



# Ambassador Trek Nepal



# buildOn in Nepal

In Nepal buildOn has constructed 83 schools to date since 1994, mostly in the Kailali District of the Far West region of the country. This area is flat, but the foothills of the Himalayas can be glimpsed in the distance, and temperatures can range from a high of 80 degrees during the day to a low of 45 degrees at night. Community members in this impact area are part of the Tharu ethnic group, an indigenous minority with its own unique dialect and culture.



# Tharu Customs

## Greetings

- When entering a home you must first greet all people you meet by saying “Ram Ram.” When greeting, you bring your hands together near your face in a prayer-like gesture. You can also join fingers with the person you are greeting. (Tharu people in the village do not shake hands.)
- When you are greeting close family members you can bow your head for a blessing.
- Tharus mostly use a person’s first name. To show respect, use the first name of the person followed by “ji.”
- Persons in authority are addressed as “Kaka” (Uncle), “Kaki” (auntie). Young adults and teens may address each other as “Dada” (elder brothers) “Bhaiya” (younger brother), “Didi” (elder sister), “Baini” (younger sister). The informal address to children is “Bhaiya” (male child), “Baabu” (female child).

## Gestures

- A verbal “hat” or “nai” express displeasure or disbelief. A loud and long “Aih”(loudly) is used to get someone’s attention from far off. When near, one says “Aih” (slowly and touch with finger).
- Public displays of affection between men and women are not acceptable in most places. However, men may walk arm in arm or hold hands while laughing and exchanging stories; women will do the same.
- Eye contact is important but direct gestures are limited. Especially towards elders and women.
- The youth often wave as a gesture of hello.
- The U.S. “ok” sign means good or nice.
- Thumbs up means best of luck.
- Nodding your head up and down or side to side means yes. Shaking your head from right to left means no.
- If you want to call someone to come closer to you, you will gesture to him or her with your palm down.
- Putting your fingers and thumb together close to your mouth is a gesture for eating.

## Visiting

- If the door of a house found closed, it means nobody is in the house. And if the door is open people call out “gharem ke baa?”(Who is in the house?) until someone welcomes them in with “Aau baitho” (come and sit down).
- A house with frequent visitors is highly regarded.
- Hosts automatically serve tea or water and refreshments to their guests; asking if a guest wants something is considered rude.



## Eating

- Among some traditional families, women and children eat apart from men, who are served first.
- All wash their hands in a basin of water before and after eating. It is polite to pour the water for the person next to you.
- Most food is eaten with the right hand. The main dish is “Dall” (Lentil) and “Bhaat” (Rice), beans, greens, “Roti” (Bread) depending on what is available.
- It is impolite to smell food or comment on the aroma of a meal.
- It is not necessary to conduct dinner conversation. People talk very little while eating.
- It is important that you eat all of the food served to you. If you have been served too much food, you will need to give some back before you begin eating. Motion your host to take some of your rice. She will come with a bowl where you can transfer some rice. It is extremely important to do this BEFORE you start eating.
- It is very uncommon for people to share food off of someone else’s plate. This is only done for close family members.
- When you are done eating, you should thank your guests by saying “Pug gil.” (This means enough.)

## Clothing

- Do not wear shorts. Pants need to be below the knees for both men and women.
- Do not wear see-through clothes.
- Be sure to wash your underwear yourself and hang it to dry inside your room.
- You must remove your shoes before entering a home, temple, or some offices.

## Hygiene

- Tharu people generally bathe when they have finished working. A bath consists of a bucket near the hand pump in a shower area. You should go to the shower and return from the shower in your clothes rather than a towel.
- The shower area should not be used for urinating.
- You might find flip flops near the toilet. These are for your use while in the latrine.
- Toilet paper can be thrown down the latrine. You can also skip the toilet paper and use the water provided.



## General Observations

- Be ‘nice’- a warm and ready smile will pay great dividends.
- Tharus joke only to very familiar people.
- Photos – always ask before you photograph folks- it is the polite thing to do.
- Explanations or apologies are always appreciated. It is easy to accidentally offend someone during a cultural exchange.

# Medical Concerns in Nepal

**T**raveling in a developing country means that there will be an increase in the chance of contracting mild sicknesses. Most of these sicknesses are due to change in diet and climate. In order to ensure that you have a safe trip to Nepal, buildOn plans to do the following:

- Discuss with you, in detail, all necessary precautions (e.g. what foods to avoid, how to purify water)
- Eat in safe restaurants and in safe homes
- Have copies of all medical forms and insurance plans on file both in the U.S. and in Nepal
- Establish regular contact between buildOn staff in the US and in Nepal throughout the trip

**Malaria** is a serious disease that is transmitted to humans by the bite of an infected female *Anopheles* mosquito. Malaria symptoms will occur at least 7 to 9 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. Symptoms may include fever and flu-like illness, including chills, headache, muscle aches, and fatigue. Individuals who have traveled to malaria-infected regions and have these symptoms should seek immediate medical attention.

## Travelers leaving the United States should:

- Visit your health care provider 4-6 weeks before foreign travel for any necessary vaccinations and a prescription for an anti-malarial drug.
- Take your anti-malarial drug exactly on schedule without missing doses.
- Wear insect repellent to prevent mosquito and other insect bites. Your insect repellent should contain DEET as its active ingredient. To prevent malaria, wear insect repellent if out of doors between dusk and dawn when the mosquito that transmits malaria is biting.
- Wear long pants, long sleeves, and light colored clothing.
- Sleep under a mosquito bed net that has been dipped in permethrin insecticide.

## Prevention:

All travelers should take one of the following:

- **Atovaquone/proguanil (brand name: Malarone™)**
- **Mefloquine (brand name: Lariam™)**
- **Doxycycline**

NOTE: Chloroquine is NOT an effective anti-malarial drug in Nepal and should not be taken to prevent malaria in this region.

For more information go to: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/nepal.htm>

# Vaccinations

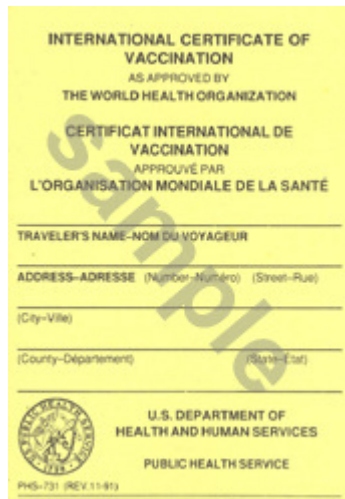
To ensure safe travel in Nepal, buildOn requires Trek participants to update routine vaccinations. Please consult with your physician to decide exactly which of the following vaccinations you will need.

Have your physician fill out the **Confidential Medical Form** and the **International Certificate of Vaccination** (the small, yellow booklet seen below).

**The CDC recommends the following vaccines (as appropriate for age):**

- Hepatitis A or immune globulin (IG).
- Hepatitis B.
- Rabies, if you might be exposed to wild or domestic animals through your work or recreation.
- Typhoid.
- Japanese Encephalitis
- Routine vaccines, as they are often called, such as for influenza, chickenpox, polio, measles/mumps/rubella (MMR), and diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT).

**PLEASE SEE YOUR DOCTOR 4-6 WEEKS BEFORE THE TREK  
TO ALLOW FOR SHOTS TO TAKE EFFECT!!!!**

A yellow International Certificate of Vaccination form. The top section is in English: "INTERNATIONAL CERTIFICATE OF VACCINATION AS APPROVED BY THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION". The middle section is in French: "CERTIFICAT INTERNATIONAL DE VACCINATION APPROUVÉ PAR L'ORGANISATION MONDIALE DE LA SANTÉ". Below this are fields for "TRAVELER'S NAME - NOM DU VOYAGEUR", "ADDRESS - ADRESSE (Number-Numéro) (Street-Rue)", "(City-Ville)", "(County-Département)", and "(State-Etat)". At the bottom left is the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services seal. To the right of the seal, it says "U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES" and "PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE". At the very bottom left, it says "PHS-731 (REV. 11-91)". A large "Sample" watermark is diagonally across the center of the form.

# Water on Trek

**D**rinking enough water to keep your body healthy and hydrated is the single greatest challenge on Trek. It is challenging both physically and mentally. It is hot, the water is warm, you might feel full, you might feel sick, etc. However, the consequences of dehydration can quickly lead to life threatening situations, so this issue becomes an absolutely critical part of the Trek experience.

“The water in your body, the fluid that keeps you alive and active, leaves you at an alarming rate. It is estimated that an average person at rest on a normal day loses between 2 and 3 liters of water. However, the fluid lost in perspiration during periods of strenuous activity can be as high as 2 liters per hour.” – The Wilderness First Responder

## Signs and Symptoms of Dehydration:

- Headache
- Nausea
- Dizziness
- Thirst
- Infrequent urination
- Disorientation
- Irritability
- Lethargy

As you can see, drinking water on Trek is no joke! You will be expected to drink 1 liter/hour on the worksite. At home dehydration is not life threatening. However, because of the extreme heat, physical exertion, remote location and lack of medical facilities, dehydration is absolutely life threatening on Trek!

## Tips:

1. Purchase 2 sturdy **one-liter** water bottles (ex. Nalgene).



2. **START PRACTICING NOW!** Try to drink 1 liter of water in a one-hour period. It will be difficult; you might have to build up to it.
3. Monitor how much water you drink on an average day. This will help you realize how much more you need to drink during Trek.
4. If you are really good, try drinking room temperature water! Remember, you won't have any refrigeration on Trek so you might as well get used to it. ☺

## Good Health Tips

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends travelers do the following to stay healthy while traveling.

- Wash hands often with soap and water.
- Drink only bottled or boiled water, or carbonated drinks in cans and bottles. Avoid tap water, fountain drinks, and ice cubes.
- When brushing your teeth be sure to use filtered or iodine treated water.
- Boil it, cook it, peel it, or forget it.
- Wash fruits with soap and water before eating if you can't peel them.
- Take your Malaria prevention medication before, during, and AFTER travel.
- Protect yourself from insects by using repellents and mosquito nets.
- To prevent fungal and parasitic infections, do not go barefoot (especially in the shower).
- Do not eat dairy products unless you know they have been pasteurized (boiled).
- Don't handle animals (especially dogs and cats) to avoid bites and serious disease (including rabies).
- Do not swim in fresh water.
- Use sun block and sunglasses.
- Prescription medications - make sure you have enough to last during your trip, as well as a copy of the prescription(s).

### Some Advice for Women

- Air travel, time changes, stress and heavy manual labor can bring on your period even if it's not time.
- You will not be able to purchase supplies in Nepal. Please bring everything you need for your monthly cycle with you.
- In the village, it will be okay to drop used supplies into the latrine – but please don't throw anything else (other than toilet paper) into the latrine. Keep in mind that the ladies in the village use cloth that they wash out and reuse so they have no waste.





# Trek Packing List

## Some things to keep in mind

- Clothes should be lightweight and fast drying
- Jeans do not fall into the above category
- You **will** be getting dirty every single day
- You **will** have the opportunity to wash your clothes
- We strongly recommend **against** purchasing new clothes and equipment for this trip!

## On a Cultural Note

Nepalese who live in the rural part of the country dress and act more conservatively in accordance with religious and cultural traditions. We, as visitors, will respect the modest dress code.

- No strappy tank tops! (sleeveless is okay as long as shoulders are covered)
- All shoes on the worksite **MUST** be closed-toed!
- All pants (males and females) must be past the knees!
- All shirts must cover your stomach and undergarments at all times!

**Whatever you pack you should be able to carry (not wheel) for ½ mile.**

## Carry-On Bag:

- ❑ One form of I.D. other than your passport
- ❑ 1 **empty** 1 liter water bottle
- ❑ spending money
- ❑ malaria medication and any other prescription medications
- ❑ watch
- ❑ basic toiletries (toothbrush, feminine products. No liquids over 3 ounces)
- ❑ 1 set of clothes (in case your checked bag is lost)
- ❑ 1 lightweight jacket or long sleeve t-shirt (airplanes can be chilly)
- ❑ sunglasses
- ❑ reading material or a deck of cards for the plane or layover time in airport
- ❑ personal camera and replacement batteries



**Checked Bag for 1 week in the village:**

- ❑ 2 pairs of lightweight pants or capris for work (these will get very dirty!)
- ❑ 1-2 pairs of lightweight pants or capris for hanging out around the village
- ❑ 1 calf or ankle length skirt for hanging out (optional)
- ❑ 5 t-shirts
- ❑ 1 pair of warm sweatpants/pajama pants for sleeping
- ❑ sneakers (or other work shoes)
- ❑ flip flops (for bathing)
- ❑ 3 pairs of socks
- ❑ 5 pairs of cotton underwear
- ❑ 2 bras (consider sports bras for work)
- ❑ work gloves
- ❑ hat, visor or bandana
- ❑ a gift for your host family (see guidelines)
- ❑ small towel (not a hand towel, but not a beach towel)
- ❑ sleeping bag
- ❑ sweatshirt
- ❑ rain jacket
- ❑ toiletries (toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, deodorant, shampoo, feminine products)
- ❑ sun block
- ❑ insect repellent with at least 30% DEET (NO aerosol spray cans)
- ❑ 1 roll of toilet paper
- ❑ small pillow (optional – you can always role up a sweatshirt)
- ❑ 1 additional water bottle (1 liter)
- ❑ hand sanitizer or baby wipes (optional)
- ❑ small zip lock of powdered laundry detergent or laundry soap tablets
- ❑ 2-3 extra zip lock bags
- ❑ 2-3 extra plastic grocery bags for trash and dirty laundry
- ❑ alarm clock
- ❑ flashlight with extra batteries
- ❑ powdered Gatorade to flavor water

**Remember, if you are buying new items to take on Trek (such as disposable cameras, toothpaste, or baby wipes), unwrap them before packing. The items will take up less space and, more importantly, you will have less trash to pack out of the village.**

**Any trash we bring in comes out with us!**

The exceptions to this rule are, of course, toilet paper and feminine products.

## Living With a Host Family

In the village, you will stay with a family. The families who will host you in the village have volunteered to do so and they will regard this responsibility as a great privilege. buildOn staff will have discussed with them our expectations and your needs before your arrival. Your host family will go far above and beyond these expectations to treat you as a truly honored guest. It is important for you to keep in mind that these families are very poor. However, the sacrifice that they will make to accommodate you is made with warm hearts and great pride. We hope that you will appreciate their exceptional hospitality and meager accommodations.

Most likely your accommodations will be a small section or room inside the family's home. The homes are small with dirt floors and mud walls. There will be a cot, mat or bed to sleep on and the family will have gone to great lengths to give you as much privacy as they can. You will probably have chickens, cats, and dogs walking freely in and out of the house. There will be no electricity or running water. buildOn will provide you with a mosquito net for your sleeping comfort and safety.

## Host Family Gifts

It is appropriate to give your host family a small token of appreciation for their hospitality. Remember, the key is to keep it simple, NOT EXTRAVAGANT, and enjoyable for all members of the family. The best gifts are often things you can do with your host family.

Here are some ideas:

- A photo (or small album) of you and your family
- A picture book from the US
- Pencils, pens, erasers, notebooks, or paper
- Coloring books/crayons/markers
- Games to play with your host family (Jenga, jump rope, soccer ball, Uno)
- A small thermos
- Hair accessories (elastics, barrettes) or nail polish

### DO NOT BRING

- Money
- Candy/food
- Technology – video games, electronic gadgets





## The Art of Giving

At the beginning, during, and at the end of Trek, it is natural to want to give many of your possessions to your new family. However, it is important to remember that you will have already given something to every person in the community. The school and the commitment to education are a much larger and more valuable gift than anything else that you could bring from home or give from your bags. buildOn strives to keep the focus of the community on building a school that will last for many generations. Although you may be tempted to leave everything behind, we ask that you help keep the focus on education too. It is also very important to remember that this is not the place to leave behind things that you do not feel like carrying home. If you have clothing or other items that you do not want to take home, you can leave them at the hotel. If you would really like to leave something behind - besides the host family gift that you brought - make sure that it is something special to you and therefore it will be special to them. Please make sure that it is clean and that you present it to them. If you leave it behind without telling them, they will keep it set aside for you until you return.



Absolutely, under NO CIRCUMSTANCES, can you leave money for anyone in your family or in the community. buildOn takes great pride in our method of working with the community and asking them to provide the unskilled labor necessary for the construction of their school. If any money is left for anyone it may be confusing to other community members or even other villages throughout the country. Not only can this cause controversy and conflict within the village, it can also create more work for our international staff when past and future villages ask for money too. So please, be very careful with what you leave behind with your new families. buildOn appreciates your support of our mission and our focus on the importance of education to increase independence in the communities where we work.

# Trek Nepal Itinerary

## Day 1

Depart USA  
Overnight on plane

## Day 2

Stop in layover city  
Overnight in Delhi or Kathmandu

## Day 3

Travel from Kathmandu to Dhangadhi  
Travel to village  
Welcome

## Day 4 – 7

Ground breaking  
Work on the construction of the school

Live with host families  
Culture & education workshops  
Group reflection  
Field trip to other buildOn school site

## Day 8

Leave village  
Travel to Kathmandu

## Day 9

Shopping  
Depart Kathmandu

## Day 10

Arrive in US

## Recommended Travel Agent

Tulsi Gyawali

Nepal Sanctuary Treks

Lazimpat - 2, Khursanitamarg - 280/40  
Kathmandu

Tel.: +977 1 4414492, 4421183

Email: [sanctuary@mail.com.np](mailto:sanctuary@mail.com.np)

## Visas

US citizens are required to purchase a tourist visa either in advance of travel or at the airport. The cost is \$25 for 15 days or \$40 for 30 days. You can find the application and information on how to apply at:

[http://www.nepalembassyusa.org/admin/resources/visa\\_application\\_form.pdf](http://www.nepalembassyusa.org/admin/resources/visa_application_form.pdf)

IMPORTANT NOTE: If you overnight in Delhi you WILL need an Indian visa!



**Ambassador Trek**  
Nepal