



Nepal & the Mystical Himalayas 2023

The mighty Himalayas rise to snowcapped peaks that are the very rooftop of the world. Sinuous green terraces wind as far as the eye can see along mountain valleys. Prayer flags adorn lively temples that reveal colorful ancient scrolls and exquisite carvings. This is Nepal. With O.A.T., you'll explore the land and meet the people like a local: Trek on stone paths threading pristine hillsides and sweeping valleys ... float on a river raft through untouched forest ... ride through lush jungle in search of wildlife. Throughout your journey, your Trip Experience Leader's lifetime of experience adds color and dimension to every moment.

In our O.A.T. small group, encounter the Nepalese people where they live, farm, and pray—in the foothills of the soaring Himalayas, along the pristine Seti River, in bountiful Chitwan National Park, and in the kaleidoscopic swirl of Kathmandu and serene beauty of Pokhara. Join us in Nepal, and discover an unforgettable world of profound and ageless beauty, nestled beneath the rugged peaks of eight of the world's ten highest mountains.

Please note: Nepal is still recovering from the 2015 earthquake, so you will likely encounter rough roads and other infrastructure issues that may affect travel times. Additionally, we do not offer elephant rides as part of our itinerary, as elephant rides offered in certain parts of Nepal subject these gentle giants to inhumane treatment, which O.A.T. does not condone.

REMINDER: Space for this special journey is available on a first-come, first-serve basis and is truly limited. To reserve your place today, please call Curtis Whitaker at **(269) 209-5889**. If you haven't experienced a Scott & Curtis travel adventure before, feel free to ask questions or meet with our staff.



Snapshot Itinerary: Nepal & the Mystical Himalayas 2023

Travel Dates: *October 2023*

Day 1 – **Depart U.S.**

Day 2 – **Arrive Dubai, United Arab Emirates**

Day 3 – **Fly to Kathmandu, Nepal**

Day 4 – **Kathmandu • Controversial Topic:
Pollution on Mount Everest**

Day 5 – **Optional Mount Everest light • Explore
Patan • Meet a local Kumari**

Day 6 – **Fly to Pokhara • Overland trek through
Annapurnas**

Day 7 – **A Day in the Life of Majgoan Village • Visit
Tanchok Majgoan Basic School • Lunch with local
villagers**

Day 8 – **Annapurna overland trek • Village visit**

Day 9 – **Return to Pokhara • Home-Hosted Dinner •
Controversial Topic: Marriage in Nepal**

Day 10 – **Pokhara • Controversial Topic: The Tibetan
refugee struggle in Nepal • Optional Annapurna Base
Camp Heli-tour • Phewa Lake canoe excursion** DAY 11
Overland to Seti River • Seti River rafting

Day 11 – **Overland to Seti River • Seti River rafting**

Day 12 – **Explore local village**

Day 13 – **Seti River Rafting • Explore Chitwan
National Park on foot**

Day 14 – **Jeep safari in Chitwan National Park • Rapti
River canoe excursion**

Day 15 – **Fly to Kathmandu • Pashupatinath • Explore
Kathmandu**

Day 16 – **Kathmandu • Fly to Dubai, United Arab
Emirates**

Day 17 – **Return to U.S.**



COVID-19 UPDATE: Your health and safety is our #1 priority. In partnership with our travel providers Great Circle Travel and OAT, we are monitoring the COVID-19 situation daily, including how it may impact future travel plans. If any changes are made, we will do our best to alert you as soon as possible. If you have questions in the meantime, please call Curtis Whitaker during regular business hours at **(269) 209-5889**. Thank you!





Detailed Itinerary: Nepal & the Mystical Himalayas 2023

Day 1 – Depart U.S.

Evening: Depart the U.S. today on your overnight flight to Dubai.

Day 2 – Arrive Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Evening: Arrive in Dubai, where an O.A.T. representative will transfer you approximately 30 minutes to your hotel for your overnight stay. Upon arrival, we'll check in and receive our room assignments. Depending on the hotel, amenities may include a restaurant, outdoor swimming pool, and a fitness center. Typically, each of the hotel's rooms offers coffee- and tea-making facilities, a TV, a safe, a minibar, and a private bathroom.

Day 3 – Fly to Kathmandu, Nepal

Breakfast: Served buffet-style at the hotel beginning at 6am, with Middle Eastern and American options available.

Morning: You have the freedom to explore Dubai at your own pace. Perhaps you'll peruse the bright and shiny wares of the Deira Gold Souk, stroll over to the bank of Dubai Creek, where you can admire the brightly-colored dhow boats that ply the Arabian Gulf—or hop aboard a smaller abra boat to see the cityscape from the water.

Lunch: On your own—ask your Trip Experience Leader for local restaurant recommendations.

Afternoon: Just after noon, we'll catch a flight to Nepal's capital, Kathmandu. Upon arrival around 6pm, we'll board our bus and transfer for about 30 minutes to our hotel. Depending on where we stay, our hotel may feature a fitness center, spa, pool, and a restaurant. Each of the guestrooms typically includes wireless Internet access, a TV, coffee- and tea-making facilities, and a private bathroom. When we arrive at our hotel, we meet our Trip Experience Leader, a Nepali, whose mission is to share the cities, land, people, and language of his or her homeland with us.

REMINDER: *Space for this special journey is available on a first-come, first-serve basis and is truly limited. To reserve your place today, please call Curtis Whitaker at (269) 209-5889. Welcome!*



Dinner: On your own—ask your Trip Experience Leader for local restaurant recommendations. You may want to try momo, a South Asian dumpling popular across much of Asia, including the Himalayan region.

Evening: Free for you to do as you'd like. You might like to glimpse Kathmandu's during a nighttime stroll, or retire early after today's transfer.

Freedom to Explore: During your three days in Kathmandu, you have the freedom to explore Nepal's capital city on your own during your free time. Below are a few recommended options for independent explorations:

Important Travel Notes:

- For your comfort and safety, we recommend this tour for individuals in good physical condition. If you have difficulty walking, this may be a difficult trip for you.
- We reserve the right to cancel this tour due to insufficient registration. Full refund will be given if tour is canceled due to insufficient registration.
- If traveling alone, we will match you up with a roommate (this tour is double occupancy only).
- Please read the "What to Expect" box on the next page carefully. If you have further questions, call Curtis Whitaker at **(269) 209-5889**.

Shop the handicrafts of Mahaguthi Craft with a Conscience: This store sells crafts, textiles, and other items made by 30-50 artisans in remote Nepalese villages. Each purchase helps secure employment, fair wages, and social benefits for the individuals selling their crafts through the store. You might even have the opportunity to learn more about these crafts from the artisans themselves and about the methods they are taking to keep these traditional art forms alive in the modern age. Prepare to spend about 1 hour here.
How to get there: A 20- to 25-minute taxi ride, about \$10 USD one way.
Hours: 10am-4pm, daily.
Cost: Free.

Learn about traditional healing therapy at Kundalini Sound & Herbal Therapy: Take a course led by a certified master instructor about the healing power of singing bowls (inverted bells used during meditation), or receive a sound healing session aimed at balancing a person's

energy through the chakras, or “power points” of the human body. Perhaps you might run into locals coming in and out of their own appointments for this traditional form of sound therapy. Plan to spend about 3-4 hours here and make an appointment in advance.

How to get there: A 10- to 15-minute taxi ride, about \$10 USD one way.

Hours: 10am-8pm, daily.

Cost: Varies by service or course.

Take a stroll through the bustling square of Ason led by your Trip Experience Leader: You’ll witness the seamless blend of the residential, ceremonial, and cultural in Kathmandu’s city center. As you make your way through the square, take note of the intricate wood carvings adorning the more modern buildings in contrast with the traditional shops selling copper and bronze pots typically used for cooking and even religious rituals. Plus, travel back in time as you witness the elaborately decorated three-story Annapurna Temple.

How to get there: About a 20-minute taxi ride from the hotel, around \$10 USD one-way.

Hours: Your Trip Experience Leader will offer a walk at 10am and 8pm.

Cost: Free.

Day 4 – Kathmandu • Controversial Topic: Pollution on Mount Everest

Breakfast: Served buffet-style at the hotel beginning at 7am, with Nepalese and American options available.

Morning: Before we begin the day’s explorations, we’ll gather in the hotel at about 10am for a 1-hour Welcome Briefing. During this briefing, we will introduce ourselves and review our itinerary in more detail (including any changes that may need to occur). Our Trip Experience Leader will also discuss logistics, safety and emergency procedures, and answer questions we may have.

Around 11:30am, we’ll set out on a 45-minute orientation walk around the vicinity of our hotel to acquaint ourselves with the area. During our explorations, we’ll have opportunities to see locals going about their daily routines and even have the chance to interact with residents. Mingle with locals when we stop by a tea shop and food cart to sample traditional sweet samosas.

Around 12:15pm, we’ll wrap up with an approximate half-hour drive to the Boudhanath Stupa, considered the center of Tibetan Buddhism in Nepal, and one of the most sacred sites of Tibetan Buddhism outside Tibet. This stupa—or large dome-like structure full of Buddhist relics—was built to reflect the shape of a mandala commonly featured in Tibetan art.

What to Expect: Nepal & the Mystical Himalayas 2023

■ **Physical Requirements:** Must be able to walk 3-5 miles unassisted and participate in 2-3 hour treks. Must not have health conditions that preclude climbing to high altitudes. Our activities on Day 8 include a 3.5-hour uphill hike of three miles and a 140-step uphill hike that will last around two hours. We reserve the right for Trip Experience Leaders to restrict participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their limitations impact the group’s experience. Altitude Elevations up to 5,000 feet.

■ **Terrain and Transportation:** Travel over city streets, rugged paths, and unpaved roads. Trek through foothills that can be steep and slippery. Raft down a river with Class II-III rapids. Agility and balance required in most situations. Travel by 18-passenger minibus, canoe, river raft.

■ **Climate:** Prepare for humidity and heat in excess of 90°F during the day, during summer, and as low as 50°F at night. Temperatures drop to about 50-60°F between October-March, and buses and hotels are not heated.

Passport & Visa Information

Your passport should meet these requirements for this itinerary: It should be valid for at least 6 months after your scheduled return to the U.S. It should have the recommended number of blank pages. The blank pages must be labeled “Visas” at the top. Pages labeled “Amendments and Endorsements” are not acceptable. Nepal: Visa required. Travelers who are booked on this adventure will be sent a complete Visa Packet—with instructions, applications, and a list of visa fees—approximately 100 days prior to their departure.

Vaccinations Information

Our travel partner GCT requires a valid Covid-19 vaccination **plus** booster shot for all travelers. For other vaccinations that **may** be recommended for this trip, please visit the CDC’s “Traveler’s Health” website at www.cdc.gov/travel.



Lunch: At a local restaurant near the stupa 1pm, featuring traditional cuisine.

Afternoon: After a brief visit inside the stupa, we'll board the bus back to our hotel around 3:15pm. Upon arrival around 3:45pm, you have some free time during which you can venture out to explore expansive Durbur Square or you may visit Pottery Square where you can see a selection of handmade goods and the process of pottery making. Or, you may choose to relax at the hotel.

Around 6pm, we'll gather for a 1-hour people-to-people experience when we sit down with a local woman who has climbed Mount Everest. She'll share the obstacles she had to overcome to achieve her goal and answer any questions we have for her. Plus, she'll address the Controversial Topic of pollution on Mount Everest. This local woman is just one of many climbers who has left waste in her wake during her expedition. How are environmentalists combatting the gradual increase of man-made debris on the mountain?

Dinner: On your own. You may seek out a traditional dish like pulao, which is fried rice seasoned with local spices and accompanied by ingredients like yogurt.

Evening: You will have free time following dinner to venture into Kathmandu by night or enjoy the company of fellow travelers at the hotel.

Day 5 – Optional Mount Everest flight • Explore Patan • Meet a local Kumari

Early Morning: You may elect to join us for an optional flight to Everest (weather permitting). This iconic mountain is known in Tibet as Chomolungma, which means “Mother of the Universe” or “Goddess Mother of the Earth.” The Nepali name is Sagarmatha, or “Goddess of the Sky.” Avid climbers call this mountain “the ultimate climb,” and with its astounding summit height of 29,029 feet above sea level, Mount Everest earns the title of the tallest peak on Earth.

Depart the hotel around 5:30am for a 20-minute drive to the airport. The helicopter takes off around 6:30am and you'll enjoy 45 minutes in the air. Rising majestically out of the Himalayan range, its snowy peak and intricate geography offer us views from above. Around 7:45am, you'll depart the airport and drive back to the hotel, arriving in time for breakfast around 8:30am.

Breakfast: Served buffet-style at the hotel from 7am-9am, with Nepalese and American options available.

Morning: Around 10am, we'll board our bus and take a 20-minute drive to Patan (4,429 feet), which sits across the Bagmati River from Kathmandu. Patan was developed on relatively thin layers of deposited clay and gravel in the central part of a dried ancient lake known as Nagdaha. The city was designed in the shape of the Buddhist Dharma-Chakra (Wheel of Righteousness). The four thurs, or mounds, located on the perimeter of Patan are known as the Ashoka Stupas, named for Emperor Ashoka, who visited Kathmandu with his daughter, Charumati, in 250 BC and erected the five stupas. These mounds are joined by more than 1,200 Buddhist and Hindu monuments of various shapes and sizes located throughout the city. Patan is known for its art and artisans: The region has produced the most artists and finest craftsmen in Nepali history, and their devotional artwork gives us fascinating displays of Nepal's fused cultures.

Upon arrival, we'll walk for 10 minutes to a local temple where we'll discover a Kumari, which are believed to be human goddesses that are sacred to the local culture. Then around 11am, we'll walk for 15 minutes to the home of a former Kumari. She'll share an intimate glimpse of what life as a Kumari was like and how it's changed since leaving that life behind. We'll also discuss how human rights activists have challenged this traditional role because it denies these women a normal life.

Next, we'll cap off our discoveries here around 12:15pm. We'll take a 10-minute walk to our next destination: Durbar Square, one of the seven UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Nepal that are preserved within a protected Monument Zone. Upon arrival, we'll set off on a 30-minute guided walking tour with your Trip Experience Leader. As Durbar translates to "palace," the term "Durbar Square" is used to describe any plaza opposite a royal palace. But while there are several Durbar Squares across Nepal, Patan's is renowned for being one of the most picturesque, with its intricately carved architecture, delicate wind chimes, and ornate fountains. We'll end our discoveries in Durbar Square, where you will be in walking distance of many local restaurants.

Lunch: On your own in Patan. Ask your Trip Experience Leader where you can find traditional dishes like thukpa, a simple soup typically made with thick noodles, vegetables, meat, and eggs.

Afternoon: Just after 2pm, we'll regroup and visit a vegetable and spice market where you'll truly feel the rhythm of life as our small group allows us to weave through the crowds as the locals do. We'll also have the opportunity to interact with shoppers and vendors to get a full perspective of the typical scene at the market. Just after 3pm,

we'll board our bus for the 30-minute drive back to the hotel. Upon arrival, enjoy some free time to relax or set off to explore the city at your own pace. Perhaps you'll explore Mahaguthi Craft with a Conscience, a shop that sells goods crafted by locals living in remote areas of Nepal. Or, you may journey to Kundalini Sound & Herbal Therapy to learn about healing treatments for the mind and body.

We'll gather around 6pm, board our bus, and drive for about 15 minutes to a local restaurant.

Dinner: At a local restaurant around 6:15pm. During our Welcome Dinner, we'll savor the flavors of Nepal and toast to our discoveries to come.

Evening: We'll depart the restaurant around 8pm for our hotel, arriving around 8:15pm. Upon arrival, you may choose to retire to your room to pack before we depart Pokhara tomorrow. Or, you may choose to set off on an evening stroll to enjoy the city by night.

Mount Everest flight - \$220/person

At dawn, you may elect to enjoy an optional flight to Everest (weather permitting), known in Tibet as Sagarmatha or "Goddess of the Sky." Avid climbers call this mountain "the ultimate climb," and with its astounding summit height of 29,029 feet above sea level, Mount Everest earns the title of the tallest peak on Earth. Rising majestically out of the Himalayan range, its snowy peak and intricate geography offer us breathtaking views from the air.

Day 6 – Fly to Pokhara • Overland trek through Annapurnas

Activity Note: Today's activities include a 2-hour trek through terraced farmland and wooded hillsides.

Breakfast: Served buffet-style at the hotel beginning at 6:30am, with Nepalese and American options available.

Morning: We'll check out of our hotel around 8:30am and drive for about 30 minutes to the airport. There, we'll catch a 20-minute flight just before 10am. Our destination is Pokhara, a historic city located at an elevation of 3,080 feet along the ancient trade route from Tibet to India built around Lake Phewa. From our plane, we may see panoramic views of impressive canyons carved out by the Seti River and defined by the fast rise of the Annapurna mountain range. Pokhara boasts a number of natural phenomena such as a waterfall that plunges and disappears into a hole and a stretch of the Seti River that disappears into a small opening in the canyon wall.

Upon arrival around 10:15am, we meet our trek guide for a briefing at our regional office. Then just before 11:30am, we'll board our bus for a 15-minute drive to a local restaurant.

Lunch: At a local restaurant around 11:45am, featuring traditional cuisine.

Afternoon: Around 1pm, we'll board our bus and journey for about 1.5 hours to meet our trekking crew. Upon arrival, we'll begin our 2-hour trek amidst terraced farmland and wooded hillsides. Walking through the lower foothills of the Annapurnas, views of the Pokhara Valley surround us.

We'll arrive at the lodge around 4:45pm. Amenities include a communal room for meals, a fireplace, and bar. Each of the rooms offers simple amenities and a private bathroom. The lodge, with its beautiful gardens and peaceful atmosphere, offers views of Macchapuchare, or Fishtail Mountain, a peak whose sacred summit is off-limits to climbers. While this famous peak is less than 22,000 feet high, it is known for its twin peaks and its startling beauty. The balance of the afternoon is yours to simply relax and enjoy the view.

Dinner: At our lodge around 6:30pm, featuring simple, traditional fare of the Annapurna region.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Freedom to Explore: During your two days in the Annapurna Valley, you have the freedom to explore this rural wonderland in your free time. Below is a recommended option for independent explorations:

Discover what mountain life is like in the Annapurna Valley during a village hike: Take a leisurely 2- to 3-mile hike to a traditional Gurung village here in the valley. You might interact with locals here who will give you a glimpse into the village's main occupation: bee-keeping. This is also a great opportunity to chat with ex-Gurkha soldiers from this village who served in the British-Indian Army.

How to get there: The village is about a 30-minute walk from the lodge.

Hours: All hours, daily.

Cost: Free.

Day 7 – A Day in the Life of Majgoan Village • Visit Tanchok Majgoan Basic School • Lunch with local villager

Breakfast: Served buffet-style at the lodge from 7am-8:30am, with Nepalese and American options available.

Morning: We depart the lodge around 9am and walk for 45 minutes to Majgoan Village where we'll enjoy our A Day in the Life experience. During our time here today, we'll learn firsthand what it's like to live in the shadow of the Annapurnas. Upon arrival around 10am, we'll enjoy a chance to meet local children at the Tanchok Majgoan Basic School (when in session) which is supported



in part by Grand Circle Foundation. We'll first be greeted by teachers and students before we meet the school principal. They'll welcome us into their classrooms to see Nepal's education system firsthand. Then, we'll head outside to play traditional games with the students, such as one game that requires you and the students to tie balloons around your ankles. Your opponents will then try to pop your balloons. They'll teach us the rules of these games in further detail, and this is a great time for you to incorporate English language lessons into the games. Our whole visit to this local school will last for a little over an hour.

Though formal education has existed in Nepal for 150 years, for the first century it was only available to members of the royal family. It has only been the last five decades that ordinary Nepali children were able to enjoy schooling as a result of the popular democratic uprising that ended the rule of the royal family. Today, five million students fill more than 20,000 schools (from elementary schools to universities). You'll get to know a few of these promising young people during our visit.

At around 11:15, we'll head over to the village health clinic and speak with a nurse there. For about a half hour, we'll have the chance to learn about how women's health is handled in the community, particularly in terms of family planning and birth control.

Then around noon, we explore nearby Majgoan Village, where we'll spend time with the people who live here. We'll be greeted by the village's women's group, including the head of the group who will lead us on a walk around the village.

Lunch: With the locals in the Majgoan Village around 1pm, featuring traditional dishes.

Afternoon: Around 2:30pm, we'll say our goodbyes to our hosts and depart the village for the 45-minute walk back to our lodge. Upon arrival, you'll have a few hours of down time to relax.

Dinner: At the lodge around 7pm, featuring regional cuisine.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

What's Included in the Package

- International airfare, airport transfers, government taxes, fees, and airline fuel surcharges, unless you choose to make your own air arrangements.
- All land and water transportation, transfers, and two internal flights.
- Accommodations for 7 nights in hotels, 5 nights in lodges while trekking, and 2 nights in a safari-style tented camp while rafting.
- 36 meals—14 breakfasts, 11 lunches, and 11 dinners (including 1 Home-Hosted Dinner) 23 small group activities.
- 23 small group activities. Explore in a small group of 8-16 travelers (avg. group size of 13).
- Use of daypacks and walking sticks (provided only during trekking portion of trip).
- Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader, local trekking guides, and porters.
- Gratuities for local guides, drivers, lodge and camp staff, and luggage porters.

Day 8 – Annapurna overland trek • Village visit

Activity Note: Today's optional excursion to Tamejong Village will involve walking for nearly 2.5 hours over trails that may be bumpy, uneven, or steep at times and will include walking up many steps.

Breakfast: Served buffet-style at the lodge from 7am-8:30am, with Nepalese and American options available.

Morning: Around 9am, we'll depart our hotel on foot, beginning our 45-minute trek to a small village which seems to naturally rise out of the terraced rice fields. These green "steps" that cascade down the hillside are a testament to the care and hard work of the people that live and work on the land. Upon entering this ancient village, and due to our small group size, we have the chance to interact with the villagers as they move through their day of feeding the animals, farming, and caring for their children. Around 11am, we'll also have the chance to meet a migrant laborer who has made their home here, and hear directly from them about the challenges they've faced. Just after noon, we walk back to the lodge, arriving around 12:45pm.

Lunch: At the lodge around 1pm, featuring traditional cuisine.

Afternoon: Free for your own discoveries. You may choose to relax at the lodge where you have the option to get a massage or rest in your room. Or perhaps you'll join your Trip Experience Leader on a journey to Tamejong Village where you can get another perspective of living in this region from the locals who live here. To get to the village will involve a 30-minute walk downhill. Upon arrival around 4pm, we'll spend about an hour interacting with the locals of the village. Then, we'll depart around 5pm to make the downhill trek back to our lodge, which can take anywhere from 45 minutes to an hour. If you do choose to join your Trip Experience Leader, please note that you'll be walking for nearly 2.5 hours.

Dinner: At the lodge around 7pm, featuring regional dishes.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Day 9 – Return to Pokhara • Home-Hosted Dinner • Controversial Topic: Marriage in Nepal

Activity Note: Today's activities include a 2-hour walk.

Breakfast: Served buffet-style at the lodge beginning at 7am, with Nepalese and American options available.

Morning: Around 8:30am, we begin our 2-hour walk back to the main road. From here, we'll board our bus for a 1.5-hour drive to Pokhara. Set in a valley where Asia's ancient civilizations crept down from the highlands of Tibet and the Indo-Gangetic Plain, Pokhara marks an important stop along an age-old trade route. The mountains around this tropical valley shoot up starkly toward the sky, leaping upwards of 26,000 feet and disappearing into the misty shroud that drapes about their shoulders. As lofty symbols of man's highest hopes and the source of eternal inspiration, these peaks are considered sacred to Buddhists, Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, and followers of Tibet's indigenous Bon traditions alike. Machapuchare, the fish-tail crown at the center of the Annapurnas, is off-limits to climbers because of its association with the gods.

Around 12:30pm, we arrive in Pokhara and head to our hotel. Depending on where we stay, amenities may include a restaurant and swimming pool. Typically, the hotel's rooms include wireless Internet access, air-conditioning, a minibar, and coffee- and tea-making facilities.

Lunch: At the hotel around 12:45pm, featuring hot and cold dishes.

Afternoon: Free for your own discoveries—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations. Perhaps you'd like to discover traditional art at TheBatik Workshop. There, you'll learn about Batik, a traditional process for dyeing patterns into cloth, during a hands-on course led by an expert instructor.

Around 5:15pm, we'll reconvene to head to our Home-Hosted Dinner. We'll split into three or four groups and ride about 15 minutes to a nearby home.

Dinner: In the homes of local families around 5:30pm. During our Home-Hosted Dinner, we'll savor the traditional flavors of Nepal while discussing daily life and the local culture with our hosts. During our time here, our hosts may show us traditional cooking techniques, teach us typical folk dances, or share insight into customary clothing.

This is also a great opportunity to get an intimate glimpse of life here, especially in terms of multi-generational families living and working together in the same home. In particular, we'll engage in a conversation around a Controversial Topic: marriage in Nepal. Historically, many women were married off at young ages due to poverty and unequal gender dynamics in the country—even today, around 40% of Nepalese women are married before they turn 18. You'll get to talk to female members of this local family about their experience growing up in a male-dominated culture. Though child marriage was ostensibly outlawed in the country in the early 1960s, the people of Nepal still experience the effects of this outdated cultural practice.

Evening: Around 7:45pm, we'll say goodbye to our hosts and drive for 15 minutes back to the hotel. You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Freedom to Explore: During your two days in Pokhara, you have the freedom to explore this Himalayan city on your own during your free time. Below are a few recommended options for independent explorations:

Go Zip-lining or Paragliding: Calling all thrill seekers. Paragliding over the Himalayas has become a more popular sport in Pokhara with the chance to soar above villages, terraces, and dramatic valleys. The city is also home to one of the world's tallest, longest, and steepest ziplines. This activity is also popular with locals, so there will likely be plenty of opportunities for conversation about the surrounding natural beauty and life in the Himalayas. Be sure to admire the view as you float by the Annapurna range. Plan to spend about 4 hours here.



How to get there: 45-minute transfer included in package.
 Hours: Tours are available by reservation from 9am-5pm, daily, and last about 2.5 hours.
 Cost: \$120 USD. Package includes transportation.

Discover traditional art at The Batik Workshop: Learn about Batik, a traditional process for dying patterns into cloth, during a hands-on course at the workshop led by an expert instructor. Participants select their own design and dye their cloth using the Batik technique for themselves before having a unique memento of their experience to take home. This is also an activity frequented by locals, so there will be opportunity for conversations about the ancient art and life in Nepal. Plan to spend about an hour here crafting your batik.

How to get there: A 10-minute taxi ride, about \$5 USD one way.

Hours: 9am-5pm, daily.

Cost: About \$24 USD.

Get an in-depth look at efforts in Pokhara, and throughout Nepal, to encourage women empowerment at the Women's Skills Development Organization: A non-profit trade organization, WSDO was established in 1975 and works to provide women who face socio-economic hardships with skills training and resources. Here at the workshop and store, you can find artisan handicrafts made by the women of the organization including purses, toys, and even shoes.

How to get there: An approximate 10-minute taxi ride

from the hotel, around \$5 USD one way.

Hours: 10am-5pm, Sunday-Friday.

Cost: Free.

Day 10 – Pokhara • Controversial Topic: The Tibetan refugee struggle in Nepal • Optional Annapurna Base Camp Heli-tour • Phewa Lake canoe excursion

Breakfast: Served buffet-style at the hotel from 7am-9am, with Nepalese and American options available.

Morning: The morning is free for your own discoveries. Check with your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations. Weather permitting, you may alternatively choose to join an optional helicopter tour to Annapurna Base Camp. Depart the hotel around 7am and drive for 15 minutes to the airport where your helicopter will take off just before 7:45am. Surrounded on all sides by 8,000 meter peaks, the views from the helicopter are some of the most coveted in the world. You'll land at a base camp around 8:15am where you'll take in views of the mountain peaks from another perspective. Just before 9am, you'll reboard the helicopter and fly back to the airport,



arriving around 9:15am. Then, you'll drive for 15 minutes back to the hotel.

Around 10am, our group will meet with our Trip Experience Leader at the hotel for a 30-minute briefing on river rafting in preparation for our rafting excursion tomorrow. Then around 10:45am, we'll walk about 10-minutes from our hotel to slip canoes into the crystalline water of Phewa Lake, a lovely gem set at 2,917 feet, framed by the Sarangkot and Kaskikot hills. We may spot fish zipping through the water or local bird species flying overhead, and weather permitting, we may have the opportunity to see the majestic Annapurna Mountains.

After around 11:45am, we'll board our bus and drive for 15 minutes to a Tibetan refugee camp where we'll meet members of a Tibetan family who will share their personal story with us. We'll engage in a Controversial Topic: the struggles of Tibetan refugees who aspire to make a life in Nepal. Though the Nepalese people have provided Tibetan refugees with a safe haven, there are a number of obstacles these refugees face, namely in terms of finding work and health care as noncitizens of the country.

Lunch: At a local restaurant around 1:15pm, featuring regional dishes.

Afternoon: Around 2:30pm, we'll depart the restaurant and walk for 10 minutes back to the hotel. Enjoy a few hours of free time to relax at the hotel or set off to explore on your own. Perhaps you'll visit the International Mountain Museum. Learn about the geology, flora, fauna, and human activity of the Himalayas, including Mount Everest, here.

Around 6pm, we'll regroup at the hotel and walk about 15 minutes to dinner.

Dinner: At a local restaurant around 6:30pm.

Evening: Around 7:30pm, we'll start our walk back to the hotel. You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Heli-tour to Annapurna Base Camp - \$350/person

Travel by helicopter among the Himalaya's iconic 8,000 meter peaks, eventually reaching Annapurna Base Camp, a coveted destination for mountaineers around the world. We'll land there, at an elevation of 13,550 feet above sea level, before returning to Pokhara via a route that takes trekkers up to a week.

Day 11 – Overland to Seti River • Seti River rafting

Activity Note: For our rafting experience, we'll split up into smaller groups as our rafts can only hold up to 6 passengers. During our rafting adventure, we may face a few sections of Class II rapids, where there may be some rough water with waves up to three or four feet, and perhaps some rocks and drops that require maneuvering by our expert guides.

Breakfast: Served buffet-style at the hotel beginning at 7am, with Nepalese and American options available.

Morning: Around 9am, we'll board our bus and begin our nearly 2.5 hour drive to a point along the Seti River, located at an elevation of 2,500 feet, where we'll begin our rafting journey. This animated river runs through Pokhara and displays some visually fascinating feats—at one point it appears to be only two meters wide, while its massive volume of water continues to flow, hidden by immense depths. Upon arrival at our rafting launch site around 11:15am, we'll receive instructions from our river guides before boarding our American-made raft. We'll let our experienced crew navigate the three-hour ride, while we observe villagers we may encounter along the river banks: women washing clothes, men fishing with sticks and cloth nets, and children swimming and playing.

Lunch: We'll pause our rafting journey for a pre-prepared picnic lunch on the banks of the river around 12:45pm.

Afternoon: Just after 1pm, we'll continue following smooth, easy waters. Around 3pm, we land on the banks of the river to settle into our safari-style camp surrounded by forest. The camp features permanent tents with twin beds, a changing room, veranda, and attached bathrooms. Around 3:15pm, we'll enjoy Welcome Drinks and a 15-minute briefing from the camp manager.

Enjoy some free time to get settled in before we gather around 6pm for a 45-minute conversation about this region with our Trip Experience Leader. During this conversation, we'll gain insight into the local culture, social issues, and traditions here.

Dinner: At the camp around 7pm, featuring hot and cold dishes.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.



Day 12 – Explore local village

Breakfast: Served buffet-style at the camp from 6:30am-8:30am, with Nepalese and American options available.

Morning: Around 9am, our guides lead us on a 1-hour hike to a nearby village. This is a chance to see and experience daily life in this valley for yourself. The Kahare Village is home to around 150 members of the Gurung hill tribe who primarily work as farmers. We'll explore the village, passing over a suspension bridge to take in views of the surrounding scenery, and we'll see locals going about their daily routines. We'll also chat with villagers to learn more about daily life here.

We'll spend time at the village until about 11am when we walk for about 1 hour back to our camp. There, we'll enjoy approximately 1 hour of free time before lunch.

Lunch: At the camp around 1pm, featuring traditional dishes.

Afternoon: On your own. You may choose to take a leisurely walk along the riverbanks, take a dip in the water, or relax in your room with a good book you brought along.

Dinner: At the camp around 7pm, featuring local cuisine.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations

Day 13 – Seti River Rafting • Explore Chitwan National Park on foot

Breakfast: Served buffet-style at the camp beginning at 7am, with Nepalese and American options available.

Morning: Around 8am, we'll begin the final 2-hour leg of our rafting journey. Savor the images of rushing water, lush jungle foliage, and villagers along the banks. Our rafts and experienced Nepalese crew expertly navigate five sections of Class II rapids and one patch of Class III rapids (especially after monsoon season) as we travel.

After bidding farewell to our faithful rafting guides around 10:30am, we board our bus and set off on a 2-hour journey to Chitwan, arriving just before 12:45pm. Upon arrival, we'll check in to our lodge and meet for a 15-minute briefing. Depending on where we stay, on-site amenities may include a swimming pool, spa, restaurant, and bar. Typically, each of the air-conditioned rooms provides wireless Internet access and a private bathroom.

Chitwan National Park (1,000 feet) is the oldest national park in Nepal and lies in the subtropical inner Terai lowlands of South-Central Nepal. Designated as a World Heritage Site in 1984, the park covers an area with a unique ecosystem of significant value to the world. It contains the Churiya hills, ox-bow lakes and flood plains of Rapti, Reu, and Narayani rivers. Formerly, the Chitwan Valley was well known for big-game hunting and until 1950 was exclusively managed as a hunting reserve for the Rana Prime Ministers and their guests. In 1963, the area south of the Rapti River was designated as a rhinoceros sanctuary. In 1970, His late Majesty King Mahendra approved the creation of Royal Chitwan National Park.

Lunch: At the lodge around 1pm, featuring traditional dishes.

Afternoon: Around 3pm, we'll depart the lodge by Jeep for a 10-minute drive to the edge of the park. From here, we'll explore the buffer zone surrounding Chitwan National Park on foot alongside a naturalist guide. We'll venture to where the Sal forest of the Chitwan jungle meets the wide valley of the Rapti River. Broad grasslands sweep north to the Mahabharata range and virgin jungle extends south to the Churia hills. For centuries, the dense jungle covering the foothills of the Himalayas formed an impenetrable barrier for Nepal, keeping it a hidden and mysterious land.

Around 4:45pm, we'll conclude our discoveries, board our Jeep, and drive back to the lodge, arriving around 5pm. Enjoy some time to freshen up before gathering around 6pm for a presentation on Chitwan, its history, and its flora and fauna.

Or, depending on your departure date, we'll be treated to a traditional Tharu dance. But first, we'll get to try the dance for ourselves when the troupe gives us a twenty-minute lesson. The Tharu people are an indigenous group who will share their history, customs, and traditions through typical dances. After the lesson, they'll perform for us, and you'll have the chance to join in if you wish.

Dinner: At the lodge around 6:30pm, featuring regional cuisine.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Freedom to Explore: During your two days in Chitwan, you have the freedom to explore this vibrant district on your own during your free time. Below are a couple of recommended options for independent explorations:

Go bird-watching at Chitwan National Park: Your Trip Experience Leader, an expert naturalist, will take you through the park and help you identify some of the nearly 700 species of birds that can be found there throughout the year. Depending on the time of year, you might come across purple herons, kingfishers, or flocks of majestic cranes.

How to get there: An approximate 10-minute drive from the hotel, around \$5 USD one way.

Hours: Determined by your Trip Experience Leader.

Cost: Free.

Day 14 – Jeep safari in Chitwan National Park • Rapti River canoe excursion

Activity Note: Our Jeep safari through Chitwan is not offered on August-September departures, and may be unavailable on select October departures, depending on weather conditions. During these months, we will instead take a Jeep safari through the community forest area.

Early Morning: We'll rise early this morning to witness the local birdlife at their most active time of day. Around 6:30am, we'll board our Jeeps for a 30-minute drive to the entrance of Chitwan National Park. After entering the park around 7:15am, we'll enjoy a Jeep safari drive through the park where more than 43 species of mammals, more than 450 species of birds, and more than 45 species of amphibians and reptiles live. From the back of an open Jeep, we'll explore the diverse ecosystems of the park, traversing its jungles, marshlands, and grasslands in search of animals such as one-horned rhinos and spotted deer. We'll also have the opportunity to visit a crocodile breeding center.

Breakfast: A boxed breakfast will be served in the park around 8:30am, with Nepalese and American options available.

Morning: Around 9am, we'll continue our Jeep safari, visiting ox-bow lakes and watering holes where we'll keep our eyes peeled for any wildlife. Then around 10am, we'll stop for tea before further exploring Chitwan aboard our Jeeps until 11:45am when we return to our lodge.

Lunch: At the lodge around 1pm, featuring local cuisine.

Afternoon: Beginning at 2pm, enjoy a couple of hours of free time before we board our Jeeps and drive for 15 minutes to the buffer zone surrounding Chitwan National Park with a local guide. From here, we'll board canoes and set off on a 45-minute ride. During our explorations, our guide will point out the distinct wildlife that lives along the Rapti River, including local bird species and crocodiles that may be lounging along the river banks.

Then just after 5pm, we'll conclude our canoe ride and drive for 20 minutes back to the lodge.

Dinner: At the lodge around 6:30pm, featuring hot and cold dishes.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations. You might take a refreshing couple of hours at the spa and massage at Kasara Resort. The massages are based in traditional Himalayan healing methods.

Day 15 – Fly to Kathmandu • Pashupatinath • Explore Kathmandu

Breakfast: Served buffet-style at the lodge beginning at 6:30am, with Nepalese and American options available.

Morning: Around 8:30am, we'll depart the lodge and walk for 5 minutes to the home of a local who was the victim of an animal attack. They will share their personal experience, as well as insight into the animal attack threats that locals who live in the park face. Just before 9:30am, we'll walk for 5 minutes back to our lodge.

Then around 9:45am, we check out of our lodge, board our motor coach, and drive 45 minutes to the airport. Around 11:30am, we'll catch a flight back to the bustling city of Kathmandu, located at an elevation of 4,265 feet. Upon arrival just before noon, we'll board our bus and drive for about 10 minutes to a local restaurant.

Lunch: At a local restaurant around 12:15pm, featuring regional dishes.

Afternoon: Around 1:30pm, we'll depart the restaurant and drive for 15 minutes to tour Pashupatinath, the most sacred temple of the Hindu god, Shiva, who is also known as Pashupati. In the company of your Trip Experience Leader, you'll explore this pagoda-style temple, boasting gold-gilded copper rooftops and silver-crowned doorways. We'll conclude our discoveries around 3pm, at which time we'll drive 30 minutes to our hotel. There, we'll check in and have a couple of hours of free time. Depending on where we stay, amenities may include a fitness center, spa, swimming pool, and restaurant. Typically, each of the hotel's rooms includes wireless Internet access, a TV, coffee- and tea-making facilities, and a private bathroom.

Around 6:30pm, we'll regroup and board our bus for a 15-minute drive to a local restaurant.

Dinner: At a local restaurant at 6:45pm. We toast the memories of our journey during a special Farewell Dinner.

Evening: We'll depart the restaurant around 8:15pm and drive for 15 minutes back to our hotel. You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations. Kathmandu offers an array of nightlife options that appeal to a wide range of socialites. From quiet, cozy bars to jam-packed clubs, there's an experience for everyone to enjoy in this capital city.

Day 16 – Kathmandu • Fly to Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Breakfast: Served buffet-style at the hotel beginning at 8am, with Nepalese and American options available.

Morning: Free for your own discoveries—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations. Perhaps you'd like to wander the colorful, narrow streets of Thamel, a commercial hub lined with shops and vendors. Talk with store owners as you peruse wares, handicrafts, clothing, and more.

Lunch: On your own—ask your Trip Experience Leader for local restaurant recommendations.

Afternoon: Depending on whether you took our pre-trip extension to Bhutan, your schedule may vary today. Travelers who took our pre-trip extension will depart the hotel around noon and drive for 1 hour by bus to the airport. You'll catch a flight just after 4:30pm to Delhi, arriving around 6:30pm. From there, you'll transfer to your hotel for an overnight stay before returning home tomorrow. Travelers who did not take our pre-trip extension will depart the hotel around 2pm and drive for 1 hour by bus to the airport.

Dinner: On your own—you may choose to grab something to eat at the airport.

Evening: Travelers who did not join our pre-trip extension will catch a flight to Dubai just before 7pm arriving around 10pm, or just after 1am arriving around 4am. (For those travelers flying out in the early morning, a day room will be provided until your bus transfer to the airport.) Your return flight home is early tomorrow morning. If you are taking the post-trip extension, Tibet's Spiritual Heart: Lhasa, Gyantse & Shigatse, you'll fly from Kathmandu to Lhasa.

Day 17 – Return to U.S.

Pricing Summary & Trip Dates

Trip Name: Nepal & the Mystical Himalayas 2023

Trip Dates: October 2023 (exact dates TBA)

Base Price (PP): \$3,595*

Rd. Trip Airfare: \$1,700*

* **Note** – The prices listed above are subject to change for the planned 2023 trip explained in this document. For the latest updates, please call Curtis Whitaker at (269) 209-5889.

Trip Cancellation Coverage – Trip cancellation insurance is not required but is highly recommended. For details, please visit www.oattravel.com/TPP or call Curtis Whitaker at (269) 209-5889.

Reservation Deposit: The deposit to reserve your space on this trip is \$350 per person, fully refundable until 65 days prior to departure.

Discount Note: Please note that the special \$500 discount offered by Grand Circle Travel and O.A.T. during the pandemic years of 2020-21 is not offered for trips during the 2023 travel season.

Need Help? For personal assistance or more information about this trip in the meantime, please call Curtis Whitaker at (269) 209-5889.

TOUR RESERVATION POLICY:

Reservations can be made by calling Curtis Whitaker at (269) 209-5889. A \$350 deposit is required to guarantee your place (credit cards accepted). Remaining balance due 90 days before departure.

Note: The information, dates and prices provided in this document are estimates only based on currently available information. Pricing and itinerary are subject to change.

Pricing Disclaimer: *Every effort will be made to provide accurate pricing information. Operator reserves the right to correct promotional or pricing errors at any time, or to increase the trip price in the event of cost increases due to changes in airfares, cruise fares, currency fluctuations, venue fee increases, taxes, or fuel surcharges, or other reasons, unless you pre-paid according to the terms of the Good Buy Plan prior to the cost increase going into effect. For more information, please call Curtis Whitaker at (269) 209-5889.*

