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Mountain Biking – Western Bhutan Adventure Trail

From	To
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2010	
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Available on request – minimum 2 persons	
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Best times to visit – Spring season early March to mid April. Autumn season end of September to end of October.	
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Grade: Moderate
Max elevation 3050m



Duration: 12 Days

Land only price per person (join in Kathmandu). Includes full board (all meals) in Bhutan & during days on trek, half board in Kathmandu, use of down jackets & sleeping bags during days on trek, bikes and helmets

Group Size	2-6	7 plus group members
Luxury hotel in Kathmandu, A class local hotels & guesthouses in Bhutan with tented camp during days biking	£2395	£2195
Flight Price	From £600	

Please note that during festival time in Bhutan for minimum group size of 02 persons a festival supplement charge of £30 per person per day in Bhutan is applicable, as required by the Bhutanese authorities. For group size of 3 or more no festival supplement is charged.

Single hotel supplement Kathmandu £170, Bhutan festival season £255, Bhutan normal season £175

Introduction:

Follow the western route across Bhutan on this memorable, fully guided and supported biking adventure through the Land of the Thunder Dragon. Beginning in Paro, you'll travel through this land of ancient mystery and tradition, past imposing fortresses and tranquil monasteries, through traditional medieval style villages, past bustling markets and into lush valleys, always with stunning Himalayan views. Your route takes you as far as beautiful Gangtey Gompa on the western side of the Black Mountains before the scenic return journey to the beautiful Paro Valley. This is a fantastic introduction to Bhutan and to biking through this beautiful and intriguing Kingdom.



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Day 01: Arrive Kathmandu

Namaste and welcome to Nepal. You'll be met and assisted at the airport by our local representatives who will arrange your transfer and check in to your hotel. After time to get refreshed, rest and have lunch, enjoy a complimentary welcome dinner later this evening at a restaurant in the heart of Kathmandu, before turning in for a good night's rest at the hotel.

Day 02: Kathmandu and Valley

After breakfast today take time to enjoy a day of relaxed sightseeing on a guided tour of some of the highlights of Kathmandu and the surrounding Valley. Visit Swoyambhunath Stupa, also known as the Monkey Temple, with its fine views over Kathmandu and many interesting features as well as the great stupa itself. Join the devotees, pilgrims and wandering siddhus (holy men) at Pashupatinath. Pashupatinath is the most important Hindu temple in Nepal as well as being one of the most important Shiva temples on the subcontinent, situated on the banks of the holy Bagmati River. Take time to walk around Bodhnath (Boudha) stupa, the largest in Nepal and one of the largest in the world. Boudha is also the centre of Tibetan culture in Nepal and a wonderfully vibrant, interesting community. Returning to Kathmandu, this evening is free for you to rest, explore and enjoy the hotel and surrounds.

Day 03: Kathmandu to Paro

please note flights to Paro from Kathmandu currently operate on Thursday, Friday & Saturday only. Flight schedules are subject to change & a degree of flexibility is required should this happen. Please contact us for details

After breakfast this morning, it's time to check out of the hotel and transfer to the International airport for the scenic flight to Paro in Bhutan. Enjoy great views of Mt Everest, Kanchenjunga, Chomolhari, Tsrimgang and Jichu Drake during your flight. Arriving in Paro, we'll be met by our local Bhutanese representatives and assisted with the transfer and check in to our hotel in Paro. The remainder of today is free to relax and enjoy your peaceful surroundings and the cool fresh air of Bhutan.

Day 04: Paro

Paro is a small town situated in a beautiful and peaceful valley. We'll spend today exploring and sightseeing on bicycle the highlights of this charming area. We'll visit the ruined fortress of Drugyel Dzong in its strategic position where it once defended the Paro valley from Tibetan invasion from the north in the early 17th century. On a clear day Mount Chomolhari (7320m) can be seen towering over the dzong. 800m above the valley on a high granite cliff we'll see Taktsang Monastery as it overlooks the surrounding area. We'll continue on through the beautiful valley to visit the watch tower, known locally as Ta-Dzong. The tower was housed into the National Museum in the 1960s by the third King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck. We should also have time for a visit to the local market today before returning to our hotel to relax for the remainder of the evening.

Day 05: Paro to Thimpu (2300m)

Today we'll ride to Thimpu, the capital city along a pleasant route that meanders along the Paro and Thimpu river with no steep ascents or descents. Arriving in Thimpu we'll have lunch and then take time to explore the surrounding area. Thimpu is a small and charming city situated in a river valley in the heart of the Himalayas with traditional low level Bhutanese buildings. It's also the modern capital of Bhutan, a lively place with a strong national character. Highlights of the city include the memorial



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chorten built in memory of the late third King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, commanding 15th century Changangkha Temple, the traditional indigenous hospital, the National Library with its treasure troves of manuscripts and ancient texts and the traditional painting school where education is free for students to learn the ancient skills of traditional painting. After our exploration of Thimpu this evening is at leisure to rest and relax.

Day 06: Thimpu to Wangdiphodrang (1300m)

This morning we'll leave Thimpu and ride towards Wangdiphodrang passing through Punaka en route. We'll cross Dochula pass today which is a good place to stop for spectacular views (weather permitting) of the eastern Himalayan ranges. From the pass we'll make the exhilarating descent ride (around 50km). We'll travel via Punaka and have time to visit Punakha Dzong. Dating from the 17th century the dzong is the winter residence of the main monk body and houses a number of sacred religious artifact as well as the district administration offices. Around 13km from Punaka is Wangdiphodrang Dzong, another 17th century dzong perched on a hill between two rivers and with spectacular surrounding views. We'll continue on to our hotel where we can rest and relax this evening. Wangdiphodrang is the last town on the central highway before we enter central Bhutan and it's a typical small Bhutanese town.

Day 07: Gangtey Gompa

We'll spend today making a day ride out to visit Gangtey Gompa, the only Nyingmapa monastery in western Bhutan. As well as the Gompa, this beautiful glacial valley is also home to the rare and protected Black Necked Cranes who migrate from the Tibetan plateau to escape the harsh winter. Later today we'll ride back to Wangdiphodrang where we'll relax this evening.

Day 08: Thimpu (2300m)

After breakfast today, we'll set out on the morning ride through the beautiful Bhutanese landscape back to Thimpu. On arrival we'll check in to our local guesthouse and relax or perhaps take a stroll along the main street and surrounding area.

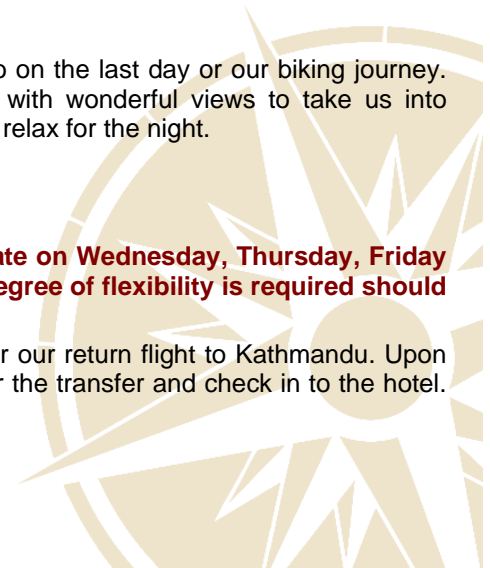
Day 09: Paro

After our evening in Thimpu it's time today to head towards Paro on the last day of our biking journey. It's a pleasant scenic route again with no high ups or downs with wonderful views to take us into beautiful Paro Valley. Arriving here we'll check in to our hotel and relax for the night.

Day 10: Paro to Kathmandu

please note flights to Kathmandu from Paro currently operate on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday & Sunday only. Flight schedules are subject to change & a degree of flexibility is required should this happen. Please contact us for details

After breakfast today it's time to transfer to the airport in Paro for our return flight to Kathmandu. Upon arrival in Kathmandu we'll be met by our local representatives for the transfer and check in to the hotel. The remainder of today is at leisure.





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Day 11: Kathmandu and Valley

After breakfast at the hotel, we'll take a short drive to the City of Devotees (Bhaktapur) this morning. This traditional and traffic free town is the third biggest in the Valley. Your guided tour takes you to explore the medieval like squares, courtyards and temples of this vibrant town. After a stop for lunch at a restaurant in Bhaktapur it's time to drive back to Kathmandu. The rest of the afternoon is free for you to explore the streets of Kathmandu, perhaps catch up on some last minute shopping or simply relax with a coffee or glass of wine and watch life go by, Kathmandu style.

Day 12: Departure

Today is free to relax until departure or to commence any additional trips or activities you may have booked. If departing, you'll be transferred to the International Airport in time for your return flight home

Extending your holiday

There are many choices and options if you'd like to extend your holiday before or after your main booking. Here are just a few suggestions of extensions available for this trip:

- Take a jungle safari by charter elephant to spot rare species including the Royal Bengal Tiger in the Chitwan National Park
- Enjoy the adrenaline rush of white water rafting in Nepal
- Relax by the lakeside in Pokhara, Nepal
- See the wonder of the Taj Mahal and enjoy relaxed sightseeing around Delhi
- Visit the Roof of the World on a short cultural tour of Tibet
- Charter a private helicopter to retrace part of Sir Edmund Hillary's route to Everest

Please contact our UK office if you'd like to extend your stay by booking one of the above options, if you would like ideas or advice on how best to spend your time and budget or if you would like help with arranging any special celebrations during your trip.

Useful Information

The following information is aimed at helping you to decide whether this trip is right for you. Additional information can be found on our website and in our brochure. If you have any questions or would like advice on any aspect of this trip please contact us and we'll be happy to go through everything with you.

Day to Day Itinerary

It must be realized that with adventure travel changes to an itinerary may occur, for example due to unexpected weather conditions. The day to day itinerary is provided as a general guideline and is intended to give you a general sense of what to expect, including places visited and activities during the trip to help with your decision regards which trip is the best one for you. Activities and timings may vary slightly from those outlined Your guide will make any changes necessary and all arrangements during the trip, including explaining reasons for any changes to the itinerary that may occur.

Trip Duration and Grading

This trip is 12 days with Day 1 beginning in Kathmandu and ending on Day 12 with departure from Kathmandu. The trip has been graded moderate as there are only moderate elevation and the routes



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are overall comfortable along good trails crossing over mountain passes with only moderate ascents and descents. There will also be some easy day walks as part of your guided sightseeing, for example when visiting dzongs, temples or palaces, usually a maximum of a few hours walking at moderate elevations. A reasonable to good level of fitness is required for this trip.

Group Size

The maximum number of persons on this trip will be 12 and the minimum number 02 persons. We guarantee to run this trip with a minimum of 2 persons and based on your preferred dates of travel within the best times to visit this region in Spring and Autumn. By keeping group sizes small it means we can provide a more personal service to you.

Local Representatives and Guides

You will be met at the airport on arrival by our local representatives who will always be available to help with your arrival, departure and any queries or requirements during your trip. The group will be accompanied by a local English speaking guide throughout the trip. Once you have confirmed your booking we will send you details of how you will be met on arrival and you will meet your guide just after you arrive.

Accommodation

During this trip you will spend 4 nights at a luxury (four or five star) hotel in Kathmandu (2 nights at the start of your trip and 2 nights before departure). In Bhutan you'll spend 3 nights at a deluxe local resort hotel in Paro. You'll spend 2 nights at a local guesthouse in Thimpu and 2 nights at a local guesthouse in Wangdiphodrang.

All accommodation is based on twin share. If you are traveling on your own and are happy to share with someone, we will arrange for you to share a room with someone of the same sex, at no extra charge. If you request a single room the single room supplement charge for this trip will apply. It is usually possible to arrange single room accommodation but please contact our office to confirm this.

Meals

All meals on full board basis during the part of the trip in Bhutan are included in the price. During the days spent in Kathmandu half board basis is included. This is to allow you the opportunity and freedom to try out some of the many wonderful eating places, particularly in Kathmandu. Snacks, bottled drinks including mineral water and alcohol are not included in the price.

Flight Inclusive Price and International Flights

The flight inclusive price is based on best available price (at the time of producing our current brochure) of economy return flights from the UK added to the 'land only' price. Flight prices are subject to change and do vary throughout the year. We use a variety of airlines and scheduled flights on our trips including British Airways, Air India, Gulf Air, Qatar Air etc. Our ATOL licence is T7199 and we work with other ATOL holders to issue flight tickets. For exact air fares and flight classes available at the time you wish to travel please contact us.



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Land Only Option

Our trips are based on 'land only' as well as flight inclusive options to allow you the flexibility to choose to make your own arrangements for flights or perhaps to arrive a few days earlier or leave a few days later than the trip or to join the trip from anywhere in the world. If you choose the land only option we will provide full details of how and when to meet the rest of your group, details of your hotel and local contacts upon confirmation of your booking. All accommodation during your trip is included in the price although additional days before or after the start and end dates of your trip are not included. We are happy to book additional accommodation or optional activities, based on your requirements and budget, on request.

Please note that whilst at all times we aim to run our trip even with just a few persons, on some of the longer treks or trips, should the group size be less than our minimum operating level we may cancel the trip up to 6 weeks before departure. In the rare event that this happens, we will offer alternative dates or trips or refunds as appropriate and agreed with you. If you are arranging your own flights and accommodation prior to the start date of a group trip we recommend that you book fully flexible and refundable accommodation and transport if booking more than 6 weeks in advance, as should we need to cancel the trip compensation will not be paid for any arrangements that have been made independently.

Climate and Weather

Nepal has a monsoonal two season year with the dry season from October to May and the wet season (monsoon) from June to September. From end September/start October to end November is one of the best times to visit. The vegetation is lush after the rains of the monsoon and the air is clean and fresh. The next best time to visit is February to April at the end of the dry season. It can be a little dusty at this time but the weather is warm and pleasant and it's a great time to see many wildflowers in bloom. December and January are still good in terms of climate and visibility but can be chilly particularly at higher altitudes as well as in the evening in Kathmandu. May and early June can be very hot and uncomfortable and mid June to September can be cloudy with poor visibility and muddy trails although some treks (rainshadow treks) can still be undertaken even during the monsoon.

Between October and November are some of the best times to visit Bhutan, particularly from late September to the end of November which are ideal for trekking and travel in general with warm days and clear skies. In spring the rhododendrons are wonderful as they colour the mountain sides throughout the Kingdom and the days are warm but nights are still cold. It can be extremely wet with the monsoon season in June to August.

Clothing and Equipment

Generally lightweight to medium weight clothing in natural fabrics is best with warm clothing a must for the evenings and in spring and winter. It's also useful to wear several layers of clothing as temperatures can change suddenly. We also suggest you take comfortable walking shoes and a small day pack or shoulder bag. In the mountains and at high altitude the weather can change rapidly so it is important to have appropriate clothing and equipment. On fully provisioned camping style treks we provide twin share dome or A frame sleeping tents, kitchen tent, mess tent, toilet tent, tables, chairs, stools, lanterns/candles, thin sleeping mattresses, all crockery and cutlery and a fully equipped kitchen set up. Upon booking with us we will send you a suggested clothing and equipment list appropriate to your trip including details of any must have items or items that can be hired (if required).



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Baggage Allowance

We request that you aim for a maximum weight of 15 to 20 kg for your main baggage including clothing and personal equipment. Many of our trips involve porters and/or local flights and 15kg is the maximum safe weight allowance for porters and permitted on local flights. International flights will usually permit up to 20kg maximum weight. If trekking, some additional baggage can usually be stored until you return from your trek. Remember you may also want to leave some weight allowance for any items you have bought during your trip! The Himalayan Adventure Company and our local partners are not responsible for excess baggage charges.

Complimentary Himalayan Adventure Company Travel Gift

On confirmation of booking we will provide a complimentary Himalayan Adventure Company travel gift. In the past, gifts have included items such as trek bags and t-shirts and vary each season, and we aim to provide useful gifts which can be used and enjoyed during your trip with us and afterwards. For clients living outside the UK will provide a complimentary gift on payment of post and packaging delivery only.

Passport and Visa Requirements

A full valid passport and a current visa is required for all trips and treks. Passports must have at least 6 months validity after the completion date of your trip. To secure your booking and avoid any additional charges, information (eg spelling of name) provided to us on your booking form must match exactly the details as shown in your passport.

To enter Nepal you will require a visa which can be obtained in advance from the Nepalese Embassy in London (UK applications) or on arrival at the airport in Kathmandu for a fee of US\$25 per person for a visa valid for up to 15 days stay in Nepal or US\$40 for a visa valid for up to 30 days. The visa process has changed in 2008 and all visas are now multiple entry which you will also need as you will leave then re-enter Nepal after your time in Bhutan. We will provide up to date information on visa requirements, costs and the application process on confirmation of your booking or on request.

To enter Bhutan you will need a separate visa valid for Bhutan. No foreign mission grants visas to enter Bhutan. Through our local representatives in Nepal we will make arrangements for your Bhutanese visa and entry requirements and may ask you to provide information relating to this up to 3 weeks or more in advance of travel. Your visa will be stamped on arrival in Bhutan and cleared in advance. The (current) visa fee of US\$20 is payable on arrival at Paro airport. We will provide up to date information on visa requirements, costs and the application process on confirmation of your booking or on request.

You are responsible for ensuring you have a valid passport and visa prior to departure. Where appropriate, we will arrange any special permits or visas required to visit specific restricted areas included as part of the itinerary whilst you are in the country and may request information from you to allow us to do this.

Permits

To enter certain areas e.g. National Parks or other trekking or protected areas, you may require a permit. All our trip prices include the cost of relevant permits and entrance fees. Where this is not the case, for example you have booked a tailor made private trip, we will inform you of any required permit fees before you make a booking with us.



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Health and Medical Information

It is your responsibility to ensure you are well and fit enough to join the trip. If you are unsure of this please contact our office to talk it through with one of our experienced staff members. We also recommend you speak to your GP if you are in any way unsure of your fitness level required to join the trip. We also suggest you have a thorough medical and dental check up before you travel. You may need specific vaccinations appropriate to the country or area you will visit. You must tell us if you have an existing medical condition or disability that might affect your holiday before you make a booking with us. If, in our reasonable opinion, your chosen holiday is not suitable for your medical condition, disability or level of fitness, we reserve the right to cancel the contract or to suggest more appropriate alternative options for you. A group medical kit will be carried on each trip or trek but we also recommend that individuals carry their own basic first aid kit and we will send a suggested list of items for this when you make a booking.

For useful health and general travel advice and information we suggest you visit the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website at <http://www.fco.gov.uk/knowbeforeyougo> and also obtain a copy of the UK Department of Health leaflet *Advice on Health for Travellers* or speak to your local GP or practice nurse for their recommendations.

What's Included in the Price?

Airport pickup and transfer, local English speaking guide services, Bhutanese cycling guide cum mechanic, pre trip briefing on arrival, all accommodation during the trip on twin share basis, meals on half board basis in Kathmandu and full board basis in Bhutan, all sightseeing and activities as per the trip itinerary, all entrance fees and permits required, all transportation during the trip (by car, bus, jeep, local flight etc), hire of bike and helmet, support vehicle, a group first aid kit, a free Himalayan Adventure Company travel gift, complimentary Safe Seat Plan issued to all our clients confirming 100% financial protection of your booking with us at all times.

What's Not Included in the Price?

Visa fees, personal travel insurance, vaccinations, airport departure and reentry fees, air excess baggage charges for carriage of bikes – must be paid directly at the airport, max weight 15-20kg per bike, additional private bus, car or jeep rental to any destination on the trek other than transport provided during the trip, bar/alcoholic beverages, bottled water, personal expenses eg for souvenirs, personal clothes, food or snacks during transfer journeys, tips for guides, porters, driver etc, alternative transportation, accommodation or other service required as a result of flight delays, weather conditions, road blockage/conditions, strikes, illness or other unexpected event outside of our control (payable locally and directly if required), international flights (available on request), optional trips, holiday extensions and activities (available on request), laundry, excess luggage charges, additional accommodation before or after the start and end dates specified (available on request).

Our Experience

We have a love of and respect for the Himalaya. Our founders and office staff are all experienced travelers who share many years of helping other travelers achieve their ambitions. The fact that we specialise in travel to the Himalaya and that we have extensive local knowledge and experience of the area means that we can offer you a wide range of travel options and provide the best standards of service to you. Being an independent specialist travel operator means we can offer a friendly personal



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service and are able to be flexible and use our experience and contacts to build new and tailor made programs as well as to continue to develop new and improved services. We have a wealth of experience in helping many individuals and groups in designing and planning adventures, ranging from romantic breaks to personal challenges to school study programmes to extreme adventure expeditions, from low budget to no expense spared and we have lots of ideas, suggestions and experience to share with you. We are also delighted to say that many of our clients return again and again to travel with us and many of our new clients are through recommendations and word of mouth from happy and satisfied clients who have previously traveled with us.

Fair Pricing

We aim to provide you with the best service at fair and competitive prices and excellent value for money. As part of this, most of our trips are priced for different group sizes with the higher price applicable for smaller groups. With larger groups the price drops so that everyone benefits from a cheaper holiday. We offer 'land only' prices, for travellers who prefer to make their own international flight and transfer arrangements but are happy to arrange flights for you on request, using a variety of international carriers from regional and national airports. Our ATOL number is T7199 and we work with other ATOL holders to issue flight tickets. Additionally, we offer special discounts for groups of 10 or over, schools and group leaders. Contact us for more information.



Your Financial Protection

We understand how important it is that the money you spend on your holiday is securely protected. You may also have concerns about booking with an independent operator. To give you peace of mind and confidence in our service to you we have a number of ways in which we protect the money you pay for your holiday. The company is a full member of the Travel Trust Association (<http://www.traveltrust.co.uk>) membership number U3237, in compliance with the EC Directive on Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours. For flight bookings and issuing of tickets our ATOL number is T7199 and we work only with ATOL licence holders. For flight bookings the money you pay is protected under the ATOL holder's licence. For all other arrangements, your payment to us is held in a separate Trust Fund and only released to us on your return. In addition, we provide free to you, a 'Safe Seat Plan' insurance cover which means that in the unlikely case of your money not being held in the Trust Account or of our insolvency, you will be fully reimbursed for the loss of any monies paid to us, up to a limit of £11 000 per person. Therefore, for your peace of mind and confidence, all money you have paid to us is always 100% protected and available to pay for the services you have booked.

Insurance

All our clients are required to have appropriate travel insurance as a condition of booking. This year we are working with Snowcard for our higher elevation treks and tours. Snowcard provide excellent and very competitive insurance services for adventure and activity based travel. For no obligation quotes from Snowcard please follow the link on our website from the Useful Links, Make a Booking or Latest News pages where you can check quotes and cover details as well as issue travel insurance online. If you'd like to contact Snowcard directly they can be called on 01327 262805 or visit their website at www.snowcard.co.uk. If calling or emailing please mention you are a Himalayan Adventure Company client to obtain lower rates and quotes based on our trips which are very competitive and offer great



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levels of cover. If you already have travel insurance please send us confirmation of that prior to your departure.

Responsible Tourism

We believe that tourism should benefit local communities and that responsible travel does not mean a compromise in standards. We aim to promote responsible travel that respects and benefits local cultures, communities and environments and we support Tourism Concern, are a sponsor of the International Porter Protection Group and a friend of The Sahara Group. We donate 5% of profits to local charities and are involved in local development and voluntary work in the Himalayas, particularly in Nepal. For every booking made we also donate £10 to The Sahara Group (<http://www.saharagroup.org.np>) to help continue their wonderful work with street children with HIV/AIDS, women and children affected by human trafficking and poor rural communities. We employ local guides, office and support staff and ensure they have good facilities and fair wages and we work as a team to ensure you a wonderful adventure holiday.

Suggested Reading

We recommend you learn about the places and cultures you will visit before you travel so that you can enjoy your travel even more. Below are just a few varied suggestions to get you started:

Lonely Planet Nepal (Travel Guide), Tony Wheeler, Richard Everist, Lindsay Brown (Editor), Bradley Mayhew (Editor), Wanda Vivequin (Editor); Lonely Planet Bhutan, stand Armington; Bhutan, Robert Dompnier; Beyond the Sky and the Earth: A Journey into Bhutan, Jamie Zeppa; Dreams of the Peaceful Dragon: A Journey Through Bhutan, Katie Hickman; Birds of India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and the Maldives, Richard Grimmett, Carol Inskipp, Tim Inskipp.

How to Book

Once you have chosen your trek or tour, contact our office to check availability and ask any questions you may have. We'll hold a provisional booking for 7 days. Please read our Terms and Conditions prior to making your booking. Then email post or fax us your completed booking form (available in our brochure or downloaded from our website) along with the appropriate deposit of £250 per person to our UK office address or email. If you choose to phone us with your debit or credit card details, a signed and completed booking form will still be required for confirmation of booking. Bookings will only be confirmed once we receive a completed and signed booking form along with appropriate payment.

We will confirm your booking and send you a trip dossier which will include confirmation of your booking, a day by day itinerary, visa and trekking permit instructions, vaccination and health information, a suggested first aid pack list, a suggested equipment and clothing list, a suggested reading list appropriate to your destination, a responsible travel briefing and other useful information. The final balance for your booking will be due 2 months before departure as specified on your invoice. **Please note NO reminder of balance payments will be sent out – it is your responsibility to ensure payments are received on time.**

We wish you a wonderful Himalayan adventure and look forward to welcoming you!