

# EXPLORE!

NEW

**Beijing to Kolkata**  
22 days

China, India, Nepal - Trip code BTC



## Beijing to Kolkata

Discover China's Forbidden City, Great Wall and Terracotta Army before taking the world's highest railway to Lhasa, through the stunning mountain scenery of the Tibetan Plateau. Explore chaotic Kathmandu and search for wild rhino in Nepal's Chitwan National Park, and visit the Buddha's birthplace at Lumbini. Wander the narrow streets of India's spiritual capital, Varanasi, and travel to the Bay of Bengal and the former capital of the Raj at Kolkata.

## Trip highlights

- ★ **China** - Explore the Forbidden City, the Great Wall and the Terracotta Warriors before travelling by train through the mountains to Tibet
- ★ **Tibet** - Visit Yumbulagang Palace, the oldest dwelling place of Tibetan kings, and the dramatic Potala Palace, the former residence of the Dalai Lama
- ★ **Nepal** - Discover Kathmandu's Royal palace, Durbar Square and the main bazaar before exploring the jungle at Chitwan on foot and by jeep to search for the one-horned rhino
- ★ **India** - Experience India's sacred holy city of Varanasi, the spiritual centre of Buddhism at Bodh Gaya, and its old colonial capital, Calcutta

### ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

#### Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

**TRIP PACE:**

**Moderate**

Moderate pace tours are ideal if you want a holiday which combines exciting activities and experiences with plenty of time to relax and unwind. Typically you'll be active and busy for part of the day but then also have time to rest and recharge your batteries.

**GROUP SIZE:**

**10 - 16**

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

# Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

## DAY 1 - Join trip in Beijing

Our trip begins today in Beijing, China's capital and its political and cultural centre. The city has been the capital since Kublai Khan put it at the heart of his mighty Asian Empire in the late 1200s. All clocks in this vast country are set by Beijing time despite the westernmost regions being some 5000 kilometres away.



**Accommodation: Xiao Xiang Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 2 - Discover the sights of Beijing including the Forbidden City

Today we'll visit the Forbidden City, the one-time home of the Ming and the Manchu (Qing) emperors and a treasure trove of eastern wares. We will walk around the infamous Tiananmen Square, which contains the Monument to the People's Heroes and the Mausoleum of Mao Zedong. We'll visit the Hutongs - narrow streets and alleys that have a timeless feel, they are the real heartbeat of the city. Walking around them we'll feel as if we are a world away from the gleaming skyscrapers of modern China.



**Accommodation: Xiao Xiang Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 3 - Walk along the iconic Great Wall of China

This morning we drive out to a renovated part of the Great Wall at Mutianyu, situated north of the city. Begun in the 3rd century BC by Shi Huangdi, thousands of conscripted workers laboured on it and many lie buried in its brick and stone ramparts. It is incredible to think that this wall spans the entire country. Here there is a 2km section to walk along with watchtowers and views of the surrounding countryside. En route we may also get to visit a cloisonné workshop where you can see examples of this ancient metal-working technique. In the evening we take an overnight train to Beijing. We will be travelling in soft sleeper compartments, which have 4 berths per carriage and shared washing facilities.



**Accommodation: Overnight Train: Beijing/Xian**



Simple Overnight Train



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 4 - Arrive in Xian and start to explore the city

We arrive in Xian this morning and after taking breakfast at the hotel we begin to explore this incredible city, uncovering the extraordinary continuity of Chinese civilisation. Xian (Changan) served 11 dynasties and was the starting point of the famous Silk Road between Central Asia and Europe. We'll explore the Muslim quarter with its labyrinth-like alleys and great wooden mosque - the largest mosque in China originally built over a thousand years ago. We also visit the Big Wild Goose Pagoda, a 64 metre high structure which dates from the year 652 and provides superb views of the city.



**Accommodation: City Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 5 - See the magnificent Terracotta Army

Today we visit one of the highlights of any visit to China - the magnificent Terracotta Warriors and Horses who guard the Qin Shi Huangdi Tomb. There are thousands of life size warriors, dating from 200 BC, and each one is unique, leading some to theorise that they were based on real people. This dramatic find of the 1970s is considered one of the greatest archaeological discoveries of the last century. We will have time to stop at the on-site factory to see how the warriors are made today. In the early evening we fly to Xining. Situated right in the middle of China, on the extreme edge of the Tibetan Plateau at an altitude of 2,300m, Xining sits between the barren plateau and the stark dominant mountains that rise up behind it. This remote outpost on the southern extremes of the silk road has been important to the Han Chinese since the 16th century, and has an interesting mix of ethnic minorities that call the city home. Aside from the Han, there are significant numbers of Hui Muslims and Tibetans, affording the city an unusual eclectic vibrancy.



**Accommodation: Junlan Borui Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 6 - Explore the Hanging Temple and walk along the shore of beautiful Kokonor Lake

Our first visit is to the Northern Buddhist Temple, also called the Hanging Temple. It takes its name from the fact that it leans against, or seemingly hangs from, Northern Mountain. Featuring Buddhist and Taoist architectural styles, it was often referred to in the past as 'a bright pearl on the southern path of the silk road'. The temple was constructed in during the 5th century and it is the earliest example of religious architecture in Qinghai Province. We then make our way to Kokonor Lake, also known as Qinghai, the lake gives it name to the whole province. It lies in stunningly beautiful mountainous countryside at an elevation of 3200m and is the largest lake in China. It is considered holy by Tibetans and Mongolians and there are prayer flags and places for offerings dotted around its edge. We'll take a walk along the shores of the lake, and learn about its religious and practical significance to the local population.



**Accommodation: Junlan Borui Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 7 - Watch monks debating at Ta'er Monastery and board the overnight train to Lhasa

We make an early morning start to see the monks debating at Ta'er Monastery. One of the most important Tibetan Lamaseries in all of China, this walled monastery is an imposing sight set on the edge of a fertile valley. It attracts pilgrims from all over China, as well as from Tibet and Mongolia. Built in 1560 in honour of Tsongkhapa, founder of the Yellow Hat sect of Tibetan Buddhism, it contains several beautifully decorated temples and prayer halls. The monastery houses some remarkable treasures, including the Great Hall with its embroidered tapestries and carpeted pillars. In the early afternoon board the overnight train to Lhasa. We travel in soft sleeper compartments, which have 4 berths per carriage and shared washing facilities. While the train travels to over 5000 metres, it is pressurised so the full effects of the altitude are not felt.



**Accommodation: Overnight Train: Xining/Lhasa**



Simple Overnight Train



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 8 - Travel through mountain scenery and arrive in to Lhasa. Visit the Potala Palace

When we wake up this morning we will have climbed to over 4,000 metres and will be travelling through the incredible mountain scenery of the Tibet region, arriving in to Lhasa around midday. The city's location is spectacular; set in a ring of towering mountains, the valley is cut through by the gushing Kyi Chu (the Happy River), one of the headwaters of the mighty Indian Brahmaputra. For most of the year the sky above Lhasa is a deep intense blue, and the air is crisp and dry. We will visit the Potala Palace, the former seat of the Dalai Lamas, where the genius of Tibetan architecture finds expression in the glistening white walls that seem to soar directly from every stone and rock face. We also explore the famous Jokhang Temple, one of the oldest and most sacred shrines in the country and an object of circumambulation by devoted pilgrims.



**Accommodation: Yabshi Phunkhang Heritage Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 9 - Continue our exploration of Lhasa

Today we visit the Norbulingka, the Dalai Lama's former summer palace. The name means 'the jewelled garden', and refers to the lush park that surrounds the palace. There's also time to stroll around the colourful stalls in the nearby market, or just sit back quietly and observe the noisy and jostling crowds of pilgrims and haggling merchants. Later, we spend some time at the Ani Tsangkung Nunnery (the only active nunnery in Lhasa) and see the monastic university of Sera where the monks practice philosophical debates in the monastery garden and ritual chanting in the assembly halls.



**Accommodation: Yabshi Phunkhang Heritage Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 10 - Drive to Tsetang and visit the Samye Monastery and Yumbulagang

Today we visit the Norbulingka, the Dalai Lama's former summer palace. The name means 'the jewelled garden', and refers to the lush park that surrounds the palace. There's also time to stroll around the colourful stalls in the nearby market, or just sit back quietly and observe the noisy and jostling crowds of pilgrims and haggling merchants. Later, we spend some time at the Ani Tsangkung Nunnery (the only active nunnery in Lhasa) and see the monastic university of Sera where the monks practice philosophical debates in the monastery garden and ritual chanting in the assembly halls.



**Accommodation: Tsetang Yulung Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 11 - Fly across the Himalaya to Nepal's capital, Kathmandu, and begin exploring the city

This morning we board a flight to Kathmandu in Nepal, enjoying views of the Himalaya and Mount Everest piercing the clouds. On arrival in Kathmandu we will take a walking tour around the bazaar and Durbar Square, the centre of old Kathmandu. Much of the day to day life of Kathmandu takes place in the bazaar: a fascinating mixture of people selling fruit, vegetables and spices; potters spinning their wheels to produce small household bowls and containers for temple offerings; devotees visiting their favourite gods at temples and small shrines dotted along the sides of alleyways; rickshaw wallahs honking their horns and the ever present sacred cow wandering amongst it all. It's a riot of colour and activity!



**Accommodation: Hotel Ambassador** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 12 - Discover Pashupatinath Temple and Bodnath Stupa

After breakfast we visit the Temple of Pashupatinath, the holiest Hindu shrine in Nepal. Situated on the banks of the Bagmati River, it is surrounded by a bustling market selling offerings, incense, conch shells and pictures of Hindu deities, and is frequented by holy men, Sadhus and religious pilgrims. We then move on to Bodnath, the largest stupa in Asia and an important destination for Buddhist pilgrims where devotees perform the Kora - a ritual circumnavigation of the monument. The area has become home to many Tibetan refugees and is sometimes referred to as 'Little Tibet'. The afternoon is free, but there is an option to explore Bhaktapur - the 'city of devotees'. Just outside Kathmandu, it is one of the ancient city-states of Nepal and many of its buildings, monuments and temples date from the city's heyday in the 1100s.



**Accommodation: Hotel Ambassador** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 13 - Drive to Chitwan National Park and take a village walk

From Kathmandu we drive for around six hours, arriving at Chitwan in the late afternoon. The oldest and best known of the national parks in Nepal, Chitwan consists of swamp, tall grass and dense forest; it is a natural habitat for tiger, the rare one-horned Indian rhino, leopard, sloth bear and a multitude of birds. Once we arrive at the park we'll take a short walk through some of the villages that are close by, learning how the local people live in harmony with nature.



**Accommodation: Machan Country Villa** (or similar)



Standard Lodge



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

## DAY 14 - Search for the wild rhino in Chitwan

Chitwan means 'heart of the jungle' and its thick tree cover and tall elephant grass shelter a wealth of animals, most famously the one-horned rhino. During our day in the park there are several activities arranged, including a jeep safari searching for rhino, bird watching, jungle walks and a canoe trip along the Rapti River. The river trip will be dependent on the water level, but floating silently down the Rapti River offers a great opportunity to spot many varieties of water birds. On the nature walk we are accompanied by a local naturalist while navigating trails in the less densely forested parts of the park, and an early morning bird-watching walk near the river reveals many of the park's 450 bird species. These include the Asian openbill stork, paradise fly catcher, jungle myna, grey-headed fish eagle, and white-eyed buzzard.



**Accommodation: Machan Country Villa** (or similar)



Standard Lodge



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

## DAY 15 - Take an early morning nature walk and drive to Lumbini, the birthplace of the Buddha

After a final early morning walk through the park and our last chance to spot the animal and birdlife, we'll leave for Lumbini, a drive of around four hours. We explore Lumbini by rickshaw, visiting the World Peace Pagoda and the Maya Devi Temple where the Buddha was born. The temple is located in a sacred garden with a pond where his mother, who the temple is named after, was said to have bathed just before giving birth to him.



**Accommodation: Hotel Nirvana** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 16 - Train and drive to Varanasi, crossing the border at Sonauli

Today we drive to Gorakhpur in India, crossing the border at Sonauli. From Gorakhpur we take the Nautanwa Durg Express train to Varanasi, a journey of around five hours that will get us in to Varanasi in the early evening. Varanasi, also known as Benares, has been the centre of Hinduism since the dawn of civilisation; its age is contemporary with Babylon and Thebes. Often known as 'Kashi' (City of Light) by Hindus, it attracts over a million pilgrims each year, many of whom come to spend their last years in the holy city.



**Accommodation: Hotel Meraden Grand** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 17 - Explore Sarnath and witness the evening aarti ceremony on the banks of the Ganges

This morning we make a short journey north to the sacred site of Sarnath, the cradle of Buddhism, where the Buddha preached his first sermon following his attainment of enlightenment. We will visit the main shrine, the Dharmarajka and Dhamekh Stupas, and the spot where he first espoused the teachings that were to form the very principles of the Buddhist faith. We will also see the nearby Ashoka Pillar and the monastery, the centre pieces of what is in effect probably the most expansive collection of Buddhist temples and monasteries on earth. At its height this remarkable site housed over 1500 monks, before its decline and subsequent destruction by Muslim armies saw it all but disappear. It was rediscovered by British archaeologists in the middle years of the 19th century and has recaptured some of its original prestige. It is now considered one of the four holiest Buddhist sites on earth. Returning to Varanasi we will spend the afternoon exploring the old city and the riverfront by cycle rickshaw and on foot, making our way to the ghats where we witness the evening Ganga Aarti ceremony. This involves young saffron-robed Pandits - Hindu holy scholars who study the ancient Vedic texts - venerating the river as a living goddess. The ceremony begins with the haunting sound of a conch shell. This is followed by waving incense sticks in elaborate patterns and circling oil burning lamps while clanging

cymbals and chanting songs in praise of the deity.



**Accommodation: Hotel Meraden Grand** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 18 - Drive to Bodhgaya

We drive for around five hours to the most important pilgrimage site in the Buddhist world, Bodhgaya, which sits on the plains of the eastern Ganges. It was here that the Lord Buddha attained enlightenment under the Bodhi tree and today there is a direct descendent of the tree still growing which was planted in 288 BC. There are also several temples to visit, including the magnificent Mahabodhi Temple, or 'great awakening temple', a UNESCO World Heritage Site which is almost 1500 years old.



**Accommodation: Hotel Tathagat International** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 19 - Discover the ancient centre of learning at Nalanda and take the overnight train to Kolkata

After breakfast we visit the ruins of one of the world's oldest organised learning establishments, Nalanda. It was a renowned centre of learning from the fifth century and scholars from all across Asia would travel to study there. Nearby we find the city of Rajgir. Divided in two parts, the old fortified city lies in a valley surrounded by seven hills and the new city established by Ajatshatru, the son of Bimbisara and a contemporary of Lord Buddha. Rajgir was a favourite place of the Buddha and he is said to have delivered some of his first sermons here and many of the cities inhabitants became his first followers. In the evening we take the overnight Doon Express to Kolkata (Calcutta) The journey takes around 10 hours and offers a great way to meet people as we travel. We make our bookings in second class air-conditioned sleepers, which have four beds in each compartment and all bedding provided.



**Accommodation: Overnight train from Patna to Kolkata**



Simple Overnight Train



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 20 - Explore Kolkata by boat and on foot

After checking in to the hotel we'll take a cruise along the Hooghly River to Belur Math. A place of pilgrimage for people all over the world, the site is famous for its tranquil setting and the architecture of its buildings, in particular the Ramakrishna Temple which is designed to celebrate the diversity of Indian Religions and resembles a temple, a mosque, and a church when viewed from different vantage points. After exploring Belur Math we'll take a short boat ride across the river to the Dakshineswar Kali Temple. Constructed in the 19th century by wealthy widow Rani Rasmani, it is said that the goddess Kali appeared to her in a dream promising to manifest herself at the site if a temple was constructed in her honour.





Accommodation: Lytton Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 21 - Visit Dalhousie Square, the Victoria Memorial and Mother Theresa's house

We make an early morning visit to Kolkata's Chinatown area, the only one in India, first settled by native Chinese in the early 1800s. Tiretta Bazaar, the area's busy market, is only open first thing in the morning and it is a renowned spot for breakfast, with dimsum, momos, spring rolls and pau - ball shaped oversized dumpling stuffed with pork, chicken, or fish filling, on the menu. YAY!! The first mention of food Later we explore the old colonial buildings of Dalhousie Square, dating from the time that the city was the capital of the British Raj. The magnificent marble domed Victoria memorial is next, where the sumptuous grandeur of European and Mughal influences come together in a blaze of white marble. Finally we pay a visit the home Kolkata's most famous resident, Mother Theresa. This remarkable woman, born in Serbia in 1910, has become synonymous with the city. A member of the Order of the Loreto nuns, she was sent to India in 1937 and spent the next 60 years attempting to alleviate some of the appalling poverty that first assailed her on her arrival.



Accommodation: Lytton Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 22 - Trip ends in Kolkata

Our trip ends this morning in Kolkata.



Meals Provided: Breakfast



## Why book this trip

This is an epic journey which takes in some of the most exciting and beautiful parts of Asia. Explore China and take the world's highest railway across the Tibetan plateau to Lhasa. Fly over the Himalaya and past the world's highest mountain, and travel by road and rail through Nepal and in to India, discovering some of the East's most holy and spiritual places as we go.

# What's included?



## Included meals

Breakfast: 22  
Lunch: 2  
Dinner: 2



## Transport

Bus  
Train



## Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader(s)  
Driver(s)



## Accommodation

16 nights standard hotel  
2 nights standard lodge  
3 nights simple overnight train

# Trip information

## Country information

### China Holidays & Tours

#### Climate

China has primarily a temperate climate, with a wide spectrum of extremes due to its huge area. Summer months are hot and rainy though in the south the climate is tropical and we can experience rain at any time of the year, often falling in sharp tropical rain-storms which are heavy but short lived. Winter is colder and drier, temperatures in Beijing can be as low as -12c.

#### Time difference to GMT

+8

#### Plugs

3 Pin Flat

#### Religion

Mainly Buddhist

#### Language

Mandarin

### India Holidays & Tours

#### Climate

There is considerable variation between the different regions of India but, in general, the climate is tropical. Summer temperatures on the plains are very hot, but cooled by the South-West Monsoon, which lasts from June- September. During these months it can be very wet and therefore very humid. At altitude, temperatures can become quite cool at night even in the summer and may drop below freezing between December and February so warm clothing is necessary. In the winter, northern and mid India can be very cool, with cold evenings, so warm clothing, including plenty of layers, are essential. The south of India remains warm and sunny during the winter months.

#### Time difference to GMT

+5

#### Plugs

3 Pin Round

#### Religion

Catholicism, Hindu, Islam and Sikhism

#### Language

Hindi and English.

## Nepal Holidays & Tours

#### Climate

Temperatures in the lower altitude regions are extremely pleasant. At Pokhara variations in temperature are very limited: from the coldest recorded of 8°C (46°F) to the highest of 31°C (88°F). The mountains are best admired, with greater air clarity, from October to January, while from February to May the skies may be hazy. Monsoon rains are strongest in June, July and August. The coldest months are December and January.

#### Time difference to GMT

+5.45

#### Plugs

2 Pin Round

#### Religion

Hinduism

#### Language

Nepali

## Budgeting and packing

### Optional activities

Bhaktapur - US\$ 35 (minimum 4 people)

### Clothing

You will experience very varied climates on this trip so you need to be prepared for the cold in Western China and Lhasa, and the heat of Nepal and India. A sweater and a windproof jacket is advisable, and there's also the possibility of rain so a waterproof jacket is recommended. In the warmer regions light clothing is recommended, but long sleeves and trousers will help protect you from the sun. Lycra garments are not allowed in Nepal and Tibet.

### Footwear

Comfortable shoes or trainers.

### Luggage

20kg

### Luggage: On tour

One main piece and a daypack. Remember, you are expected to carry your own luggage - so don't overload yourself. Whilst walking on the Great Wall your main luggage will be left on the vehicle or in the hotel. You should carry a daypack containing water, sunscreen and a hat at the very least. It is essential that your baggage is lockable to comply with local aviation regulations. Please be aware, before boarding a flight in China that the Chinese authorities will only allow bottles onto aircraft if they have been checked in as main luggage. Any bottles in the hand luggage may be confiscated.

### Equipment

Bring a sunhat, insect repellent and waterbottle.

### Tipping

#### Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

### Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly, you should allow approximately £45 for tipping. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

### Country Information

## China Holidays & Tours

### Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

**Lunch price**

£5

**Dinner price**

£6.00 - 10.00

**Beer price**

£2

**Water price**

£1.5

### Foreign Exchange

**Local currency**

Renminbi/Yuan

**Recommended Currency For Exchange**

Either EUR, USD or GBP.

**Where To Exchange**

In all towns - your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival. When changing money ask for a receipt so you can change Yuan back into your own currency when leaving China.

**ATM Availability**

All major towns.

**Credit Card Acceptance**

Most major restaurants and stores.

**Travellers Cheques**

Travellers cheques can be changed in Hong Kong and at the Bank of China in all major cities but only during bank opening hours. Please note this is very time consuming and is not recommended.

## India Holidays & Tours

### Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

**Lunch price**

£6

**Dinner price**

£8

**Beer price**

£1.4

**Water price**

£0.5

## Foreign Exchange

### Local currency

Indian Rupee Recently new 500, 1000 and 2000 rupee notes have been brought in to circulation and as the old notes are no longer accepted there have been some cash flow issues. You don't need to worry about being given old notes as it's very easy to tell the difference, the new notes are pristine in comparison with most Indian money which is fairly tatty.

### Recommended Currency For Exchange

GBP/US\$ are the best currency to change into local currency.

### Where To Exchange

The Indian rupee is a restricted currency and it is best not to obtain in the UK as rates are very poor. You can either change money at the airport on arrival or in major towns during the tour. Your Tour Leader will advise you on the best places in each town. Both GBP and USD cash are easy to exchange at the airport and at hotels however you will be restricted to changing £60 cash at a time and it's not possible to change money at these locations using a credit or debit card.

### ATM Availability

ATMs are available in most large cities in India but they are very limited elsewhere so please do not rely on this.

### Credit Card Acceptance

Very rarely, only in the larger outlets.

### Travellers Cheques

Opportunities to exchange are limited.

## Nepal Holidays & Tours

### Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

#### Lunch price

£7

#### Dinner price

£10

#### Beer price

£3

#### Water price

£0.3

## Foreign Exchange

### Local currency

Nepali Rupee.

### Recommended Currency For Exchange

US\$ or GBP.

### Where To Exchange

In major cities and towns

### ATM Availability

Although you may occasionally find cash machines these are very unreliable - do not rely on plastic!

### Credit Card Acceptance

Credit cards are not generally accepted except in larger establishments in Kathmandu.

### Travellers Cheques

Travellers cheques are not accepted as a valid mode of payment in Nepal.

## Transport, Accommodation & Meals

### Transport Information

Bus, Train

### Accommodation notes

#### Booking a Single Room

All of our group tours are planned and operated on a twin-share basis, meaning that the standard cost is based either on individual travellers sharing accommodation with another group member of the same sex, or people who book together sharing accommodation. Please refer to the tour notes where the single room option availability is detailed on a night by night basis for this tour, and the price for the available nights is detailed on the dates & prices tab by departure date. For Self-Guided trips the Single Room supplement offers the option of a single room each and is charged per person. The Single Room supplement also applies to the third person in a party of three that will be accommodated in a single room.

China: As tourism developed relatively recently in China, accommodation is usually modern, spacious and comfortable, albeit rather generic. Most hotels are large and purpose built and though rarely characterful, you can generally rely on good facilities. In major cities the hotels that we use are of international style generally with business facilities, restaurants and bars and all mod cons, though few have pools. In other cities and large towns the standard is similar although on a lesser scale. In small towns or villages where tourism is less prevalent, the hotels we use are smaller and facilities are more limited, though we generally stay in the best place in town. Rooms will still be en suite but can be basic. Plumbing and electricity supplies can be somewhat erratic and although the welcome is warm, service levels may be less efficient than you might expect. Please be aware that the beds in China are often quite firm and may take a few nights for you to get used to. Aboard the overnight sleeper train, berths are usually in 1st class 'soft sleeper' lockable compartments for 4 which have 2 sets of bunks with clean bedding provided. WC and washbasins are provided for shared use at the end of each carriage. Hot meals and snacks are usually sold to your berth on overnight journeys. In times of large demand we may have to travel in 2nd class 'hard sleeper' which consists of sectioned off compartments for 6, leading off an open plan carriage. The majority of hotels in China offer check in from 12noon. On days where we will arrive on a sleeper train the Tour Leader will try and arrange an early check in for the group, however this may not be possible. India: Accommodation in India is as varied as the country itself. On our tours we stay in a mix of hotels, heritage properties, camp sites and homestays. Standards do not equate to standards in the UK and it's best to approach each type of accommodation with an open mind. Service can be slow in places especially when travelling with a group. For the most part hotels do not have heating so in the winter months it can be chilly and if you feel the cold you may wish to ask for extra blankets. Hot water is not always available 24 hours a day in some of the smaller properties, and with a group staying you might find if you are showering last you may miss out on the hottest water.

## Essential information

### FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice click here.

For more information from Explore about travel advice, click here

#### Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

### Essential Information

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

### Visa Information

China: A visa is required by all nationalities. A single entry visa should be arranged in advance of travel. In order to apply for your Chinese visa you will need to submit supporting documents from our local supplier confirming your itinerary and travel arrangements, which we will obtain on your behalf. So that we can provide this for you, and to ensure all local arrangements are in place, we require a copy of your passport no later than 8 weeks before you are due to start your trip. Once we have your passport copy we shall process and pass on the documents you require 6-8 weeks before your trip, please be mindful of this when applying for your visa. If you require the supporting documents earlier than this, please contact Explore so we can arrange this. PLEASE BE AWARE: Passengers wishing to extend their stay in China should note that current visa regulations only allow foreigners to stay in the country for up to 30 days. Please consider this when making your travel arrangements. Passengers with flights that transit via Beijing or Shanghai airports (Beijing Capital International airport, . All visa information is subject to change regularly, so please

check with your local consulate for the most up to date information. Nepal: Visas can be obtained from the Nepalese embassy prior to travel or on arrival at Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu . A passport sized photograph is essential in order for you to arrange your visa. India: Holders of passports endorsed 'British citizen' may be eligible for the e-Tourist Visa to enter India. The visa can be applied for through the official Indian government visa website only - <https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/visa/tvoa.html>. Please check all eligibility criteria that can be found on the website but important points are listed below - You must be arriving into one of 24 selected entry points which can be found via the official Indian Government website link above. However, you can exit from any of the authorised immigration check posts in India. Passports must have at least 6 months validity from the date of arrival in India and at least two blank pages for stamping. The visa application will take approximately 4 days to process. It is valid for 60 days from the date of arrival in to India, and double entry is permitted on the e-Tourist visa. You can only obtain 2 e-visas for India in a calendar year. The visa costs \$75. Biometric data will be collected on arrival in India. Whilst the online form offers a relatively quick way to apply for a visa, a number of applicants have reported difficulty in completing the form. Travcour will complete the on-line visa on your behalf for a fee of £25 + the visa cost. Please contact them directly if you wish to take up this service. If you are not eligible for the e-Tourist Visa, please refer to VFS Global to apply for your Indian visa - [http://in.vfsglobal.co.uk/how\\_to\\_apply.html](http://in.vfsglobal.co.uk/how_to_apply.html). If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See [www.travcour.com](http://www.travcour.com) to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa

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## Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our Essential Information and Booking Conditions.

## Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

### Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

### Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

## Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

## Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. [Read more about them here.](#)

### Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

### Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid

paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

## Altitude information

This trip goes to an altitude where there is a risk of being affected by Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS), a common and usually harmless condition caused by reduced air pressure and a lower concentration of oxygen. Whilst the itinerary has been specifically designed to allow your body to acclimatise gradually, the speed of onset and severity - as well as the height at which AMS develops can vary greatly between individuals; being physically fit affords no special protection. If symptoms occur while on tour you must let your tour leader know immediately. For further advice when travelling at altitude we recommend visiting the medical advice website of Medex and download their information booklet: [http://medex.org.uk/medex\\_book/english\\_version.php](http://medex.org.uk/medex_book/english_version.php) Travellers with heart or lung conditions, anaemia, asthma, high blood pressure, or taking the contraceptive pill must seek the advice of their GP and specifically mention the maximum altitude the trip reaches (please refer to Tour Essentials box on front page of your Tour Notes). Please take these to your medical appointment so that your doctor has the full details of your trip. Insurance: Please ensure that your insurance policy covers you to the altitude indicated below in the section entitled 'Medical examination' before you come on tour. If you have Explore insurance, you will be covered to this altitude.

## China Holidays & Tours

### Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against malaria, infectious hepatitis, typhoid, tetanus and polio. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on different prophylaxis available against malaria. Travellers may wish to take immunisation against Japanese Encephalitis. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.

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## India Holidays & Tours

### Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against Tetanus, Infectious Hepatitis, Typhoid and Polio. Please consult your travel clinic for the latest advice on Malaria, Dengue and Zika Virus. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at Explore Travel Health and from your local healthcare provider.

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## Nepal Holidays & Tours

### Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against malaria, infectious hepatitis, typhoid, tetanus, polio and Japanese encephalitis. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on different prophylaxis available against malaria. Although not compulsory, travellers may wish to take immunisation against meningococcal meningitis.

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