



HOLIDAY ESSENTIALS

GUIDE TO INDIA, NEPAL & BHUTAN

Trailfinders prides itself on the firsthand knowledge that we can pass on to our clients. We want you to benefit from our experience and have as carefree a holiday as possible so please take the time before you go to read through our "Holiday Essentials". If you know what to expect in advance it will allow you to pack and plan accordingly thus ensuring you have an enjoyable trip. We also suggest you take this guide with you in your hand luggage since it has useful contact numbers and information you might need.

The first part of this guide is common to all 3 countries and is followed by details specific to India, Nepal and Bhutan.

Visa & Immunisations

Please refer to the Essential Information on your booking confirmation for important details of visa requirements and immunisation recommendations. The Trailfinders Visa Service and Travel Clinic can provide further information and advice.

Trailfinders Visa Service - in the UK please call 020 7368 1504 or visit trailfinders.com/visas and in Ireland call 01 8814949 or visit trailfinders.ie/visas. Enjoy a discount off our service charge as a valued Trailfinders' client.

Trailfinders Travel Clinic - receive a 20% discount off immunisations when you book your travel with Trailfinders. Our clinic is based at 194 Kensington High Street, London W8 7RG and no appointment is required. In the UK please call 020 7938 3999 or visit trailfinders.com/services.

Insurance

At Trailfinders we believe that comprehensive travel insurance is an essential part of your travel package. Please contact your travel consultant for a personalised quote. Regardless of whether or not you choose Trailfinders Travel Insurance, please ensure you are comprehensively covered for the duration of your holiday.

Itinerary & Guides

Our local representatives will meet you on arrival at each destination/city, accompany you to your hotel and brief you on your itinerary. Where your arrangements include a private car and driver for your sightseeing you will be accompanied by an English speaking guide. If you are travelling between destinations as part of your tour you will generally have a different guide in each area.

Your guide will be aware of the itinerary planned for each day but there is flexibility so you can start earlier or later, skip sites, cut visits short or linger longer depending on your mood and you can discuss with your guide what impact this will have on subsequent visits. You cannot add or substitute sites since the tour will have been costed according to the original itinerary. In the very unlikely event that the guide is not understanding or adhering to your wishes please call our local representative listed under the relevant Local Contact Details section of this document.



On the occasions where the car & driver is at your disposal (this will be clearly detailed on your itinerary if this is included), your driver will be happy to drive you within the vicinity during your free time, for example to return to a shopping area you may have passed earlier in the day or to drop you off and collect you from a local restaurant for dinner. Where the car is not at your disposal, there may be an occasion when you want to take a taxi and we suggest you ask your guide or hotel concierge for assistance. Auto rickshaws or tuk tuks can be hailed in the street in many cities but you should negotiate a price before getting in. Avoid these late at night and choose a reliable metered taxi company instead.

Travelling with Children

If you are travelling with young children please speak to your consultant about infant or booster seats. It is generally accepted that children 5 years and under do not have a good concept of danger. Children must be supervised at all times, especially when near any type of pool, when on a boat or near water in general.

Safety

India, Nepal and Bhutan are all reasonably safe travel destinations and crime against tourists is very rare. However it is sensible to take basic precautions against petty theft as you would anywhere. Keep your money and documents close to you, keep photocopies of your passport and travel documents elsewhere in your luggage, use the hotel safes and don't put all your money in one place.

Ocean waves and currents can be strong and the sea can often be unsuitable for swimming. Take note of any red flags and seek local advice if unsure.



INDIA

With its fascinating temples, vibrant cities, delicious cuisine, friendly people and a culture as rich as its history, India is an unforgettable country to explore. It provides a diverse spectrum of travelling experiences, some of which can be quite challenging to the first time visitor.

Road Travel

Road travel is a great way to see the country but can be quite a startling introduction to Indian life. The traffic in built up areas is often chaotic and aside from newer roads around major cities, many roads are in a state of disrepair. Often roads are single carriageway and in the hills can be narrow and winding so road travel is often slow. Driving can be erratic with potential hazards such as animals and people wandering into the road but please be assured your driver will be familiar with local conditions and is trained to drive with due care and attention. Journey times are listed within your itinerary, these are approximate and based on average travel times for a particular route. Do bear in mind that the weather and local road conditions can occasionally result in longer journey times.

The 'What's Included in the Price' page in your documentation will detail the type of vehicle you will be travelling in.

Air Travel

Internal flights are sometimes subject to short notice delays and cancellations which are beyond our control, however we will do all possible to minimise the inconvenience should delays occur. Some flights will have one or more 'touch downs' before they reach their final destination.

Train Travel

Boasting one of the most extensive rail networks in the world, travelling by rail in India provides a wonderful window into life on the sub-continent. If your itinerary includes any train travel, please refer to the separate 'Train Travel in India' page in your documentation.

Climate

Due to its size and differing topography, India experiences some extremes of climate. Most of the country experiences 3 fairly distinct seasons:

North India's cool season is from October to April while in South India it is from November to March. Bear in mind cool does not necessarily mean cold as daytime temperatures remain quite high (Delhi's average maximum daytime temperature is 21C in January), with generally clear skies and lots of sunshine. Evenings are cooler and nights can be surprisingly cold so make sure you pack some warm clothing. The main exception to the above is the far north of India in the Himalayas. From October to April the nights are extremely cold and from December to February the daytime temperature also drop considerably (Shimla's average maximum daytime temperature is only 11C in January). The summer months here bring warmer temperatures, averaging 25C.

From April to June with the exception of the high Himalayas, the whole country experiences a hot and humid climate by day and night (Delhi, Chennai & Jaipur's average maximum daytime temperature peaks at 39C in June).

The monsoon typically falls on North India from July to September, Goa from May to September and South India from June to November. The climate is humid and wet at this time.



Altitude

The health conditions caused by the effects of altitude are known collectively as altitude sickness or acute mountain sickness (AMS). Mild symptoms may be experienced by some people above 2,800m. The symptoms tend to be worse at night and include headache, dizziness, lethargy, nausea, loss of appetite, irritability and difficulty sleeping. If you start to feel any of these symptoms, please tell your guide immediately. Areas frequented by tourists above 2,800m include parts of the northern states of Jammu & Kashmir (including much of Ladakh), Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand as well as the eastern state of Arunachal Pradesh.

What to take with you

Generally loose cotton clothes are best for tropical climates, although you will need to bring some warmer clothing if travelling to Rajasthan, The North and places of high altitude especially during the winter months. For visits to wildlife reserves you will also need warm clothing for early morning and late afternoon game drives. Casual dress is acceptable everywhere.

Accommodation

In the main tourist centres, most hotels we offer are modernised with many facilities of an international standard. For travel off the beaten track and in rural areas, accommodation choices are limited so hotels may be much more modest and basic than elsewhere. Larger hotels will generally offer some kind of internet access, with Wi-Fi becoming increasingly common. Internet access is often at a charge (even in top end hotels).

Heritage Hotels are typically old converted forts, palaces and mansions. They boast fascinating histories, and as many are privately owned, they retain much of their original ambiance and charm. Service can sometimes be slow, facilities basic and due to their age, plumbing can be temperamental and air-conditioning and heating might not exist. In addition, each property is unique which does mean that room size, view and aspect can vary enormously. Please note that their layout and design may mean they are not suitable for the less mobile.

Homestays are the equivalent of a B&B and will be fairly basic. They do however provide a unique opportunity to gain an insight into the culture, traditions, history and everyday life of an Indian family. Each homestay is totally unique and can range from 10 or more en suite rooms in a courtyard at the back of the main house, to just a couple of bedrooms within the family home with shared bathroom facilities. Meals in homestay accommodation will be simple, home cooked Indian cuisine.

Wherever you stay in India, if your accommodation option includes a pool - we strongly advise against diving and please keep safety in mind at all time when enjoying the pool. Please also be aware that outdoor pools in hotels across Northern India are usually unheated and typically close for a short period of annual maintenance during the cooler winter months (Dec - Feb). These pool closures have minimal guest disturbance.

Be aware that some hotels, especially in the larger cities, have airport style security at the entrance and you may be searched if there is due cause.

Food & Drink

Indian cuisine is famous the world over, however you'll find that eating in Indian restaurants in the UK will not prepare you for the rich diversity and delicious culinary insight you'll gain during your visit to India. The basis of any Indian meal is grain, in the form of rice in the south and bread (roti) in the north. These are generally eaten with dhal (lentils), vegetables and chutney. Fish and meat are added for special occasions. On top of these staples there are countless other combinations of flavours and textures making India a real gourmand's delight.

The majority of visitors to India experience no issues, however traveller's diarrhoea can be a problem for some so you should be careful about what you eat. Avoid salads and fruit that you



can't peel yourself and beware of ice cream which is sold on the street, or may have melted and been re-frozen. It is not recommended that you drink the tap water. Ice in drinks is generally OK in good standard hotels and restaurants when made from purified water but it is best to avoid it on street stalls or in country areas. We recommend that you avoid drinking the tap water. Bottled water, carbonated soft drinks, lassis and fruit juices are widely available.

Language

There is no one language in India, which is partly why English is still so widely spoken. Eighteen languages are recognised by the constitution, and additionally to this over 1,600 minor languages and dialects were listed in the last census! For your sightseeing in India you'll be accompanied by an English speaking guide, however you'll find that almost everyone you come across will speak English to some degree.

Money

The Rupee (INR) is the currency in India, please check with your bank or ask your travel consultant for an up to date exchange rate. As INR is a restricted currency, it is not possible to buy it in advance nor change it back once you have left the country.

There are ATMs at the airport and in all but the smaller towns however we recommend you bring some pound sterling or euros to exchange locally for when you are unable to access an ATM. Many hotels will provide a money changing facility for cash. Unlicensed moneychangers can also be found in major tourist centres but they are generally uncompetitive and unreliable so we advise against using these wherever possible. When exchanging money, it is advisable to obtain some small denominations for tips. Visa and Mastercard credit cards are widely accepted in hotels, larger shops and top end restaurants, however smaller shops and restaurants may only accept cash, so it is best not to rely solely on credit cards during your stay.

Tipping

Tipping is customary, but not obligatory. You may feel you'd like to tip your driver and guides during your tour. We recommend an amount of INR 1,000 per day (per couple) if you have been satisfied with their service, with you paying the driver INR 400 and the guide INR 600. If your trip includes a stay on a houseboat, we recommend a tipping amount of INR 1,500 per day (per couple) which can be divided across the crew.

Social Graces & Customs

India has an incredibly rich and diverse culture, full of time honoured traditions and customs. If you're ever in any doubt about how you should behave simply watch what the locals do, or ask. 'Namaste' (I bow to the divine in you) is the traditional Indian greeting said with a slight bow whilst bringing your hands together with palms touching in front of your chest.

Both men and women should dress modestly outside hotels and away from beaches, with clothing that covers the shoulders and knees. When visiting religious sites you should ensure shoulders and knees are covered and remove shoes and hats.

Topless and nude sunbathing is prohibited and public displays of affection between members of the opposite sex are frowned upon. The left hand is considered unclean, therefore passing things to an Indian person and eating should be done with the right hand.

Shopping

India offers many beautiful handicrafts including carpets, embroidered textiles, jewellery, leather goods and wood/marble carvings. Gems, spices and tea are also popular purchases.



Bargaining is common in India, particularly when souvenir hunting. In shops where there is no fixed price the shopkeeper will start with a high price which you are expected to then bargain down to a fair price, which is generally at least a third less than the first price quoted. Bargaining is normally very good natured and can be a lot of fun, and a smile goes a long way to help the process. Your guide will be able to give you an indication of a fair price for goods and do use common sense if something seems too good to be true, especially for high value products such as gems and carpets.

Unfortunately as much as we discourage the guides from taking you to local shops/workshops during your tour unless specifically asked by you, this is all part of tourism in India. Usually the guides and drivers get a small commission on your purchases or simply for taking you to the store. However please do not feel under any pressure to visit these shops and politely but firmly tell your guide if you don't want to stop or spend just a few minutes having a very quick look around. If you have any issues with a guide please contact our local representative at the time so the situation can be rectified.

Time

India is 5 hours 30 minutes ahead of GMT. During the summer months of April to October, India observes daylight savings and this becomes 4 hours 30 minutes ahead.

Electricity

The electrical current is 230-240V AC. Sockets are usually the 3 round pin variety. We recommend that you take a universal plug adaptor.

Local Contact Details

In the event of any problem or concern please contact our representative on the numbers below. Please note if calling from a landline within India or from an Indian mobile phone please drop the country code 91 and replace with 0.

Trans India

Open Mon - Sat 09:30 to 18:00 Indian Standard Time (except public holidays)

Delhi Head Office +91 11 4720 8000

Outside of office hours/Sundays/public holidays

+91 9810229439 or +91 9873884083

24 hours emergency contact (mobile)

Mr Rajesh Kaushik +91 9811020724



NEPAL

Nepal offers beautiful mountain scenery and trekking as well as friendly people and majestic temples. Your trip has been planned to maximise your enjoyment and you will have the support of our local representatives at each destination.

Road Travel

Road travel is a great way to see the country and will give you a real flavour of how the locals live. Roads are generally well maintained, although in more remote areas some may have fallen into disrepair. Often roads are single carriageway and in the mountains can be narrow and winding so road travel is often slow. Driving can be erratic with potential hazards such as animals and people wandering into the road but please be assured your driver will be familiar with local conditions and is trained to drive with due care and attention. Journey times are listed within your itinerary, these are approximate and based on average travel times for a particular route. Do bear in mind that the weather and local road conditions can occasionally result in longer journey times.

The 'What's Included in the Price' page in your documentation will detail the type of vehicle you will be travelling in.

Air Travel

Internal flights are sometimes subject to delays and cancellations at short notice which are beyond our control, however we will do all possible to minimise the inconvenience should delays occur.

Since December 2013 all Nepalese registered airlines have been placed on an EU blacklist preventing them from flying into EU airspace. The EU has done so in order to highlight the airlines' relatively poor safety record in Nepal to EU citizens. Being on the blacklist does not affect their right to fly within Nepal - the airlines meet their own national aviation requirements and are licensed to operate these flights. However flying within Nepal is a known risk and the current travel advice offered by the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office and Irish DFA provides an overview which we encourage you to read. Details can be found on:

www.gov.uk/foreigntravel-advice/nepal for the UK

or

www.dfa.ie/travel/travel-advice/a-z-list-of-countries/nepal/ for Ireland.

Trekking

Nepal boasts some of the best trekking trails in the world. If your itinerary includes any trekking, please refer to the separate 'Nepal Trekking' page in your documentation.

Climate

Nepal's climate can broadly be divided into 2 seasons:

Nepal's dry season runs from October to May. Average maximum daytime temperatures in Kathmandu and Pokhara are 17C-19C during December - February, but nights may be especially cold. The temperatures can drop significantly, particularly at higher altitudes. October – November and March – May both offer typically warmer daytime temperatures (average maximum daytime temperatures are up in the 20Cs) and the skies are normally clear, affording fabulous mountain views.

The monsoon falls on Nepal from June to September. The climate is humid and wet at this time.



Altitude

The health conditions caused by the effects of altitude are known collectively as altitude sickness or acute mountain sickness (AMS). Mild symptoms may be experienced by some people above 2,800m. The symptoms tend to be worse at night and include headache, dizziness, lethargy, nausea, loss of appetite, irritability and difficulty sleeping. If you start to feel any of these symptoms please tell your guide immediately. Areas frequented by tourists above 2,800m include the Annapurna and Everest regions.

What to take with you

Generally loose comfortable clothes are best, although you will need to bring some warmer clothing if travelling to places of high altitude, especially during the winter months. For visits to wildlife reserves you will also need warm clothing for early morning and late afternoon game drives. Casual dress is acceptable everywhere.

If your itinerary includes any trekking, please refer to the separate 'Nepal Trekking' page in your documentation for our suggestions on what to pack.

Accommodation

In the main tourist centres, most hotels we offer are modernised with many facilities of an international standard. For travel off the beaten track and in rural areas, accommodation choices are limited so hotels may be much more modest and basic than elsewhere. Heating does not come as standard in many places with the exception of hotels in Kathmandu and the Ker & Downey Lodges we use in the Annapurnas. Larger hotels will generally offer some kind of internet access, with Wi-Fi becoming increasingly common. Internet access is often at a charge (even in top end hotels).

Tea Houses in particular have very basic facilities and the food served will be simple, home cooked Nepali cuisine (refer to the 'Details of your Accommodation' section in your documentation).

Wherever you stay in Nepal, if your accommodation option includes a pool - we strongly advise against diving into pools and please keep safety in mind at all time when enjoying the pool.

Food & Drink

Kathmandu and Pokhara have many restaurants serving a wide range of international dishes but food in the rest of the country is generally very simple. Sandwiched between India and China, Nepal's cuisine is heavily influenced by its neighbours. The staple meal is 'daal bhaat tarkari' (often shortened to daal bhaat) which is literally translated as 'lentil soup, rice & curried vegetables'. Momos are delicious steamed, savoury dumplings and one of Nepal's most famous dishes. Nepalis enjoy lots of sticky sweets which are mostly based on milk curd, sugar palm and nuts.

The majority of visitors to Nepal experience no issues, however traveller's diarrhoea can be a problem for some so you should be careful about what you eat. Avoid salads and fruit that you can't peel yourself and beware of ice cream which is sold on the street, or may have melted and been re-frozen. It is not recommended that you drink the tap water. Ice in drinks is generally OK in good standard hotels and restaurants when made from purified water but it is best to avoid it on street stalls or in country areas. We recommend that you avoid drinking the tap water. Bottled water, carbonated soft drinks, lassis and fruit juices are widely available.



Language

Nepali is the national language. For your sightseeing in Nepal you'll be accompanied by an English speaking guide, however you'll find that almost everyone you come across will speak English to some degree.

Money

The Nepali Rupee (NPR) is the currency in Nepal, please check with your bank or ask your travel consultant for an up to date exchange rate.

There are ATMs at the airport and in Kathmandu and Pokhara but frequent power outages can limit when these are working. We recommend you bring some pound sterling or euros to exchange locally for when you are unable to access an ATM. Larger hotels can also provide a money changing facility for cash. Unlicensed moneychangers can be found in major tourist centres but they are generally uncompetitive and unreliable so we advise against using these wherever possible. When exchanging money, it is advisable to obtain some small denominations for tips. Visa and Mastercard credit cards are widely accepted in hotels, larger shops and top end restaurants, however smaller shops and restaurants may only accept cash, so it is best not to rely solely on credit cards during your stay.

Tipping

Tipping is customary, but not obligatory in Nepal. You may feel you'd like to tip your driver and guides during your tour. We recommend an amount of USD 8 per day (per couple) if you have been satisfied with their service, with you paying the driver USD 3 and the guide USD 5. We recommend trekking guides and porters should be paid USD 5 each per day.

Social Graces & Customs

Nepalis rarely shake hands, instead they use the 'Namaste' (I bow to the divine in you), the traditional greeting said with a slight bow whilst bringing your hands together with palms touching in front of your chest. If you're ever in any doubt about how you should behave simply watch what the locals do, or ask.

Both men and woman should dress reasonably conservatively with clothing that covers the shoulders and knees. Public displays of affection between members of the opposite sex are frowned upon.

When visiting temples or monasteries always remove your shoes before entering, avoid smoking and walk clockwise round Buddhist stupas. In Buddhism the head is regarded as the highest part of the body so avoid touching children on the head, particularly young monks. Feet are the considered the 'lowest' part of the body so never sit with your feet pointing towards a person or a Buddha image. The left hand is considered unclean, therefore passing things to a Nepali person and eating should be done with the right hand.

Shopping

Nepal offers many beautiful locally produced handicrafts including clothes, jewellery, masks, puppets and pashminas. Tibetan goods can also be found in Nepal such as Tibetan carpets, Tibetan Buddhist paintings and clothes.

Bargaining is common in Nepal, particularly when souvenir hunting. In shops where there is no fixed price the shopkeeper will start with a high price which you are expected to then bargain down to a fair price, which is generally at least a third less than the first price quoted. Bargaining is normally very good natured and can be a lot of fun, and a smile goes a long way to help the process. Your guide will be able to give you an indication of a fair price for goods and do use



common sense if something seems too good to be true, especially for high value products such as gems and carpets.

Unfortunately as much as we discourage the guides from taking you to local shops/workshops during your tour unless specifically asked by you, this is all part of tourism in Nepal. Usually the guides and drivers get a small commission on your purchases or simply for taking you to the store. However please do not feel under any pressure to visit these shops and politely but firmly tell your guide if you don't want to stop or spend just a few minutes having a very quick look around. If you have any issues with a guide please contact our local representative at the time so the situation can be rectified.

Time

Nepal is 5 hours and 45 minutes ahead of GMT. They do not observe daylight savings.

Electricity

The electrical current is 220V AC. Sockets usually take plugs with 3 round pins, sometimes the small variety and sometimes the larger ones. Some sockets take plugs with 2 round pins. We recommend that you take a universal plug adaptor.

Local Contact Details

In the event of any problem or concern please contact our regional representative (based in New Delhi, India) on the numbers below.

Trans India

Open Mon - Sat 09:30 to 18:00 Indian Standard Time (except public holidays)

Delhi Head Office +91 11 4720 8000

Outside of office hours/Sundays/public holidays

+91 9810229439 or +91 9873884083

24 hours emergency contact (mobile)

Mr Rajesh Kaushik +91 9811020724



BHUTAN

Bhutan is a magical country to visit that is rich in traditional culture and natural beauty. Whilst Bhutan is remote it warmly welcomes tourists and offers them a unique experience. Bhutan's traditional dress is very distinctive and it is compulsory for all Bhutanese to wear national dress in schools, government offices and at formal occasions. It is also a requirement of Government of Bhutan that foreign tourists travel with a pre-paid and pre-planned itinerary.

Road Travel

Roads are generally well maintained, although in more remote areas some may have fallen into disrepair. A major road widening project is underway on the main east/west highway and as a result the journey times on your itinerary may be longer due to the disruption. During the monsoon season, occasionally roads can be blocked due to landslides so your driver may need to amend your itinerary. Driving times can also be slow as many roads are single carriageway. A straight road in Bhutan is a rare sight and even people who do not generally suffer from motion sickness can sometimes feel a bit uncomfortable with all the twists and turns so we suggest you take some travel sickness medication with you just in case. Please be assured that your driver will be familiar with local conditions and is trained to drive with due care and attention. Journey times are listed within your itinerary, these are approximate and based on average travel times for a particular route. Do bear in mind that the weather and local road conditions can occasionally result in longer journey times.

The 'What's Included in the Price' page in your documentation will detail the type of vehicle you will be travelling in.

Climate

The climate in Bhutan varies widely depending on the elevation. In the southern border areas it is tropical whilst in the high Himalayan regions there is snow year round. In the far south, winter (December - February) temperatures are around 15C but nights can feel cold whilst in summer (June - August) temperatures can reach 30C. In Paro temperatures range from -5C in January to 30C in July. Rain occurs primarily during the monsoon season June – September. During this period, heavy rain falls most nights but during the day there can be long periods of clear weather. Your guide may well need to adjust the itinerary during the day to take account of the weather conditions but will always do so in consultation with you.

Altitude

The health conditions caused by the effects of altitude are known collectively as altitude sickness or acute mountain sickness (AMS). Mild symptoms may be experienced by some people above 2,800m. The symptoms tend to be worse at night and include headache, dizziness, lethargy, nausea, loss of appetite, irritability and difficulty sleeping. If you start to feel any of these symptoms please tell your guide immediately. Areas frequented by tourists above 2,800m include the Dochula Pass, Gangtey and Bumthang.

What to take with you

Generally loose comfortable clothes are best, although you will need to bring some warmer clothing if travelling to places of high altitude, especially during the winter months. Casual dress is acceptable everywhere. We also recommend you pack a waterproof jacket and an umbrella because there is always a chance of rain in Bhutan whatever the season.



Accommodation

In the main tourist centres, the usual hotels we offer are modernised with many facilities of an international standard. For travel off the beaten track and in rural areas, accommodation choices are limited so hotels may be much more modest and basic than elsewhere. Heating does not come as standard in many places with the exception of hotels in Thimphu, Paro and Punakha. Larger hotels in main towns will generally offer some kind of internet access, with Wi-Fi becoming increasingly common. Internet access may be at a charge and an access card may need to be purchased from reception.

The allocation of hotels is carefully managed by the Bhutanese government. For this reason the exact hotels you will be staying in throughout your tour will not be able to be confirmed until 45 days before your arrival into the country. Rest assured that the price of your trip will not be affected and that the hotels that will be confirmed for your stay will be of a comfortable and comparable standard.

Wherever you stay in Bhutan, if your accommodation option includes a pool - we strongly advise against diving into pools and please keep safety in mind at all time when enjoying the pool.

Food & Drink

It is a requirement in Bhutan that breakfast, lunch and dinner are included in your pre-planned itinerary. Most of your meals will be in the hotel dining room which generally offer buffet style meals. There is usually a western dish as well as rice and daal and sometimes an Indian, Chinese or Bhutanese option. All drinks, including bottled water, are extra and payment is usually collected at the end of the meal or when you check out of the hotel. In some places you may be taken to a local restaurant for your meal and if you are undertaking a long drive, you may have a packed lunch prepared by the hotel you left that morning.

We recommend that you avoid drinking the tap water. Bottled water, carbonated soft drinks and fruit juices are widely available.

Language

Dzongkha is the national language though there are 19 different dialects spoken in Bhutan! While in Bhutan you will be accompanied by an English speaking guide, however you'll find that almost everyone you come across will speak English to some degree.

Money

The Bhutanese Ngultrum (BTN) is the currency in Bhutan. As BTN is not traded internationally, you are unable to buy it in advance nor change it back once you leave the country. There are few ATMs in Bhutan and these are not very reliable so we recommend you bring cash to exchange locally. If arriving from India, visitors are advised to bring Indian Rupees (INR) which are pegged to the BTN and are freely used as legal tender in Bhutan (you often receive change in INR). NB INR 500 and INR 1000 denomination notes are NOT accepted in Bhutan. Alternatively we recommend you bring pound sterling or USD in cash.

There are licensed money changers at the airport and most hotels and banks will be able to exchange cash. Visa and Mastercard credit cards are often accepted in larger shops and hotels, though transactions can be rather slow and high surcharges usually apply. Do not rely on being able to use credit cards in Bhutan.

Tipping

Though tipping was officially discouraged in the past, it is now becoming common practice. You may feel you'd like to tip your driver and guide during your tour. We recommend an amount of



USD 10 per day (per couple) if you have been satisfied with their service, with you paying the driver USD 3 and the guide USD 7.

Social Graces & Customs

Bhutan has an incredibly rich culture, full of time honoured traditions and customs. 'Kuzuzangpo' (hello) is the traditional greeting. When addressing seniors or elders, the Bhutanese use the more respectful 'Kuzuzangpo la' whilst bowing their head. If you are ever in any doubt about how you should behave simply watch what the locals do, or ask. Both men and women should dress reasonably conservatively with clothing that covers the shoulders and knees. Public displays of affection are frowned upon.

When visiting temples or monasteries always remove your shoes before entering, avoid smoking and walk clockwise round Buddhist stupas. In Buddhism the head is regarded as the highest part of the body so avoid touching children on the head, particularly young monks. Feet are the considered the 'lowest' part of the body so never sit with your feet pointing towards a person or a Buddha image. The left hand is considered unclean, therefore passing things to a Bhutanese person and eating should be done with the right hand.

Shopping

Bhutan offers many beautiful locally produced handicrafts to buy. Hand-woven fabric is one of the most popular items and traditionally was the most highly prized of Bhutan's 13 traditional arts and crafts. Using cotton or silk threads, this beautiful fabric has intricate motifs woven into the cloth. Buddhist ritual items such as prayer wheels, bells and cymbals as well as brass statues, jewellery and other silver items are also popular items to buy. Bargaining is not a Bhutanese tradition and most things you see will be fixed priced.

Time

Bhutan is 6 hours ahead of GMT. They do not observe daylight savings.

Electricity

The electrical current is 220V AC. Sockets are usually the 3 round pin variety. We recommend that you take a universal plug adaptor.

Communication

Though Bhutan's mobile networks are constantly expanding, mobile coverage can be patchy, especially outside the main towns, so you should not rely on using your mobile phone.

Local Contact Details

In the event of any problem or concern please contact our representative on the numbers below. Please note if calling from a landline within Bhutan or from a Bhutanese mobile phone please drop the country code 975 and replace with 0.

Norbu Bhutan Travel

Open Mon - Fri 09:00 to 17:00 (except public holidays)

+975 2 327232 or +975 2 327233

Outside of office hours/weekends /public holidays/24 hours emergency contact (mobile)

Mr. Bishnu Kumar +975 17838517 or +975 17141431



You may also contact our regional representative (based in New Delhi, India) on the numbers below.

Trans India

Open Mon - Sat 09:30 to 18:00 Indian Standard Time (except public holidays)

Delhi Head Office +91 11 4720 8000

Outside of office hours/Sundays/public holidays

+91 9810229439 or +91 9873884083

24 hours emergency contact (mobile)

Mr Rajesh Kaushik +91 9811020724

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