket
- 1 pair sport shoes/ sandals to wear when not trekking
- warm socks
- small travel towel or sarong
- comfortable trousers for walking (not jeans)
- long sleeve cotton (or polypropylene) shirts or T-shirts

Trekking Equipment

- 1 pair of comfortable walking boots with a good grip and ankle support
- medium to large backpack
- day pack to carry your personal belongings during the day (should have waist straps)
- 1 sleeping bag (3/4 seasons, comfortable to -5C)
- inner sheet/sleeping sheet (optional)
- refillable water bottle (min. 750 ml capacity recommended) or 'Camel Bak' hydration pack
- trekking pole (optional) - *this can be bought in Nepal*

Other Suggestions:

- camera
- adapter for recharging digital camera (sockets are the 3 pin variety but can also accommodate 2 pin plugs)
- spare batteries
- reading / writing material
- penknife (put in main luggage at airport)
- torch
- toilet paper
- small calculator (when out bargaining!)
- photos of family or postcards of Australia (great way to have fun with locals you meet)
- phrase book, map and Lonely Planet guide
- small padlock for securing your luggage during flights

**Please note that you can hire sleeping bags, Gortex jackets and trekking poles from Kathmandu trekking stores. Please let us know before you go and we can arrange for you.*



Local Dress

We will be spending a lot of time in the more conservative rural regions of Nepal. Please remember that as visitors to someone else's home it is our responsibility to fit with the local customs by wearing appropriate clothing (irrespective of what other travellers are wearing). Building or trekking without a shirt or in a singlet is deemed offensive in the eyes of the locals.

We recommend loose fitting, long sleeved shirts and long shorts, skirts or pants when visiting rural communities. Let's cover up and give a really good impression. RAW is very firm on this policy, so please ensure you bring suitable clothing. Your group leader can advise you on what is appropriate dress and behaviour for visiting these communities.

Safety

Many national governments provide a regularly updated advice service on safety issues involved with international travel. We recommend that you check your government's advice for their latest travel information before departure.

We strongly recommend the use of a neck wallet or money belt while travelling, for the safe-keeping of your passport, air tickets, cash and other valuable items. Leave your valuable jewellery at home - you won't need it while travelling. Many of our hotels have safety deposit boxes, which is the most secure way of storing your valuables. A lock is recommended for securing your luggage.

Your leader will accompany you on all included activities however during your trip you will have some free time to pursue your own interests, relax and take it easy or explore at your leisure. While your group leader will assist you with the available options in a given location, please note that any optional activities you undertake are not part of your RAW itinerary, and RAW makes no representations about the safety of the activity or the standard of the operators running them. Please use your own good judgment when selecting an activity in your free time.

Please also note that your group leader has the authority to amend or cancel any part of the trip itinerary if it is deemed necessary due to safety concerns.

Special Safety Notes

Dehydration

Dehydration is the biggest risk when undertaking a physical challenge such as trekking over undulating terrain. It is so important to be aware of your fluid intake especially at altitude and to constantly drink water throughout the day (even when you do not feel thirsty). Symptoms of mild dehydration include:

- *flushed face*
- *extreme thirst, more than normal or unable to drink*
- *dry, warm skin*
- *cannot pass urine or reduced amounts, dark, yellow*



- *dizziness made worse when you are standing - weakness - cramping in the arms and legs*
- *sleepy or irritable*
- *headaches*
- *dry mouth, dry tongue; with thick saliva*

The simplest way of monitoring your fluid intake is by checking the colour of your urine. If it is clear or slightly yellow you are well hydrated but once it is a dark yellow you are in the danger zone and need to increase your fluid intake immediately. Ensure that you bring some Gastrolyte sachets as these help your recovery after trekking with the replacement of electrolytes. Gastrolyte is also the recommended treatment for dehydration caused by diarrhoea ('gastro').

Altitude Sickness

Altitude sickness has the potential to affect all trekkers from 2500m and higher. We ascend slowly and give our bodies plenty of time to adjust to the smaller quantities of oxygen in the air. However it is important to be aware of the normal altitude symptoms that you may encounter BUT NOT worry about:

- *Periods of sleeplessness*
- *Occasional loss of appetite*
- *Vivid, wild dreams at around 2500-3800m in altitude*
- *Unexpected momentary shortness of breath, day and night*
- *Periodic breathing that wakes you occasionally*
- *Your nose becomes bunged up*
- *Dry cough develops*
- *Mild headache*

If you are feeling nauseous and dizzy be sure to let the main leader know and the person you are walking with so that we can monitor your condition. However at the altitude we go to there should not be any problems. More details will be given to you at the briefing on the first evening.

RAW Challenges Newsletter

We have a free email newsletter full of travellers stories and experiences as well as news on new trips that we are running. Please send us an extract from your travel journal at the end of the trip. We also have a travel blog ('Travels with a Purpose') at: <http://intrepidchallenges.wordpress.com> where we like to feature your stories.

We would also love to receive any photos after the event as we are starting to build up a travellers album for each of our destinations on our website. We need resolution of around 1MB. Please could you send a CD to: RAW Challenges Photo album, 2/24 Bay Road, Sandringham, VIC 3191.

If you have any suggestions to add more information to our trip dossier that you think other travellers would find useful please email: adventure@rawtravel.com. And of course email us if you have any questions leading up to the event.



HAVE AN AMAZING ADVENTURE!

The information in this trip dossier has been compiled with care and is provided in good faith. However it is subject to change, and does not form part of the contract between the client and RAW Challenges.