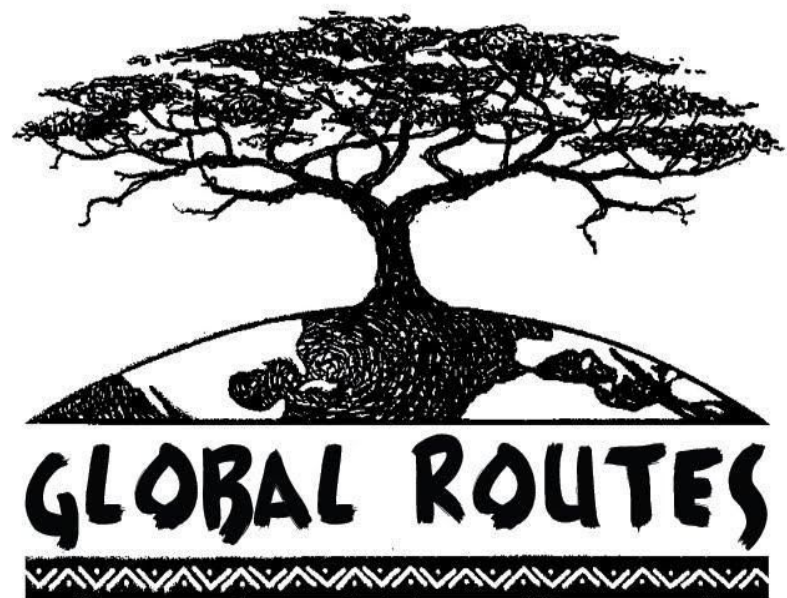


HEAF Nepal Handbook 2018



Global Routes Program Handbook



Please make sure you have read each the following documents:

- Checklist
- Nepal Map and Itinerary
- Expectations and Culturally Appropriate Guidelines
- Clothing and Equipment List
- Luggage Options
- Spending Money
- Daily Medications
- Immunizations
- Reading and Resources

Global Routes Checklist

- **Passport-** Is it current? Apply for passport if necessary; Please be sure that your passport is **valid 6 months after your return date**. If your passport needs to be renewed, please be aware that the process can take up to 3 months. **Send a copy of your passport to Global Routes by May 15th**
- **Visa-** HEAF staff will be in contact regarding your Nepal Tourist Visa.
- Fill out and return the following forms by **June 1st on your CampDoc Profile**
 - **Student Questionnaire**
 - **Parent Questionnaire**
 - **Student Contract**
 - **Emergency Contacts**
 - **Terms and Conditions**
 - **Health Form 1**
 - **Passport Copy**
- Make appointment with doctor
 - Have doctor sign **Health Form 2** and return to Global Routes by **June 1st**. If you can't return Health Form 2 by this date, please inform HEAF with an update on expected date of receipt.
 - Receive any necessary immunizations (if immunizations are received after health form has been returned to Global Routes, please fill out additional **immunization form**, which can be found under forms and documents on your CampDoc profile)
- Submit **Permission to Travel Form** by **June 1st**. (Hand these in to HEAF for notarization)
- **Equipment-** Do you have all necessary equipment for your trip? Please review Clothing and Equipment List, and Luggage sections in this handbook.
- **Daily Medications**
 - Please make sure to have enough prescriptions or over the counter medicines for the entirety of your trip.
 - Have you filled out the Daily Medication form? Please do so just prior to departing for your trip.
- **Spending Money**
 - Will you bring cash? ATM/Credit Card? Please review the Spending money section in this handbook.

Questions? Please contact us at mail@globalroutes.org

Nepal - Map & Itinerary

June 27th to July 8th

Days 1-2: Group departs USA & travels to Nepal

Days 2-3: Orientation Days in Nepal in Kathmandu and Dhapasi

Day 4: Teenager Cultural Exchange day

Days 5-6: Immersion and Service with Nepal Orphans Home/Volunteer Nepal

Day 7: Rural excursion to Pharping for introduction to village life and service project

Days 8-9: Service Immersion with Nepal Orphans Home/Volunteer Nepal

Day 9-11: Final Travel: Bodnath/Bhaktapur/Pashupatinath, fly out

Days 12: Arrive Home

(Itinerary subject to change)



APPROPRIATE GUIDELINES

We are honored that you have chosen to participate in a Global Routes program this summer. By now you have:

- Registered for the program, signed your student contract and completed student and parent questionnaires.

We trust that after completing those steps, you have a good understanding of the philosophy, goals and content behind our organization, and your program. If there is any uncertainty, please be in touch.

We would like to take a final opportunity to highlight certain items that come to our attention year after year. Please consider that though these guidelines may be very different from what you may be accustomed to on a daily basis at home, your experience will be safer, and more meaningful, as a result. You have enrolled in a Global Routes program and maintaining your commitment to the following is an important part of your participation with us this summer.

Purchase or use of alcohol or unprescribed drugs is not allowed

In addition, the possession and use of marijuana is illegal and dangerously so in every country that we visit. Students who choose to use these substances are putting their own safety, as well as the safety of their leaders and fellow group members, in serious jeopardy. For this reason, we do not tolerate the possession, and or use of, marijuana, or any other illegal drug. Misuse of prescribed drugs is also a serious offense and will be met with serious consequences. Please be advised that clear evidence indicating drug or alcohol use will be considered grounds for dismissal.

"But what if it is offered to be by someone I meet locally and I don't want to be rude by saying no?" There may be a situation during your program when alcohol or marijuana is offered to you, perhaps even by your host family. This happens regardless of our attempts to prevent it. While it may be culturally appropriate for it to be offered to you, and may therefore feel awkward for you to refuse it, we want to be absolutely clear that no cultural or social context is an excuse for breaking this rule. We assure you, it is entirely possible to say "no" without causing offense.

We have a no-smoking, no-tobacco policy

"But my parents let me smoke" or "I am addicted to nicotine." For those of you who do smoke, we want to suggest that you take the opportunity now to quit smoking so that you can focus all your attention and energy on having a great summer. If you feel that your addiction to nicotine may be distracting, we recommend you bring a substantial supply of Nicorette or Nicoderm.

Bring modest and versatile clothing

Attire is an important consideration on the worksite for both safety (the sun can be quite intense and you will be working with rough materials) and role modeling (when working with youth and other community members). Therefore, long, loose-fitting and durable clothes should comprise all of what you bring, including the “regular wear” outfits on your packing list. Think about materials that let your skin breathe and your body move comfortably. Avoid items that are see-through, tight or revealing (i.e. spaghetti-straps, muscle tees, crop tops), items that are torn or dirty, or that have logos or slogans that could be seen as offensive. Try to keep shorts and skirts as long as possible.

“But what if these aren’t the types of clothes that I wear at home?” Above all, there are safety concerns involved on the worksite that require certain types of dress. In addition, while we understand that you may make different choices at home, and that you may see other travelers or locals dressed differently from what we are requiring of you, part of a responsible cross-cultural experience lies in how you present yourself – in word and action – respectfully to those around you. Thus, we ask that you err on the conservative side, follow our packing list closely and abide by any further guidelines your leaders suggest.

Personal music devices are not allowed

We believe that these devices can cut students off from one another and their immediate surroundings, as well as promote the stereotype of the “disconnected foreigner.” On most programs we will be sending bluetooth speakers that your leaders or chaperones can control with a phone. If there are certain songs or playlists you’d like to request, make a note and share this with us so we can share this info with your leaders/chaperones. As both your host community and group will be exposed to your music selection, we expect it to reflect appropriate thematic content that does not use profane language or in any way degrade another gender, population, etc. Your leaders/chaperones will use their discretion to guide music selection and may assess that certain music is not appropriate for specific situations.

“I have long domestic and international flights. Can’t I bring my music player just for those and then put it away for the program?”

No. Keep in mind that your group leaders will have activities planned for the international flights. Furthermore, entertainment such as music and movies are available on most flights. We also suggest that you pack books and a journal to help pass the time.

Cell phone use is limited to 2-3 scheduled calls during the program.

Prior to departure you’ll receive a calendar with scheduled calls home. For safety and programmatic reasons, phones will be stored away by staff and chaperones during the program. Our general policy is that students leave their phones in the USA for the entire program but we’ve arranged this compromise for the program. Why? This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and we want students to be present and focused in the moment while unplugging from devices.

“But how will I contact my child?” While students’ cell phones will not work abroad, and international/satellite cell phones are not allowed, Global Routes stays in close contact with each program and receives and posts updates weekly. Students will use WIFI to call home. Our office is accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to our group leaders for the entire summer and we will certainly let you know if there are any issues that come up with your child.

Philosophy & Commitment

We understand that the policies described here require students and parents to challenge and let go of certain cultural and technological choices that provide us with a sense of comfort, safety and identity. Enrolling in our program implies that you trust Global Routes to provide not only a safe experience, but a meaningful cross-cultural adventure. With over fifty years of leading programs of high school students to these incredible destinations, we have seen that challenges to, and violations of, our rules may jeopardize the safety, well-being and morale of others in the group. They may reflect negatively on a host family, be deeply compromising in a cross-cultural context, and or damage the good reputation of Global Routes. One person’s rule infraction can also take a tremendous toll on the staffs’, groups and family’s time and energy.

Perhaps most significantly, a violation of contract is a breach of trust. In joining us this summer you have agreed to a level of participation that demands great commitment and integrity. Your leaders, host families and other group members have made the same commitments to themselves and to you. We hope you seize this as the simple and extraordinary opportunity that it is.

Clothing & Equipment List

NEPAL

You should be able to fit everything into your backpack/duffel bag and comfortably CARRY (not wheel) it yourself. Pack lightly! Bringing new, expensive clothes or gear is not needed or recommended. Be prepared for most of your clothes to get dirty. You will wash your clothes and have opportunities to buy new ones during your program. Please stick closely to this list as we do update it every year. We also expect you to follow our *Culturally Appropriate Guidelines* when packing, especially in regards to conservative clothing choices. As you pack, please keep in mind that adequate trash disposal is a real issue in the rural communities that we visit, so please limit any plastics, unnecessary packaging, etc.

We will spend the majority of our time in the Kathmandu valley where the climate is warm and rainy during the summer. You will see that there is a variety of both warm and cold clothing on this list. Follow the list closely and do not over pack!

REQUIRED EQUIPMENT

- **Valid Passport** with your Nepal single-entry tourist **visa** stamped inside (refer to separate passport and visa information).
 - Two photocopies of photo page and
 - Chaperones **will carry your notarized Permission to Travel form.**
- **Passport Photos (4):** For Visas on Arrival and hiking permits in Nepal.
- **School/Student I.D.**
- **Duffel Bag or Backpack:** to store and carry your luggage for the program.

- **Day pack:** For the plane, day trips. This can be a school backpack and should be large enough to carry books, a water bottle, a jacket and/or umbrella, and a change of clothes
- **Towel (1):** A lightweight towel that packs up small is better than a bulky beach towel. A quick-dry travel towel is ideal. You can find these at REI or sporting goods stores (look in camping or swimming section.) Sometimes TJ Maxx and Marshalls have them.
- **Toiletries:** Bring toiletries in small, travel size bottles; you can get more if needed. Women should bring tampons/pads. Use biodegradable products if possible.
- **Reusable Water bottle (2):** 1 liter size (durable construction is important for travel, we like Nalgene brand). Wide mouth is best.
- **Personal Medications:** If you take prescription medications, bring enough for the entire program. Bring an extra pair of contacts/glasses. It is suggested, but not required, to talk to your doctor about a prescription for Ciprofloxacin.
- **Garbage bags (3)/Ziploc bags (5):** For storage/ laundry
- **Headlamp or small flashlight:** A version that has a red-light option is ideal for reading at night while not keeping up your roommate.
- **Insect repellent:** Lotion or pump spray, not aerosol.
- **Sun protection:** Sun block for skin & for lips, Sunglasses (w/ UV protection), baseball cap or wide brimmed hat
- **Luggage Lock:** Must be TSA approved (it will say this on package.) You can often find these at TJ Maxx or Marshalls.
- **Travel alarm clock or watch with alarm:** A simple digital watch is good. You won't be able to use your phone as an alarm.
- **Money Belt:** One that fits under your clothing. You can find these at TJ Maxx, Marshalls, REI, Amazon, etc.
- **Bandanas (1 - 2):** For use as a washcloth/ headband
- **Personal First-Aid Kit:** Less is more! Leaders carry a fully stocked kit. Things you may want to have a personal supply of are:
 - Band Aids
 - Anti-itch cream
 - Powdered Gatorade, Emergen-C or electrolyte packets
 - Hand sanitizer
 - Alcohol Swabs
 - Acidophilus/Probiotics
 - Pepto Bismol/Tums
 - Vitamins

REQUIRED CLOTHING

- **Regular Wear (1-2 outfits):** Semi-casual clothes for going out, teaching and recreation: nicer (collared) shirts, jeans or pants for boys, long skirts or long dresses and blouses/collared shirts for girls. *See Culturally Appropriate Guidelines.*

Also bring:

- **Underwear (8-12 pair)**
- **Bras / Sports Bras (3 - 4)**
- **Socks (6-7 pair):** At least 2 pairs should be wool/synthetic for hiking
- **T-shirts (5):** For volunteering and recreation.
- **Lightweight long-sleeved shirt (1):** Quick-dry material (not cotton) is ideal, like polypropylene, capilene or smartwool, for warmth and protection from mosquitoes.
- **Fleece jacket (1):** Heavy wool sweater may substitute. Something warm in case of cool nights.

- **Lightweight Waterproof Jacket (1):** Expect plenty of rain. A poncho is fine.
- **Pajamas:** Presentable for walking around during your stay. You'll have the opportunity to purchase these in-country, lots of great pajama-like pants souvenirs in Nepal.
- **Lightweight Pants (2-3 pairs):** Khakis, exercise/hiking pants, loose-fitting yoga pants, etc. for volunteering, hiking, and everyday wear. Pants that have zip-off legs to turn into shorts can be great. Non-cotton is ideal. You'll wear pants on most days to respect the culture. We do NOT suggest jeans - they are heavy and take a very long time to dry!
- **Lightweight Shorts (boys only, 2):** For hiking, athletic/basketball shorts work well. May serve as swimsuit for boys.
- **Lightweight skirts or pant skirts (girls only, 2):** Must cover to the lower leg and be opaque (not see through!), bring a pair of lycra shorts and/or leggings to wear under your skirts during active days.
- **Bathing suit (1):** Girls should only bring a one-piece suit.
- **Sneakers, hi-tops, or lightweight hiking shoes:** For everyday wear. There is a fair amount of rain in the summer so understand your shoes may get rained on and will DEFINITELY get dirty! Don't bring shoes that you want to keep clean.
- **Warm hat and gloves:** Fleece or wool. **Great to purchase in Nepal for very cheap.**

OPTIONAL CLOTHING & EQUIPMENT

- **Small journal**
- **Small Nepali phrasebook**
- **Lightweight sneakers**
- **Raincover for daypack**
- **Earplugs**
- **Flip flops or Crocs**
- **Small pillow/Travel pillow** (an airplane pillow works fine)
- **Small umbrella**
- **Sarong** (use as a sleep sheet, beach towel, wrap skirt, etc.)
- **Camera:** Camera & charger: Depending on the model of your charger, you may need to get an adapter. Most camera chargers can accept 240v. You can get a transformer in-country if necessary.
- **Dry bag:** For protecting Camera, etc.
- **Thin cord/string:** To hang clothes to dry
- **1-2 Books (you can trade!)**
- **Sketchbook/art supplies**
- **Small musical instrument**
- **Sport sandals with ankle strap (1 pair):** Sturdy and comfortable (i.e. Tevas, Chacos, Keens)
- **Travel-size games** Cards, chess, backgammon, Connect-4, etc.

SORRY, NO PERSONAL MUSIC DEVICES ALLOWED!

GIFTS FOR YOUR HOSTS

We encourage you to bring a few small and inexpensive gifts for children and adults in your host community. These gifts serve as great icebreakers when getting to know your new friends. Consider bringing things which you've made yourself, that are typical of your home area or that would initiate fun activities together. Here are some suggestions:

Gifts for NOH and friends you may meet in Nepal

- Photos of family and your city
- Postcards or calendars of home
- Maps
- Souvenirs
- Unique local food (chocolate, taffy)

Gifts for children

- Bubbles
- Small toys
- School supplies
- Crayons
- Coloring books
- Play-dough
- Stickers
- Picture books
- Sports items (balls, Frisbee, hacky sack, jump rope)

Luggage

As you begin to gather the items on your packing list, you will need an appropriate piece of luggage to carry them! **Remember, unless otherwise specified on the Clothing & Equipment List, you will bring only 2 pieces of luggage with you on program - a day pack and large bag - both of which you are responsible for carrying.**

Your primary piece of luggage should fit those required items on your packing list, with the addition of any optional items from the list you choose to bring. When you choose a bag, think about:

- 1. Program requirements as stated on Clothing & Equipment List**
- 2. Cost & personal preference**
- 3. The likelihood of using this piece of luggage in the future**

Remember - you can probably borrow a bag from someone if you don't already have one at home!

Duffel Bag:

Duffel bags are typically the least expensive and more common option, while proportionally offering the most amount of space. Keep in mind, however, that they can be difficult to carry when fully packed. Some duffels have hidden backpack straps, that while limited in padding, offer the easier option to carry your duffel as a backpack when necessary. Duffels with wheels are convenient, although there will be instances where you will still be required to carry it instead. It should weigh less than 40 pounds fully packed.

Size: Ideally 4000 – 6000 cubic inches

Hiking/Travel Backpack

This is an alternative to a duffel bag. Hiking packs are large backpacks with or without an internal frame that are used for travel or hiking trips. They have hip belts to offer support on longer treks and can be a great investment if you plan to hike or backpack in the future! They are expensive, but built to last many years. We recommend Gregory brand.

Your Daypack:

You will use your daypack throughout your program, including on the plane as your carry-on, on day hikes, when you browse through markets, or while on other small excursions. On most days, you will only carry a bottle of water, a snack, a warm layer, your journal, a camera and possibly a rain jacket. On your days of international travel you will also have your passport, money and plane tickets! It should be no bigger than 30 to 40 liters. A school backpack should do the trick.

SPENDING MONEY

Almost all of your expenses are covered within the program fee so you need very little of your own money on the trip. Keep in mind that our programs do not focus on shopping and don't provide very many opportunities to do so. We advise students to bring **no more than \$200** of personal spending money on program for personal toiletries, extra snack food and souvenirs and gifts.

We prefer that students bring no more than this amount in order to minimize inequalities in students' spending power and to avoid the appearance, especially in non-affluent communities, of people "throwing money around."

Exchange rates for international currencies are worse in the U.S. than if that currency was procured in its country of origin. For this reason, we highly recommend that you **wait to exchange your money** into local currency until you arrive in country.

****Please set aside \$40 (which should not be spent during the program) to cover return travel expenses and any unanticipated departure taxes.****

We suggest that you bring your spending money in a few different forms:

CASH:

Some U.S. cash is great for the ease of changing money; smaller denominations are best (nothing greater than a \$20 bill). We don't recommend you bring *all* of your money in cash since it is not as secure and protected as other forms.

ATM OR DEBIT CARDS:

Cards work in most large towns and cities. Call your bank beforehand to check if certain cards have an international pin number and to notify them you will be using the card abroad.

DAILY MEDICATIONS

The health and safety of our students is the top priority on all Global Routes programs. We ask families to ensure our students have the best experience possible by maintaining their medication regimes and not making any changes immediately before, or during their program. This includes any daily medications taken for ADD/ADHD. A new climate, unfamiliar foods, and simply being away from home can all impact side-effects that may result from changes in medications or dosages. Even though our programs are non-academic it is critical that students can focus and follow instructions on the work site and during group related activities.

Students are responsible for carrying and taking their own daily medications while on program, so please be sure to understand how and when they should be taken. Students should either bring enough medication for the duration of their program or have a plan in place to replace their medication. It is important to remember you may not have access to refill or replace medications if they are damaged or lost.

Additionally, we will ask students to fill out a medication form in addition to their health form. This form is to be filled out just prior to the student's program departure and can be found on your CampDoc profile.

If you have any questions please contact us at (413) 585-8895 or at mail@globalroutes.org.

Immunization Recommendations

Education and immunization are two important parts of staying healthy when traveling. Based on our experience, your specific program itinerary and experts in the field, we offer you the following information. These are immunizations many participants have elected to choose in the past. **You must consult with your physician and travel clinic to make your own final decisions on preventive health measures.** Please remember to bring these pages with you to your doctor's appointment. We have included some helpful websites.

Center for Disease Control, travel health
More information on travel health, by region
List of travel clinics throughout the US

<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/>
<http://www.mdtravelhealth.com/index.html>
http://www.travmed.com/travel_clinics/clinic_links.htm

ROUTINE IMMUNIZATIONS:

These are vaccinations you should already have for life at home - they are not specific for travel. Check with your physician to ensure you are up-to-date on each of them, particularly Tetanus.

- Tetanus
- Polio
- Hepatitis B
- Measles
- Chicken Pox
- Rubella
- Mumps

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS:

Typhoid - Typhoid is contracted through infected water or food. Be assured that we take great care in the purchase and preparation of water and food. Nonetheless this precautionary immunization is recommended for travel in the developing world.

Hepatitis A - Hepatitis A is also contracted through infected water or food, and thus our precautions and recommendations are the same as they are for Typhoid. The vaccine for Hepatitis A is given as a series of two shots, but you only need the first shot for 6 months of immunity. This first shot can be administered as late as 2 weeks prior to departure.

Japanese Encephalitis - Japanese encephalitis (JE) is a mosquito-borne flaviviral infection. Transmission is seasonal and occurs throughout the year in various parts of the country and peak transmission season is not when groups will be serving in Nepal. JE transmission principally occurs in rural agricultural locations where flooding irrigation is practiced. The risk to short-term travelers and those who confine their travel to urban centers is very low. However, travelers with extensive unprotected outdoor, evening, and nighttime exposure in rural areas, such as might be experienced by Global Routes participants, may be at slightly higher risk. We recommend students take this vaccine series.

The vaccine is administered in three separate injections over the course of 30 days, so if you plan to take this series, please allow adequate time.

Malaria - Malaria is a mosquito-borne protozoan disease. The symptoms of malaria are much like those of the flu: headache, fever, aching joints, nausea and a general malaise. With early attention, it is treatable and has not been shown to result in any long-term health problems. We highly suggest that students traveling to Nepal take a Malaria prophylaxis.

Discuss a prescription for **atovaquone/proguanil, doxycycline or mefloquine** with your doctor or travel clinic, as well as its dosage, schedule, contraindications and possible side effects. **Chloroquine is NOT an effective antimalarial drug in Nepal.** Please be sure to tell your doctor or travel clinic if you have any food or drug allergies, a history of depression, or are currently taking any prescription drugs as these prophylactic medications can exacerbate preexisting conditions or cause side-effects when mixed with other medications.

The best protection against malaria is to avoid getting bitten by a disease-infested mosquito. Preventive measures include using bug repellent, wearing long pants and long sleeved shirts at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active, and avoiding the use of perfumes or fragrances.

A Final Note...

Although the above health concerns and preventive measures may sound imposing, know that being exposed to - let alone contracting one of the above diseases is highly unlikely. Thousands of tourists, travelers and volunteers visit Nepal every year without even the slightest hint of illness. Your leaders travel with an extensive medical kit and are well trained to deal with minor ailments. Should any condition persist, your leaders will seek medical attention.

We understand that students take their own daily medications separate from those suggested for this program, while not required, we suggest that students bring a filled prescription of Cipro. In the event of illness, students will have a complete examination at a local clinic or hospital to determine the source of illness (bacterial, viral, parasitic, etc.) and the best form of treatment. In addition to consulting doctors, leaders will also consult with parents' and gain their permission before administering Cipro or any other medicine. Because Cipro is used to treat the vast majority of gastrointestinal illness we suggest having a filled prescription on hand to expedite treatment. Suggestions for what to bring in a mini medkit are on your Clothing & Equipment list.

Reading & Resources

The following is a list of resources related to various topics about Nepal. While this is not a required reading list, we highly encourage you to explore at least a few of these interesting and informative resources as you begin your preparations for your upcoming journey!

Books LITERATURE

Arresting God in Kathmandu,

by Samrat Upadhyay

Upadhyay has the distinction of being the only Nepali-born author writing in English who has been published in the West. Published in 2001, this was his first book. It is a collection of nine stories dealing with themes of love and spirituality but written from a distinctly Nepalese standpoint, which offers tremendous insight into the country's culture and society. Also check his other collection of short stories called *The Royal Ghosts*, as well as his novels: *The Guru of Love*, which was a NY Times 'Notable Books of the Year' in 2003, and *Buddha's Orphans*. All of his works are set in Nepal.

The Tutor of History, by Manjushree Thapa

This book is also significant for being one of the few major novels in Nepal to be translated into English. Although this book was not published in the US, it can easily be found online. Tutor was her first book, started as her MFA thesis at the University of Washington. It is a complex tale set in the midst of a Maoist insurgency in Nepal. It is an exacting and truthful glimpse into the country's tumultuous political climate of the 90s. She has written two other novels as well as some non-fiction including *Forget Kathmandu: An Elegy for Democracy*, which is her most well-known book.

Mountains Painted with Turmeric,

by Lil Bahadur Chettri

Set in the far eastern hills of Nepal, this novel by an Indian Nepali author has struck a chord with native Nepalese for its starkly realistic depiction of life in a small village. The story follows the trials of a peasant farmer struggling to provide for his wife and son as well as arrange the marriage of his younger sister. Chettri explores many complex subjects including the intimacy and sense of community that comes with village life.

NON-FICTION

Travelers' Tales Nepal, by Rajendra S. Khadka

A wonderful compilation of anecdotes and stories from travelers visiting Nepal. A great first look at being a traveler far from home in the Land of Snow. This collection includes works from Jimmy Carter, Peter Matthiessen and Manjushree Thapa, a notable Nepali author (listed in the 'Literature' section).

The Snow Leopard, by Peter Matthiessen

Sensitively written account of a journey into the heart of the Himalayan region of Dolpo in pursuit of the elusive snow leopard. Vivid descriptions of the land interwoven with perceptive insights into the mind. It is considered a classic of modern nature writing.

The History of Nepal, by John Whelpton

John Whelpton's history of Nepal focuses on the period since the overthrow of the Rana family autocracy in 1950-51 and on the origins of the kingdom and the evolving relations of its diverse peoples. Whelpton portrays a country of contrasts, whose history has been buffeted constantly by its neighbors, China and India.

Annapurna, by Maurice Herzog

In 1950, Maurice Herzog and other members of the French Alpine Club were going to try to climb a mountain higher than 8,000 meters, a feat that had never been done before. They chose the 26,493-foot Himalayan peak, Annapurna. It was an adventure that almost cost them their lives.

Culture Shock: Nepal. A Guide to Customs and Etiquette, by Jon Burbank

A very useful guide to cultural norms and practices in Nepal. It is thorough but also readable. This book is a highly recommended resource.

Films

Caravan (1999 – also released as *Himalaya*)

This French film was the first Nepalese film to be nominated for a Best Foreign Film Oscar. Set in the remote mountain region of Dolpo, the story follows a group of villagers and their caravan of yaks from the high plateau down to the lowlands to trade their loads of rock salt for grain. All but two characters in the film were played by real chiefs and local villagers. It is a beautiful film to watch and perceptively depicts Tibetan culture and traditions.

Seven Years in Tibet (1997)

Based on the book of the same name written by Heinrich Harrer, an Austrian mountaineer who lived in Tibet in the late 1940s. While hiking in India at the start of WWII, Harrer and his friend are unexpectedly imprisoned by the British due to their German citizenship. They escape prison and take the dangerous trek along the high plateau into Tibet. There he becomes a tutor to the Dalai Lama until Chinese invasion in 1950.

The Saltmen of Tibet (2002)

This German documentary records the annual 90-day caravan trek to the dried salt lakes of northern Tibet, providing them with salt they can then trade for grain. This annual journey was the subject of the Oscar-nominated film *Caravan* (above).

Unmistaken Child (2008)

A Tibetan Buddhist monk goes in search of the reincarnation of his teacher, the renowned lama Geshe Lama Konchog, in this documentary. The film follows him to several small villages in the Tsum Valley on the Nepal-China border as he meets with different children and their families. It is an interesting look at the process of finding and confirming a Rinpoche, or reincarnated Tibetan master.

Music

“With more than forty ethnic diversities, the music of this country is a highly dispersed phenomenon. Although genres like pop, rock, folk, and Classical music exist, a huge number of such genres are yet to be cataloged. Many musical bands exist in Nepal, with a huge number located in Kathmandu - most of the recent ones focused in pop and rock. Rap has been known to emerge on the charts from time to time.” The rock music scene of Nepal originated with the arrival of Hippies in the Kathmandu valley. The prime scene of Rock as well as Rock and Roll during those days used to be Jhochhen aka Freak Street, in Kathmandu near Durbar Square. Like music in many countries around the globe, Nepal’s musical youth are mixing classical melodies, song lyrics and traditional rhythms with a modern day flare, mixing boards and instrumentals. Sacred Tibetan Chant

The Monks of Sherab Ling Monastery
Tibetan Sacred Temple Music

Tibetan pop music forms the ambient sounds of everyday life, and hits can be heard blaring from loudspeakers in downtown Kathmandu. Music fans are treated also to tunes like the theme song of South Korean TV hit Dae Jang Geum; covered in Tibetan, no less, by Kunsang Lhamo, a native female vocalist. Tibetan monks are recording sacred chants and both secular and non-secular music is being distributed by “home-studio” recording companies. The Tibetan monk Geshe Ngawang Tashi, popularly known as Lama Tashi, received a Grammy award nomination. Here are a few examples of traditional Nepali/Tibetan music and chanting.

Tibetan Monks Of Drepung Loseling Monastery
Seven Metals Singing Bowls of Tibet
Benjamin Iobst

Language

Learning a few Nepali phrases before you step on the plane is highly recommended. While learning how to read Nepali may be a monumental task, learning how to confidently ask, ‘how are you’ (Ta Pai Lai Kasto Chat) or ‘what’s your name’ (Ta Pai Go Nam Kay Yo) will earn the respect of Nepalis from day one. This free Cornell course is a good place to start although having the transliteration of Nepali phrases will also be helpful: <http://lrc.cornell.edu/nepali/online>

Websites

We encourage you to explore on the web or Wikipedia for information about Nepal and specific topics you may be interested in (national parks, local art, current events, etc) before you depart for Nepal. There are hundreds of good websites at your fingertips, and these are just a few to help get you started.

http://nepaltourism.info/nepal_culture.html

While also covering culture and history, this link provides access to adventure opportunities.

<http://www.nepalitimes.com/>

English-language newspaper in Nepal. Covers news stories and also features interesting opinion and interest blogs and columns.