

The Indian Experience
229 JBK Villas
Doha, Qatar
Tel: 4689251, 5566198, 5857231

DOHA COLLEGE
2006 EXPEDITION
A TREK IN THE HIMALAYA

PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION

The Indian Experience
229 JBK Villas
Doha, Qatar
Tel: 4689251, 5566198, 5857231

INTRODUCTION

We are pleased to welcome you on your trekking adventure in the Indian Himalaya. We are sure that you are about to embark on the trip of a lifetime!

From years of experience operating trekking expeditions we have learned that the single-most important 'item' to bring along is a spirit of adventure. Full enjoyment of your trip depends on your being prepared, both mentally and physically, for the nuances of travel in a foreign country. You will be far from home and far from the standard routine of life at home. Flexibility and a sense of curiosity and fun will prove invaluable for the proper appreciation of this type of travel

We are also great believers in preparation. Read as much as you can about India, and in particular about the area we are about to visit and get yourself in good physical condition.

This brief is designed to convey the spirit of the trip, your destination and serve as a guide in preparing you for your adventure. We have compiled the following information from our personal experience in the field. **We urge you to read this information carefully, as most of the following pages will answer most of your questions.**

If any further questions come to mind as you prepare yourself for the trip, please get in touch with us.

Have a wonderful trip.

Deepak Kapur

The Indian Experience
229 JBK Villas
Doha, Qatar
Tel: 4689251, 5566198, 5857231

MASTER CHECKLIST

For your trip you must have:

- 1. Valid passport**
- 2. Indian visa**
- 3. Photocopy of passport page to carry in wallet**
- 4. Air tickets and expense money**
- 5. Recommended inoculations**

DEPARTURE DETAILS

Flights are booked and we arrive early morning on 23rd March and depart around 9.30am on 31st March so all looks well

Departure Doha	Wednesday	22 nd March	TBC
Arrival Delhi	Thursday	23 rd March	TBC
Departure Delhi	Friday	31 st March	0930
Arrival Doha	Friday	31 st March	TBC

The above is based on current Qatar Airways schedule but is subject to reconfirmation closer to departure date.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

A valid passport and visa is required for all. This can be obtained from the Indian Embassy at Doha and usually have a validity of 6 months. Sri Lankan, Bangladesh and Pakistan nationals require special clearance. Indian visas can **not** be obtained at the airport on arrival. If you do not have a passport, apply for it immediately. Allow some time for the Indian consulate to process your visa application.

The Indian Experience
229 JBK Villas
Doha, Qatar
Tel: 4689251, 5566198, 5857231

The Indian Experience
229 JBK Villas
Doha, Qatar
Tel: 4689251, 5566198, 5857231

LIFE ON THE TRAIL

On the average trek day, we get up at sun rise. Morning tea, coffee or hot chocolate is served followed by breakfast. Camp toilet and bathing facilities are available. After we pack, camp is struck by the staff as we eat breakfast. If camp location is to be shifted, the loads are put on horses and we are generally off by 7:30 a.m.

We walk for 3-4 hours and then stop for a relaxed lunch. Most groups like to spread out over the trail, pausing in the villages, talking to the local people. Whilst there is no need for the entire group to stick closely together, except in the event of bad weather or dangerous conditions, we recommend that you not wander off on your own but stay in smaller teams.

There is a lead and a "sweep" guide along the trail to assist you as needed. We ask you not to forge ahead of the lead guide. On short days take your time and enjoy the route, as there is no advantage in getting to camp before the horses, which have your tent, belongings, and the all-important grub.

We usually serve a hot meal for lunch, (prepared in the morning and heated up at lunch time) except for the days we go over the passes, when a pack lunch is provided. We'll pick as scenic a spot as possible, sometimes by a river or a stream. You'll have an hour and usually more to relax, wash, and of course eat.

We usually walk for 2-3 hours in the afternoon, reaching camp by 4:00 p.m., where hot tea and biscuits are served. There's free time before dinner to read or relax.

After dinner we usually spend time writing or reading by lantern light in our dining tent or retire to our tents. These are among the most pleasant times on trek. You are totally liberated from the modern world; its demands, pressures, you can relax and view your life from an entirely new perspective.

HOW TO WALK

This may seem trivial at first, but it is vital that you watch the trail directly before your feet at all times. If you spot something you wish to gaze at for even a few moments, if you want to adjust your clothing or pull something out of your pack--stop walking. There's plenty of time. There are rocks, small steps, quick turns and abrupt drop off on Himalayan trails. More than one trekkers' trip has ended prematurely when, awe struck by a spectacular vista and head quite literally in the clouds, he or she walked right off the trail. Result: a twisted or broken ankle, return to Delhi, and loss of a marvellous trekking experience. Walk when you walk and look when you look; please don't combine the two.

WHAT TO EXPECT

You are embarking on an adventure in a place and amongst people whose lives are very different from your own. Many aspects of life may seem unusual. Remember that these are the same aspects that make an area an "off-the-beaten-track" destination. **This trek will challenge you.** In addition to the personal physical challenges you may face, travel conditions can present unexpected obstacles, such as rough and bumpy roads and changeable weather. To prepare for this experience the most important item to "pack" is a flexible and relaxed attitude. Bring a healthy sense of humour and a willingness to encounter the unexpected, and you'll find your trip to India the adventure of a lifetime!

PACKING YOUR DUFFEL

It is **very** important to have appropriate clothing for trekking. It's frustrating to be uncomfortable, inconvenienced or unable to do all you want because of improper clothing, and it can be dangerous to continue if you are ill-prepared. Even if you may not use each item listed, it's better to be prepared in case of a storm or severely cold weather instead of being uncomfortable without the necessary equipment. At the same time don't overload yourself, or the pack animals, but make sure what you bring is suitable. **Your trek duffel should weigh no more than 15 Kg and what you can comfortably carry. The list below may at times seem excessive. Use your judgement to shortlist items that you want to bring.**

Shell Clothing

Shell clothing includes a jacket that protect from rain and wind, usually made from Goretex or a similar material. They should be waterproof, breathable, and roomy enough to fit over other layers of clothing. A poncho is **not** adequate for conditions encountered on the trip.

Clothing

Women

Refrain from wearing shorts on trek, in villages and towns. Apart from being culturally inappropriate one is likely bruise in the forest. Many women who trek find it very comfortable and functional to wear a light, mid-calf length skirt, such as a wrap-around. These can be worn with tights or thermal underwear when cold, and provide some privacy for toilet purposes in areas without forest cover or large rocks. Long pants or culottes are perfectly acceptable for women. If you feel you must bring shorts, make sure they at least touch the knee. Denim Jeans are difficult to trek in particularly and are avoidable

Men

Men may wear mid-thigh length shorts while hiking, however, they run the same risk of lacerations in the forest, particularly in the denser parts. Running or sports shorts or hiking bare-chested is not appropriate. I have found a loose track bottom with a sport shirt the most comfortable. Denim Jeans are difficult to trek in particularly and are avoidable

Fabrics

In general, wool, pile, fleece, polypropylene and cotton are highly recommended fabrics for anything from socks and underwear to shirts and pants. Each, (except cotton), insulates even when wet and dries very quickly which is a real asset at colder elevations where it is difficult to dry laundry. No organized laundry facilities are available once out on trek and considering what we are packing into this trip you will not have an opportunity to wash clothes out in a stream. Avoid bringing white colour clothes which soil easily.

Please note that the hike on this trip starts at about 1200 ft but you will climb to over 7,000 ft. You can thus expect big range of temperatures, from very warm to cold at the higher elevation camps. For this reason we recommend 'layering' , a combination of several thin to medium clothing layers to deal with all the conditions, so you can peel clothing off or on.

Footwear

Your boots and auxiliary footwear are probably the most important items you'll take to India. On trek your life revolves around your feet. Blisters caused by poorly fitting, or boots which are not broken-in are amongst the most common and painful, problems on the trail.

The Indian Experience
229 JBK Villas
Doha, Qatar
Tel: 4689251, 5566198, 5857231

It is not essential to buy boots and you may opt for hiking shoes because they are lighter and more comfortable. If you are buying a new pair, make sure a qualified salesperson gives you a proper fit while wearing socks and that they have a good ankle support. Don't buy any boots that you are not permitted to return after wearing a few hours around your house. If you have new boots / shoes, wear them for a while every day for at least a month; before you depart, you should be able to wear them for a full, active day with no discomfort. Even boots you have owned for years can sometimes produce blisters when doing the amount of walking you'll do in India. Limber up your boots (and feet) with some hiking before departure. *Waterproof your boots with several coats of snow seal or other sealant before departure; you may cross streams on parts of your trek. We do not expect to encounter any snow but who knows?*

Bring a second pair of sport shoes to wear in camp or if your first pair get wet. .

Socks

We recommend wearing two pairs of socks while hiking. The inner sock, usually a thin layer of polypropylene, functions to wick moisture away from the skin preventing blisters. To avoid the build-up of heat that leads to blister, avoid nylon in any quantity. We recommend the outer sock (worn over the liner) to be made of at least 70-80% (but not 100%) wool. You'll change liner socks more frequently than the heavier outer sock. Some people like to use cotton socks which are not altogether bad, except it does build up moisture and lead to bad smelling feet! However to deal with some of the hot weather conditions we will encounter on some of the hiking days – it is a good option.

Luggage

- 1 large waterproof duffel bag to carry all personal gear on trek. We suggest a strong, durable, cordura nylon bag with full length zipper and handles.
- 1 small padlock to lock your duffel.
- 1 day pack to carry misc. items (sweater, water bottles, rain gear, camera equipment etc.) you want to have during each day on trek. We recommend bringing at least a 1450 cu in. to 2000 cu.in. capacity pack. Your day pack should hang from both shoulders; one with waist belt recommended; fanny packs are not satisfactory. Some day packs have side pouches - great for easy access to water bottles.
- 1 small duffel bag to store items not needed on trek. This should be locked and stored in the coach.
- A water proof layer to cover your day pack and duffel bags.

Sleeping Bags

Bring along a roomy sleeping bag. During March, night temperatures are expected to range between 5°C to 7°C and it is common practice to equip one self with a sleeping bag rated for at least one grade colder. If you are planning to buy a new sleeping bag, buy one that is light, has provisions for liners, fits your height and take a long term view. We hope that at the end of this trek you will take a liking for the Himalaya and trekking and it may be better to buy a bag that you are comfortable at lower temperatures. We also encourage you to bring a therma-rest pad if you already have one.

EQUIPMENT

Essential

- Hand sanitizer. All leading stores offer several brands and “Dial” is a preferred brand but others will do just as well.
- 1 toilet kit, toothbrush, toothpaste, bio-degradable soap, shampoo etc
- Toilet paper (1 medium size roll per week). We do provide toilet paper on trek but Indian toilet paper is rough, so may not be suitable for you.
- 1 small quick drying towel.
- 1 lighter (for burning toilet paper) – remember to pack in your checked luggage as airlines will not allow this to be carried on board.
- 1 pocket knife – remember to pack in your checked luggage as airlines will not allow this to be carried on board.
- 1 torchlight with spare batteries - – remember to pack in your checked luggage as airlines will not allow this to be carried on board.
- Wet wipes (individually packed)
- Nylon stuff sacks (colour coded and waterproof) to organize clothes, laundry etc.
- Plastic bags small and medium zip-lock bags, large garbage bag to help "protect" or waterproof your duffel.
- 2 bandannas, protects neck from sun, soak up sweat, use as handkerchief.
- 2 wide mouth plastic water bottles with minimum 1 quart capacity each.
- 1 pair sunglasses with side shields and lens that filter 90% UV and 50% infrared light.
- Repair kit comprising needle, thread, nylon cord, rip stop tape, safety pins (share with others).
- Spectacle ties.

Optional Equipment

- Walking stick (a ski pole also works well).
- Camera, film, camera batteries, lens cleaner and paper.
- Binoculars.
- Journal and pens.
- Stash of favourite snacks or powdered drink mixes, instant soup mixes or convenience meals

CLOTHING LIST

Outerwear

- 1 shell clothing (lightweight shell clothing is adequate)
- 1 pile jacket in fleece / wool sweater

- 1 scarf wool (optional)
- 1 warm cap
- 1 cap / hat with brim

Clothing

- 2 pair khakis / casual
- 1 pair hiking gear.
- 1 long sleeve shirt and 4 short sleeve T-shirts
- 1 light weight wool or fleece sweater
- 7 sets underwear
- 1 bathing suit
- 1 set long underwear polypropylene top & bottom (optional)

Footwear

- 3 pair outer socks wool / cotton
- 3 pair liner socks polypropylene
- 1 pair hiking shoes
- 1 pair tennis shoes (optional)
- 1 pair sandals with ankle straps (optional)

FOOD AND WATER

In India, consider all tap water as unsafe.

1. Do not drink or even brush your teeth with tap water unless you have purified it with iodine.
2. Keep your mouth closed in the shower!
3. Do not use ice cubes; freezing does not kill bacteria.
4. Bottled water is available in most Indian cities and should be your first choice for drinking.
5. Eat no uncooked food or food bought from sidewalk vendors.
6. Be wary of uncooked food, especially salads, and unpeeled fruits or vegetables at the hotel.
7. Shellfish should be avoided.
8. Overall be very conservative about what you eat before the trek.

On trek, our camp crew is well trained in hygienic practices, drinking water is always boiled, and the food you are served is clean and safe. Sterile, treated washing water is put out before every meal; use it to wash your hands.

Adequate fluid intake is essential. During the day once your supply from camp is over, you will be filling your water bottles with water from streams, which should be treated, preferably with

The Indian Experience
229 JBK Villas
Doha, Qatar
Tel: 4689251, 5566198, 5857231

iodine crystals or by using a good filter (you are responsible for this). In the evening, you can get your water bottle filled with boiled water in camp. Do not drink directly from streams, no matter how clear they look.

Water Treatment

In camp the staff will boil all drinking water, which is then safe to drink. You must carry water bottles with this water on the trail. Your trip leader will be carrying some iodine tablets, which you can utilise in case you run out of drinking water on the trail and have to use the water from a stream.

If you run short of water, we recommend use of iodine tablets or crystals for water purification. Iodine requires at least half hour to dissolve in the water before it is safe to drink, so allow time for this.

Meals

Meals on trek are nourishing and plentiful, a blend of Indian and Western dishes. Breakfast is normally a meal of porridge with hot milk, followed by eggs and toast, honey, marmalade, tea, coffee (instant) or chocolate. This gives us a good start for the best walking hours in the morning. Lunch is prepared in the morning by the cook and carried by one of our *Sherpas* along with us. It is heated at lunch time and served hot. Potatoes, curried vegetables, eggs, local style breads, fruit, tea may be served. On longer days and on days we cross passes, a pack lunch will be provided.

After the day's trekking, dinner is a highlight, consisting of a soup; a main course which may be mixed vegetables and curries, lentils and rice, chapattis (local bread), meat, vegetables, and potatoes, stew, a noodle dish etc. and dessert. Meat (chicken or lamb) is served almost every day. Some tinned foods are used but most of the vegetables and fruits are fresh (carried on pony back). For variety, every few days a Western style meal is served: spaghetti, vegetable & chicken stew, french fries etc.

If you are partial to any foods or treats -- it is a good idea to bring them with you.

If you are a vegetarian or have other special food requirements please inform us in advance so that we may make necessary arrangements.

CLIMATE

The plains tend to start warming up in March. The mountains can create their own weather, and drenching rain can occur anytime during the summer though we do not expect it in March.

Temperature ranges (Fahrenheit):

Plains 75-95

Trek 40-75

Some nights on trek at the higher elevations could get colder.

PERSONAL FIRST AID SUPPLIES LIST AND MEDICAL INFORMATION

A trekking medic will accompany us on trek. You must report all illnesses to the medic and the Group Leader, howsoever minor they may feel. Your own experiences and preferences should determine what you bring. Every member must bring a small first aid kit and is expected to use it for minor personal needs. If you take your own prescription medicines, bring a supply for your entire trip, as these are often not available abroad.

The common ailments include:

The Indian Experience
229 JBK Villas
Doha, Qatar
Tel: 4689251, 5566198, 5857231

Colds, Allergies: Colds and coughs are actually more common than stomach problems on trek. Everyone should bring cough drops and cold remedies. We encourage you to bring both an expectorant and a suppressant. If you want a cough suppressant, avoid codeine.

Mild pain, Aspirin, Motrin, or Tylenol.

G.I. Tract: Pepto-Bismol tablets; Donnatal for stomach cramps, a mild sedative; Gelusil M or other antacid tabs; Lactobacillus capsules taken daily help keep your gastrointestinal system working smoothly. You may bring Imodium or Lomotil, but they do not treat the cause of diarrhoea, and we do not recommend their use.

Skin ointments: 1 small tube for cuts, bites, irritations, or sores. Mosquito repellent cream.

Sun Protection Sunscreen or block. Sun can be very strong at high altitude and an almost total sun block is best. A #15 screen will be needed for the first few days if you are pale; #10 or 12 may be adequate thereafter. Chapstick or A-Fil Sun Sticks for lips, nostrils, etc.

Musculo-Skeletal: Ace bandage, an ankle or knee elastic support, available in sporting goods stores, is useful for weak knees or ankles, or if sore knees develop from walking downhill; Motrin.

Miscellaneous:

- Moleskin or second skin pads; a good supply, for blisters
- Band-aids, assorted
- Small roll of adhesive tape
- Skin/hand moisturizer
- Vitamin C tablets
- Eye drops, foot powder, spare glasses (personal choice)
- Tampons or Sanitary napkins.

Recommended Inoculations

It is ordinarily recommended that all travels to the sub continent are preceded by inoculations or boosters for **Cholera, Typhoid, Tetanus, and Hepatitis**. These are available in Doha.

Malaria

Lariam (mefloquine), is now the drug of choice for anyone going to a malaria area. Prescription tablets are taken weekly. However talk with your doctor about which medication is most appropriate for you.

FITNESS

Trekking in India is not "easy". The Himalayas are the world's highest mountains, and with that comes the world's largest hills! A typical trek day involves 6-7 hours of walking or more (on the days crossing the passes), sometimes exceeding 3,000 feet gain or loss in altitude. Trail conditions are often rough, and not the well-maintained switchbacks you may be used to. Trekking in the Himalaya is definitely more difficult than hiking or backpacking in the U.K., if only because of the elevations you'll reach.

The better shape you are in, the more you will enjoy the trip. You must make special efforts to get in reasonably good physical condition for the trip by hiking, running, swimming, bicycling or

The Indian Experience
229 JBK Villas
Doha, Qatar
Tel: 4689251, 5566198, 5857231

engaging in other forms of aerobic exercise. Many activities get the lungs into shape, but the most effective way of getting fit for hiking is to hike.

Please let us know of any medical problems, allergies, etc. that you may have.

MONEY

The currency in India is the rupee. Exchange rates vary depending on the strength of the U.S. dollar. It is currently quoting at Rs. 45.00 to a US \$. Cash and travellers cheques are readily accepted and you can exchange them for rupees at the airport, or at the bigger hotels in Delhi. All banks will also change money but it takes a long time. The exchange rate varies a bit depending on the commission charged but the difference is marginal. Keep all currency exchange receipts. You will need them to change rupees back into foreign currency (at a slight loss) at the airport upon departure.

Please note that once we leave Delhi, there is no facility at any of the hotels we stay in or anywhere on trek to either exchange money or to use credit cards.

You will need to budget spending money for:

- Personal items such as laundry, phone calls, drinks, snacks.
- Souvenirs and other shopping.
- Emergency

SECURITY

While on trek we have staff to guard the camp once it's set up to keep people away from the tents. It's a good idea to keep your tent securely zipped at all times.

You must handover your passport to the Staff escort. Carry a photocopy of your passport in your main baggage. Your return international ticket will be taken by us on your arrival in Delhi so that we may get the flights reconfirmed.

PHOTOGRAPHY

There are incredible opportunities for photography in the Himalaya and there are no limitations on the amount of film you may bring. The price for film in Delhi is expensive, so we recommend bringing more film than you expect to use. Outside of Delhi it is not available at all. Camera equipment is heavy and the more you bring the more you will have to carry (never pack cameras in your duffel; on trek or on flights or elsewhere). A standard 35 or 50mm lens with one longer (135 or 200 mm) lens in either a zoom or fixed length should cover most picture taking situations. Haze and polarizing filters will protect lenses as well as enhance pictures. Be sure to take spare batteries (it is not possible to recharge batteries outside of Delhi), lens tissue, and cleaner.

You will have an opportunity to charge batteries only at the main camp in Rishikesh. It is thus essential that you carry spare batteries if you use Digital cameras.

TIME AND COMMUNICATION

India is exactly 2 hours 30 minutes ahead of Qatar. With satellite communications, it is possible to telephone anywhere in the world from Delhi and possibly from the other hotels on our trip. This can be done from the hotel in Delhi, but must be paid for on the spot; there are no collect calls.

The Indian Experience
229 JBK Villas
Doha, Qatar
Tel: 4689251, 5566198, 5857231

We will be able to make telephone calls from ISD booths in New Delhi, and Rishikesh but may not have sufficient time to do so.

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

If you wish to give family and friends an emergency contact number, please have them call our office in Delhi and we shall communicate an emergency mobile phone number in due course.

As it may be difficult, expensive, or even impossible to contact you while you are on trek, emergency contact should only be attempted in cases where your immediate or early return or phone call is required. In any case, the message may not reach you until you return to Delhi from your trek.

ENVIRONMENTAL GUIDELINES

Bathing/Washing

Please use bio-degradable shampoo and soap if possible.

Toilet facilities

Upon arrival in camp, the staff will erect a toilet tent. During the day's hiking you will simply locate quiet spots off the trail. All toilet paper must be burned. As you will gather, in this part of the world toilets are peculiarly Western inventions!

Garbage

Please carry all tissues, biscuit and sweet wrappers and other garbage with you to camp where the kitchen staff will burn it. You may want to bring extra small plastic bags you can carry in your day pack to collect the garbage throughout the day.

In camp we incinerate garbage. What we cannot incinerate (all plastics, tin cans, glass bottles) is carried back off the trek to the nearest town and disposed there.