

# A DAY IN THE EYES OF A NEPALI TREKKER



Trekkers looking down valley at Mount Amadabla

Nepal is roughly equivalent to the size of Colorado; however varies in elevation from 29,029 feet (the summit of Mount Everest) to 800 feet along the India/Nepal border. Due to this large elevation gradient many areas of Nepal are inaccessible by road; however, some regions can be accessed via trail systems.

Trekking in Nepal allows us the unique opportunity to see and experience these remote places that time and a rapidly expanding western culture has skipped over. One of the most important components of a Nepal trek is the attitude one takes into it. The people and culture of Nepal move at a slower pace than we do here in the US. There the value is placed on the sight and smell of each rhododendron (Nepal's national flower) not how many one can gather in a bouquet. Taking moments to breathe in the mountain vistas, run your fingers over each and every Buddhist prayer wheel, and connect with the people around you over afternoon tea is ingrained in the Nepali way of life. The Nepali people reflect this attitude with their travel in the mountains; making the most of every step along the trail, not rushing to the next destination.

This style of travel allows us, the visitors to this amazing world, to appreciate the landscape and its people on a level that is difficult to experience anywhere else in the world. In addition, it provides opportunity for people other than extreme mountaineers or ultra-distance backpackers to visit these remote landscapes. The pace that we move on the trail is perfect for the average person feel comfortable with the daily travel as well as have energy to look up and admire where they are in the world.

Further easing our Himalayan travel is our team of porters and sherpas that aid us along the way. A porter (gear guide) is a person who carries large, heavy loads along the trail. In our case the porters will be carrying all of our additional personal gear that we do not need during the day. Changes of clothes, additional cold weather layers, sleeping bag, toiletry items, etc. are all put into your overnight bag and given to a porter. As an impressive side note there is usually one porter carrying two peoples overnight gear, and even with these weighted loads they will beat us to every stop along the way. Not to worry though porters usually have long family lineages of carrying loads through the Himalayan mountains; they were literally born to do this. The use of porters allow us to hike as if we were only out for a single day. A snack, an extra layer, and water is all that is required of each person to carry on the trail.

In addition to porters sherpas (guest guides) will hike with us along the way. They educate us on the names of surrounding mountains, inform us of local traditions in the communities we are traveling through, and motivate us through the difficult parts of the trails; reminding us that lunch is just at the top of the next ridge.



Porters on their "day off"



Spinning prayer wheels invokes the national prayer of Nepal, OmManiPadmeHum

All of our meals are provided at "tea houses" along the way. Each of these small bed-and-breakfast style lodges are unique to the culture and influence of the area. In the morning we will eat breakfast at the same house we spent the previous night at, then hike along the trail to our lunch tea house. A few more hours on the trail after lunch (itinerary dependent) will bring us to our next tea house where we will eat dinner and spend the night.

Traveling in this fashion not only further connects us with the culture and landscapes we are trekking through but also once again eases our travel logistics. One of the many benefits of trekking with Kumar (who has been a trekking guide for over 40 years) is that we only stop at tea houses that he knows and trusts. This provides us a safer experience (from a sanitation perspective) and will maintain the authentic Nepal experience that some of the other more popular houses have lost.

Trekking in Nepal is a life changing opportunity. The mountain vistas and river canyons will give you photos and memories to last a lifetime; but the true magic of this place is the power it holds to change you as a person. The bonds you create, the laughs and smiles you share, the happiness you see and feel all around; these are the hidden gems of a Himalayan trek. Please seriously consider this opportunity before simply turning it aside.



Looking out over a classic Nepali canyon landscape