

FAR HORIZON PHOTO TOURS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS - NEPAL

1. Do I need a polarizing filter?
 - a. Please bring one if you have it but realize there is less atmosphere in the Himalayas so there is less need for one. We have found sometimes it makes the sky 'too blue' because of how strong the colors are to start with.
2. How many batteries should I bring?
 - a. As many as you're comfortable with. Charging while on the trail will not be as convenient as in Kathmandu (where we'll have power in all hotel rooms for a strong nightly charge) and many tea houses lodges charge for the convenience. Our guides usually bring enough batteries to last 4 days without a charge, which comes out to about 4-8 batteries, depending on camera use (a typical day can easily see 1000+ photos taken if you are trigger happy). Charging fees are around \$3/battery, on average.
3. How many memory cards should I bring?
 - a. Assume an average of 300-1000 photos a day, depending on your shooting style. If this is your first visit to Nepal, you're going to see a lot of new and colorful sites and may take more than your average number of shots. Our guides, shooting 20MP pictures that are around 24MB RAW each, bring a total of 200-300GB worth of cards when on research trips to the area, but they can be a little snap happy! Cards are available on the trail (SD more than any other brand), although they can be expensive compared to Kathmandu or at home. Our guides will be happy to share theirs if you are getting low as it is their primary goal to make sure you come back with stellar images. They carry SD and Compact Flash.
4. Do you have suggestions for purchasing trip insurance?
 - a. We like to use <https://www.insuremytrip.com> for our personal trips. It's a site we have found to give an excellent range of options for decent prices. You will need to acquire, at the minimum, evacuation insurance. This is explained in the Welcome Packet.
5. Will my cell phone work in Nepal?
 - a. Probably. This is discussed in more detail in your Welcome Packet.
6. How do I get a visa for entry?
 - a. Entry visas are purchased upon landing in Kathmandu while going through the Immigration and Customs process. For current fees check with [Nepal's Immigration service at this link](#). In 2018 the going rate was US\$40 (unless you are from a [SAARC country](#)). Nepal now offers an option to fill out the visa application before arrival and we suggest you take that route. If you forget your form, no biggie, just bring a pen and fill out the form at the airport when you arrive.
7. Is there a minimum group size to guarantee the trip?
 - a. Our tours do not currently have a minimum number of guests before we declare the trip a go. We have been fortunate to have enough guests for each trip and have never had to cancel or postpone a trip.
8. Is there a maximum group size?
 - a. Yes, and emphatically yes! We limit our groups to six guests per guide and most of our trips are only with one photography guide and one local guide. We craft our trips based on the type of trip we would like to take and that has led us to small groups in place of large profits. Six guests is not too small and not too large, which aids us in getting around Kathmandu to see the sites, as well as guest interactions. Smaller is also more nimble and gives us ample freedom to chase the beautiful light we find in Nepal.

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9. What is the trekking like?

This one is a little hard to gauge without knowing your level of activity and familiarity with hiking. Let's then start with the basics.

- a. We cover about 3-5 miles a day, which, at higher altitude and stopping to take photos, can take 3-5 hours. We are there to take photos and see the sights, not to cover vast distances, so our days are not particularly strenuous. That being said, it's not a cake walk either. The elevation combined with being in unfamiliar surroundings (and sleeping in new places most nights) can put a strain on most trekkers, so it comes down to mental fortitude more than anything.
- b. We highly suggest being in good physical shape, defined as being able to walk 6 miles with a 10-15lb pack without much strain. At sea level on level ground this should take you 2-3 hours. The trek is mostly aerobic excursion while admitting we do have some decent uphill stretches. There's no need for technical mountaineering experience; the trek is all on established trails.

10. What kind of footwear is best?

- a. Hiking boots are a norm on the trail but trail runners, being lighter, can be beneficial. The trail is well used and packed down, with stone steps in places. Something waterproof can help. Tennis shoes or other slippers are helpful in Kathmandu. We suggest bringing some kind of shoe or sandal to slip into at night on the trail. It often helps your feet to relax by being out of your regular hiking shoe/boot. Flip flops aren't the best idea as you'll want to keep socks on at night.
- b. Depending on how sweaty your feet get, having pairs of hiking socks and night time socks is a good idea. You can then dry out your socks around the stove in each teahouse or tie them to your pack the next day. See laundry question below.

11. Will I be carrying all my gear?

- a. Heavens no! You will carry only the daily essentials on your back during the trek. This means a lighter day pack with camera gear, water, snacks, rain gear and some other easy essentials. The bulk of your overnight gear and full changes of clothes will be carried by either porters or yaks/dzokyos (a dzokyo is a mix between the higher altitude yaks and lower altitude cows). Your day pack will also serve you well in Kathmandu on our daily excursions.

12. Can I do laundry on the trip?

- a. There are laundries in Kathmandu and you can leave your city clothes with them while we are on the trek. That way you will have clean clothes for the trip home without having to pack extra clothes. Plus it helps the local economy.
- b. While in the mountains, laundry options are less available and drying often means hanging on a line inside or outside. Electric or gas driers aren't common in the Khumbu, except in Namche sometimes. This is why we suggest bringing clothes that dry quickly while trekking. After a 3-5 days of trekking you can likely hand over your vital clothes to a teahouse owner who will wash your clothes and try to get them dry before the next day, at a cost.
- c. All laundry service costs are up to each guest as the price is not included. Some teahouses discourage washing clothes in the common bathrooms and some are okay with it. The ones who offer a laundry service often discourage it ☺.

13. Should I bring a laptop?

- a. If you enjoy editing your photos while you shoot, then a laptop can be enjoyable to have. But on the trek, charging is not always available so you should not be dependent on its use. It may be 3-4 days between opportunities for a solid charge (while acknowledging that charging smaller camera and phone batteries is

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easier). Our guides do not bring their laptops on the trek (but do bring them in country for use in Kathmandu). The weight and distraction is often not worth it.

14. What's the weather like?

- a. Trekking the Khumbu in October can be a mixed bag, but we choose that time as it offers the best chance for good weather. Snow can be possible in the latter half of the trek but not often. We do not spend sustained periods at higher elevations where snow is more likely. Rain is possible as well and a good base layer plus rain jacket should be in your daypack at all times.
- b. Nights are cold and that is why we suggest a 20F degree sleeping bag or better. The temperatures can hover around 20F/-7C at night and not all teahouses are heated (at least the sleeping quarters). They do offer protection from the wind and are comfortable if you have the right layers for night. They often have extra blankets to put over your sleeping bag.

15. Duffle bag/hardsided suitcase/softsided suitcase?

- a. You will be leaving a bag in Kathmandu with your warm weather clothes while we trek. This makes it ideal to bring a suitcase (hardsided is fine) or duffel bag for all your gear into the country and leave that in Kathmandu. When we head up to the mountains, you will want a duffel (waterproof can be handy, but not required) for your overnight gear. Your camera bag will likely stay with you on the plane as a daypack and that is perfect for use in the mountains as well.
- b. Our guides bring their gear to Nepal in a large duffel with a smaller, storable day bag inside. They then use the duffel for overnight gear on the trek while leaving the smaller day bag in Kathmandu. They also carry a sufficiently sized daypack/camera bag to carry normal day hike items plus extra food, first aid supplies and other essential group gear.
- c. Bags are plentiful in Kathmandu and can be handy for bringing home souvenirs. So it could be an option to bring, as a checked bag on your international flight, a suitcase with wheels then buy a duffel bag in Kathmandu for the trek. Now you have more room to go shopping!

16. I'm concerned about the altitude.

- a. Concern is a good thing! And it should lead to acquiring knowledge. Here's useful information about [HAPE/HACE/AMS](#). The thing is, there is no test to see how high altitude will affect you except for going to high altitude. Even then, you can be fine on one trip above 10,000' and have some mild symptoms on the next trip. Even Nepalese from Kathmandu, at about 4,500', have some altitude issues on different trips.
- b. We suggest talking with your doctor about your trip and seeing if medication might be helpful. Diamox (acetazolamide) has been shown useful for helping with altitude but it has some side effects. Some people bring ginger chews as they help calm an upset stomach, one of the more common symptoms that fades as you acclimate.
- c. Our groups always have the option of descending, which is one of the best treatments of AMS before it progresses to HAPE/HACE. We are not hardcore mountaineers ascending Mount Everest at any cost. We are in Nepal to enjoy the trip and take some photos.
- d. Further, your tour leader will carry a pulse oximeter, a device for measuring both heart rate and oxygen levels in your blood. Don't worry, we don't need to draw blood, it just slips over your finger for a minute. We take and record respiration, pulse and oxygen levels first in Kathmandu to establish a baseline and then each morning and evening while ascending on the trek. This, combined with observations of mood, appetite, alertness and pace on the trail all help to give your guide information to keep you safe. Your guide is the ultimate authority on the trip in regards to whether you keep ascending or need to take a break for a day or two at a lower altitude. They do

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not make this decision lightly as they know everyone's excitement to 'keep going', but they won't let you keep going at risk to your health.

17. Do I need any shots?
 - a. The [US CDC has an excellent page](#) with more information on that.
18. Are there any weight limits?
 - a. Yes there are. Your air carrier will have their own limits on luggage coming into Nepal. Our flight to and from the Himalayas, as they are on smaller aircraft in mountainous terrain, will have a weight limit of 33lbs/15kg for checked baggage and 11lbs/5kg for carryon. You can pay a fee for extra weight. That is why we included the handheld scale in the welcome kit and we will have additional scales available if you forget to pack yours. We'd also don't wish to weigh down our porters or yaks/dzokyos with too much weight for health and safety reasons. If you have some 'must have' items that are heavy, talk with your guide about possibly distributing the weight amongst other guests or paying for additional support staff.
19. What do we do with our Kathmandu clothes while in the Himalayas?
 - a. You can store your warm weather clothes in any luggage you desire and we will have it held at our hotel while we are gone. This makes it easy to have two sets of outfits for hot and cold weather and you don't have to consider those warm weather clothes in your weight allowance for the Himalayas. You can also have your city clothes laundered while we trek.
20. What kind of power adapters do I need?
 - a. Your Welcome Packet will cover this information.
21. What's the exchange rate and what currency do they use in Nepal?
 - a. Nepal uses the Nepalese Rupee and the rate hovers around 100 rupees to \$1. For current rates in your local currency, check out [XE.com](#).
22. Will I have access to cash machines?
 - a. Yes, but they can be finicky. Some machines only take Visa (most common) but a few only take MasterCard. The areas we visit in Kathmandu have a number of machines available but any given cash machine may have an issue 25% of the time. They aren't as convenient as at home, but are by no means scarce. During the trek the opportunities to get out cash are less frequent. Before heading to the Himalayas your guide will discuss with you a ballpark range of cash to keep on hand after getting to know you and what you might want to purchase in the mountains.
23. Can I get prescription drugs while in Nepal?
 - a. In Kathmandu there are pharmacies but you will typically need a prescription written by a Nepalese doctor. Which means going to visit one. So we *highly* suggest bringing all your needed medications, with extras, with you. There are really no options to simply FedEx forgotten pills to the Khumbu once we are on the trek.
24. Do I need a passport?
 - a. Yes! Most importantly, a lot of countries require your passport to be valid for 6 months after your intended stay. Please be sure your passport is in order and if you have questions, please ask.
25. Will we have wifi?
 - a. We will have wifi at all hotels while in Kathmandu but the availability of wifi on the trail is spotty. In some locations, such as Namche Bazaar, where we spend a couple of nights acclimating, we anticipate our lodge will have wifi. It's not guaranteed, but probable. This isn't a trip where you'll be wanting to connect to the world at large with huge amounts of data, but we also understand some guests' desire to stay connected through wifi.
26. Are your guides on assignment when guiding or do they have any other goals?

The logo for Far Horizon Photo Tours features the text "FAR HORIZON PHOTO TOURS" in a bold, black, serif font. The word "HORIZON" is split by a stylized sun or lens icon, which consists of a central white circle with a black outline and a vertical line passing through it, resembling a camera lens or a sunburst. The background of the logo is a gradient of orange and yellow, with a darker orange at the bottom and a lighter yellow at the top.

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- a. Absolutely not. Our guides' primary goal is to help you get the shots you want, not to take side jobs that distract from that goal. While they will be shooting right along side you for the love of the art, they are always available to answer questions and won't have secondary business goals. That being said, many of our guides have personal projects crafted from many visits to the regions, seeing it in all kinds of light and weather and moods. They tend to let that experience and perspective elevate everyone's shooting and 'eye' and we see that as an asset to all on our tours.
27. What about tips?
- a. Our photography guides do not take tips nor are they expected. Our local guides do accept tips. Your lead guide will discuss guidelines for tipping our local guide and any porters or yak drivers when you arrive. Otherwise, you need not worry about tipping our van driver, baggage handlers, restaurant staff or any other hospitality staff. These are all taken care of by Far Horizon to ease your travel. Tips are accepted in any currency.
 - b. Tangent to tips, many monasteries and religious sites accept alms or donations and these situations will be up to individual guests. Your guide can give you an idea of range depending on the situation. Your guide will always have some rupees on hand should you run out or forget yours. We don't want anyone to not participate in any activity because they happen to have an empty pocket at that moment.
28. Will there be snow?
- a. Possibly! After all, we will be there on the shoulder between the monsoon season and winter. As our highest point is over 17,000', there is potential for snow to fall, but it is not that often. We don't suggest a need for crampons or traction spikes and we don't carry them.
29. What about sleeping arrangements on the trail. Do we sleep in beds, like in a Western hotel?
- a. On the trail you will have a bed in a private room with a roommate from our group. Most teahouses offer a mattress and maybe half have actual bedding, but it's not always available. It also might not be the freshest. Our guides prefer to bring a sleeping bag rated around 20F/-7C. Some will even bring an air mattress (the roll-up camping kind) but they are not needed. Extra blankets are available for the extra cold nights. Your accommodations are inside but the walls are often just a sheet of plywood with no insulation nor individual heat in the room.
 - b. One trick we try to employ is the nighttime-hot-water-bottle-in-the-sleeping-bag trick. Just ask for some hot water for your water bottle and then slip it in the bottom of your bag at bed time to keep your feet and body toasty until morning.
30. And what about bathrooms?
- a. More and more teahouses in Nepal are acquiring Western toilets and we may be lucky enough to have them our entire trip. But often along the trail, if Nature calls, your options might be a simple pit or squat toilet. In the hotels in Kathmandu you will have a bathroom in your room but on the trail they are in common areas only, much like a dorm in college. Some are outside, but not often.
31. Is the water safe? If not, what do we do?
- a. Drinking tap or stream water in Nepal is not advised and actively discouraged. Boiled water in teahouses on the trail is a sure way to kill anything living in water (while admitting that the further away from civilization we get, the better the water is). Your guides will be carrying SteriPens to purify water for the group. These are little ultraviolet (UV) wands meant for use in typical water bottles and take about 1 minute to sterilize a quart/liter of water.
 - b. We prefer not to buy bottled water when possible and we certainly do not encourage only surviving on bottled water for the length of the trip. While bottled water is considered safe in Nepal, there are little to no recycling facilities in the country. This is why we encourage guests to bring a bottle and/or bladder to refill as practical.

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Sometimes we do purchase bottled water for guests (you never have to pay for water on the trip) and then we prefer larger containers to share at meal times. In short, we won't put our ethical temperament for reusables above the health and comfort of our guests. But if we each used three bottles of water each day for 17 days, that's hundreds of plastic bottles that will not degrade for over 400 years in a country not suited to deal with it.

- c. Some other things to avoid are washed salads, ice cubes and anything else that might have used unfiltered water. Always ask your guide or your server when in doubt. We tend to frequent nicer quality restaurants who care about their reputation amongst travelers and have an interest in not getting people sick.
32. Do you have emergency contact information for us to pass on to loved ones?
 - a. Yes. That information is in your Welcome Packet. A week before the trip you will receive an email with any updates needed. Your guides will carry their cell phones and have them on at all times, plus they carry a satellite phone they will check a few times daily.
 33. What if I have other questions not covered in this FAQ?
 - a. Just ask! Our lead guide, Peter Carey, is always available to answer any questions via email, text, Skype or phone call. peter@peterwestcarey.com 206-200-4259 Skype:Explore.Inspire.Educate