

2014 Nepal Trip Report

In 2014 Team:MED will be expanding upon our previous trips to Nepal. For over 16 days, 12 lucky students will have the chance to experience the cultural wonders Nepal has to offer as well as being part of a unique medical experience in the developing world.

Background

Nepal is located in South in south East-Asia between China in the north and India in the South. The fascinating rugged geography of Nepal contributes to appeal. Home to the world's highest mountain at 8848m travelling through Nepal takes you through stunning valleys, across lush plateaus and across rivers. The extreme and rugged nature of Nepal's landscape makes hiking an amazing experience with views of the beautiful Himalayan range of mountains. Nepal has a number of ancient pilgrimage sites each with temples that glorify the miraculous powers of its deity. Kathmandu valley is home to the famous Pashupatinath temple, Swayambhu Stupa and several other famous temples. Team:MED's Nepal experience will also take travellers through the famous Bigu monastery. Nepali cuisine often consists of a mixture of different cultural influences. A common and native dish to Nepal is Dal Baht. The dish consists of lentil soup and steamed rice with masu (meat with spices and gravy). As killing cows is prohibited in Nepal meat is usually either chicken, mutton buffalo or pork.

Healthcare in Nepal

Whilst the culture and beauty of Nepal is breathtaking, it remains one of the world's poorest countries and its healthcare system remains unable to meet the needs of its average citizen. According to UNICEF the infant mortality rate in 2012 was 34 per 1000 live births. It is estimated that 49,000 people currently live with HIV in Nepal whilst only 49% of young people take adequate preventative measures against the disease. Common conditions such as pneumonia remain untreated with only 7% of people receiving antibiotics and only 39% of people receive adequate rehydration for gastroenteritis. Nutritional problems are severe in Nepal with 17.8% of children born with a low birthweight. And 29% of people considered either moderately to severely underweight.

Whilst these statistics are worrying there are clear signs that health-care and general wellbeing in Nepal is improving. The under-5 mortality rate has dropped from 269 to 42 per 1000 live children since 1970. Primary school attendance is at 90% for even the poorest 20% of people and immunisation coverage for most conditions is at 85–90%. 87% of people now used improved drinking water sources for the prevention of common diseases like gastroenteritis.

Everyday life in Nepal

As you can imagine, day-to-day life in Nepal is very different to Australia. From the simplest things such as the way drivers interact on the road to subtle cultural complexities surrounding interactions with patients. Purchasing items in Kathmandu is very different to shopping in Australia and it is expected that you will barter with shop attendants. You will notice an interesting mixture of a relaxed attitude to life with strict adherence to small details. Nepalese people are extremely proud of their country and way of life and respecting their culture is immensely important as you travel through their country. Amazingly, you will find that whilst reliable electricity sources don't even exist in the major cities almost every venue you visit in

Kathmandu will have a free wireless internet connection. The people you meet are extremely hardworking, friendly and hospitable and it is amazing to see people who have so little giving so much.

Some favourite pastimes you might experience in Nepal include playing soccer and singing traditional Nepali tunes around a campfire.

Safety in Nepal

Smart traveller currently recommends that people exert a high degree of caution when travelling in Nepal. This has mainly been due to small amounts of civil unrest in the country as it has transitioned over the past 10 years from a monarchy to a democracy. Our program will ensure that you have qualified guides to accompany you throughout the trip. The streets of Kathmandu are quite safe however it is important to always stay in a group. Hiking in rural areas of Nepal carries the same risks as hiking anywhere. It is important to stay hydrated and to take appropriate clothing. Nepal in December can become quite warm during the day (even at the high altitudes at which you will be travelling) but drops to freezing temperatures at night.

Medical experiences in Nepal

During your trip you will have the chance to take part in a range of activities and expand your medical experience, these include but are certainly not limited to:

- Preparing for your own clinics in remote villages
- Interviewing your own patients, examining them and setting out a management plan
- Organising an inventory of medications to distribute to patients in Nepal
- Organising health promotion programs such as dental hygiene for people in Nepal and educating patients about how they can look after their health after you are gone.

Pre-trip preparation

If you are lucky enough to be selected for the trip you will meet with your group regularly and have contact with your trip coordinators prior to leaving. Fundraising for the trip is an important part of the experience and it is expected that you will organise events to raise money for any medical supplies to take with you on the trip. Two people from your group will be assigned as group leaders and they will correspond with the organisation in Nepal prior to the trip. During your regular meetings with your group you will discuss arrangements including vaccines, visa arrangements for entrance into Nepal and any fees required by the volunteer organisations in Nepal.

Stay tuned...

Exact details regarding your itinerary and the locations you will be travelling to have yet to be finalised but stay tuned for updates on the TeamMED website for when these details become available. An information night will be held later this year for all those interested in coming to Nepal. Applications for the trip will open soon so watch this space!

If you'd like more information about Nepal...

Please check out these websites for further information about this amazing part of the world:

- Nepal's [tourism website](#)
- or in formation about Nepal's healthcare system, the [UNICEF website](#)
- Nepal's [Lonely Planet guide](#)

For any further questions please feel free to email us at teamed@monashclubs.org.