

trek to the home of the dalai lama, q&a



do I actually meet the dalai lama?

Your main reason for booking this expedition should not be in order to see HH the Dalai Lama. When we book the expedition we check with the Dalai Lama's office that he is due to be in residence. We will request a public audience (September - November) or aim to attend scheduled teachings (March - April). However, due to the expedition being planned so far in advance it is impossible to guarantee that the Dalai Lama will be there due to his other demanding commitments; he may be required to conduct an unscheduled dignitary duty at the last minute that Charity Challenge cannot be held accountable for.

To obtain passes for the Dalai Lama teachings March-April departure dates only (Sept-Nov this is not necessary), we need from you the following:

§ 1 photocopy of 2 pages in your passport (the page with your picture on and the page with your Indian visa)

§ 4 passport size photos with your name and trip written on the back

Please send these to the Charity Challenge office once you have received your Indian visa and at least 8 weeks prior to departure. You will not receive your pass until you arrive in India.

It is advisable to be flexible over the date you book, as in order to accommodate the Dalai Lama's changing schedule we may need to make last minute amends.

do I need a visa?

Yes; please see the India Fact File for more information.

how big is the group?

Each group is intended to be a minimum of 12 people in order to run and a maximum of approximately 20 people because of the wilderness environment in which this expedition takes place, and the unique mountain accommodation used during the trek.

who do we fly with?

You will be may be flying with from London Heathrow Airport to Delhi and returning from Delhi to London Heathrow Airport with BA, JetAir or Virgin. The flight takes around 10 hours. Your flight tickets will be issued to you upon departure at the airport. If you choose to book your own flights you must confirm with the Charity Challenge office before paying otherwise you may be liable for your included group flights (please contact flights@charitychallenge.com for further assistance).

what's the luggage allowance?

As no formal clothes are needed, luggage should be kept to the absolute minimum – details on what to pack are provided in your kit list. Your rucksack/soft bag (suitcases are not appropriate) must not exceed 15kgs in weight. Each day when you begin to trek, your personal kit will be transported to the next camp and will be waiting for you on arrival.

what will the accommodation be like?

During the challenge sector you will be staying in two-person tents and lodge accommodation. At the beginning and end, you may stay in slightly more comfortable hotel accommodation. If you are travelling with a friend or partner

who you wish to share with please let Charity Challenge know in advance.

do we need to take our own sleeping bags and mats?

Foam mattresses are provided however an extra ground mattress such as a Thermarest will aid your chances of a comfy night's sleep and you should take a good three-four season sleeping bag. Also see Kit List notes.

what are the toilet/washing facilities like?

At every campsite, a dug-in toilet will be improvised in a separate tent. This will be located at some distance from the campsite. Please bring no-water anti-bacterial hand gel.

will my valuables be safe?

While we will do everything to provide adequate safety for the group and security for your possessions, the general rule is that if you don't need it, don't bring it. This includes jewellery, necklaces, rings and even watches. Your passport and money should be kept on you at all times.

what is the food and drink like?

You will be served with a variety of European and Indian food. All meals are healthy, nourishing and incredibly tasty, there is always plenty to satisfy a hungry appetite. Homemade cake, cocoa, tea or coffee will be served before bed. Please let Charity Challenge know prior to departure if you have any specific dietary requirements or allergies.

who will be leading the group?

We employ one main English speaking, first aid qualified expedition leader and a number of support team members, all of whom speak English. They will be ultimately responsible for the running of the itinerary and the safety of your group.

what is a typical day?

You will wake early (around sunrise) in time for a light breakfast. Walking days will last between 5–8 hours. Trekking on your expedition will take place on mountain paths. Most days will involve 1-3 ascents and descents with time to stop and take it at your own pace. The walking will be steep a lot of the time but nothing a slightly above average level of fitness could not cope with. Packed lunch will be provided and we will stop around noon for lunch. We will head out at around 1-2 pm. You will arrive at camp before sunset in order to wash before it gets dark. Supper will be prepared and we can relax as the stars come out.

how fit do I need to be?

Training and a good level of fitness is definitely required, as this is not for the faint-hearted. Anyone who leads a fairly active and moderately healthy lifestyle should be OK but the more you exercise before the expedition, the more you will get out of it. Don't forget that the temperature and altitude is different to the UK and that you will be exercising constantly for a number of days. Aim to go for a minimum of 1 day – a weekend with camping and walking to spot any areas of extra training you need. Also see the Fitness Training Advice notes, walking training is essential.

what happens if I fall ill, can't keep up or there is an emergency?

Back up support (vehicles) will never be far away and can be brought in, in the event of an emergency. The event is not run as a race and there is always a large discrepancy in people's walking abilities, which is catered for. There will always be a staff member at the back of the group to ensure you are not left behind and can take things at your own pace.

what is included in the cost of the expedition?

The following items are included in your expedition: international flights to and from India, internal transfers, all meals and drinking water unless otherwise stated in the itinerary, all accommodation whether in tents or hotel, group first aid supplies, an English-speaking expedition leader and full local support team, backup, a Charity Challenge T-Shirt, US\$20 to the local community project, and discount from Nomad Travellers Stores for personal equipment. We also make a contribution through Climate Care to offset the equivalent CO2 emissions of your international flight.

what is not included in the cost of the expedition?

The following items are not included in your expedition and will be at your own expense - tips for the local support team, activities not mentioned in the itinerary, personal spending money, any alcohol you may want whilst on the challenge part of the expedition (you can buy this at Heathrow), visa (GBP£30), travel to and from UK airports and any required vaccinations.

what shall I do about spending money?

You will not need large amounts of money during the trip and other than at the start and end of the trip, you will be in the Himalayas, away from any foreign exchanges or banks. Approximately £200-250 is recommended for gifts, souvenirs, alcohol & tipping. You are not able to get buy Rupees before entering India. You are advised to take a sufficient amount of cash that you can change at the airport or in Delhi. NB: by changing at the airport while some of the group collect the luggage you will save time, the Indian Exchanges are the fastest.

how much would you recommend for tips?

Tipping is personal and at your sole discretion. You should only tip if you feel that you have received good service. We recommend approx. US\$6 / £3.50 / 300Rs per person per challenge-day and this should be given to the expedition leader at the end of the expedition who will distribute it among the support team.

should I take gifts or clothes for the locals?

Generally we advise against giving small gifts to children as it can encourage begging. However, if you have any small items of clothing, balloons, toys, pens, stickers that you would like to donate, your expedition leader can advise you on how to ensure they are distributed where they are most needed.

what is the weather likely to be like?

March/April – In the Himalayas, the temperatures in the day can vary; minimum is probably around 7c and maximum 28c, average 22c. The minimum it could reach is 0c at night, and is likely to drop even further, so you should come fully prepared for cold nights. You will have campfires and eat inside the dining tent. As a general rule it is t-shirt weather in the day and fleece & jacket weather at night. In Delhi it will be humid and around 28-30c but remember to bring appropriate attire for visiting religious suites.

September - In the Himalayas, the average daytime temperature is 20c but this can vary. The rainy season is

petering off but you may well still experience some rain so good waterproofs are essential. In the evenings it will be cooler (approx 5c) however you will have campfires and eat inside the dining tent. As a general rule it is t-shirt weather in the day and fleece or jacket weather at night. In Delhi it will be humid and around 34c but remember to bring appropriate attire for visiting religious suites.

October/November - In the Himalayas, the average daytime temperature is 15c but this can vary. There is little rain (average 7mm) at this time of year but you may well still experience some rain so waterproofs are optional. The minimum it could reach is 0c at night, and is likely to drop even further, so you should come fully prepared for cold nights. You will have campfires and eat inside the dining tent. As a general rule it is t-shirt weather in the day and fleece and jacket weather at night. In Delhi it will be humid and around 29c but remember to bring appropriate attire for visiting religious suites.

what do you do to protect the environment?

We are keeping to a small group so that we limit the impact we have on the surrounding environment. We will ensure that all rubbish is disposed of responsibly (burnt, buried or carried out & food stuffs fed to the cows!). Batteries should be brought back to the UK. We follow the local guidelines on cultural and environmental protection and respect. We will also be donating US\$20 per participant towards a local community project, which you will be informed about after your expedition (educational, health or environmental) to enhance local living conditions. Also see Responsible Tourism notes.

can you recommend any literature about the region?

- *Kim* by Rudyard Kipling
- *Plain Tales from the Hills* by Rudyard Kipling
- *Passage to India* by EM Forster
- *Freedom in Exile* – autobiography of HRH Dalai Lama
- *Midnight's Children* by Salman Rushdie
- *A Suitable Boy* by Vikram Seth's
- *India & Indian Himalayas* – Lonely Planet

english

Hello / Goodbye
Please
Thank you
How are you?
Excuse me
What is your name?
Do you speak English?

I don't understand
Yes
No
How much?
How far is...?
What is the time?
One
Two
Three
Four
Five
Six
Seven
Eight
Nine
Ten

hindi

namaste
meharbani
shukriya
Aap kaiseh hain?
maaf kijiye
Aapka shubh naam kya hai?
Kya aap angrezi samajhte hain?
meri samajh men nahin aaya
haan
nahin
Kitneh paiseh?
kitni duur hai?
Kitne bajeh hain?
ek
do
tin
char
panch
chhe
saat
aath
nau
das

NB: The information provided above was correct at the time of going to print.