

The Langtang Valley of Nepal

24 Day Trek

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline itinerary

Day 1	Depart London
Day 2/3	Kathmandu
Day 4/21	Trekking
Day 22/23	Kathmandu
Day 24	Fly London

Pre-tour extension

Day 1	Depart London
Day 2	Arrive Kathmandu
Day 3/6	Chitwan National Park
Day 7	Kathmandu. Join Group

Dates

2021

Saturday 3rd April – Monday 26th April 2021
Pre-extension to Chitwan from: Monday, 29th March 2021

2022

Saturday 2nd April – Monday 25th April 2022
Pre-extension to Chitwan from: Monday, 28th March 2022

Cost

From £4,795 (London/London); Extension cost: From £995

Single room supplement

From £695 (extension: From £95)

Grading

Grade B/C. Moderate.
Between 1,520 and
4,602 metres

Focus

Birds, plants and mammals



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N.B. Please note that the itinerary below offers our target programme. However, adverse weather and other local considerations can necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available. Most importantly on a trek, our overnight stops must be flexible to allow for the overall speed of each particular group and to accommodate 'on trek' sightings, which can mean that we ultimately choose to spend more time in some areas than others.

Day 1

Saturday

In Flight

We depart from London this evening on board Qatar Airways' scheduled flight to Kathmandu, via Doha. Please note that airlines flying to Kathmandu are very limited and therefore seats get booked up early. We may not always be able to accommodate group members on Qatar Airways, in which case alternatives such as Jet Airways or Gulf Air may be used on some occasions.

Day 2

Sunday

Kathmandu

Arriving in Kathmandu in mid afternoon, we transfer to our 5-star hotel, generally the Hotel Yak & Yeti or the Hotel Shangri-la. The rest of the day is free for relaxation. In the evening we will venture into the heart of the old city in search of one of Kathmandu's fine restaurants.

Day 3

Monday

Kathmandu

Today we will spend birdwatching on the forested slopes of Phulchowki, at 2,756 metres the highest peak in the valley. Phulchowki is a wonderful spot for birds, plants and mammals in the Kathmandu valley. The variety of laughingthrushes, fulvettas, bulbuls, flowerpeckers, sibia, flycatchers, sunbirds, tits and warblers is tremendous. We will drive up Phulchowki in the early morning, ascending as far as the ice will allow. Here we should get good views of the snow-clad Great Himalaya, including the Annapurna range, Langtang, Manasalu and many of Nepal's other high peaks (provided the weather is clear!). We will then spend the rest of the day walking down the mountain through its fine temperate forest, with a picnic lunch en route. Some of the many highlights should include Himalayan Bluetail, Fire-tailed Sunbird, White-collared and Grey-



Phulchowki (left), White-tailed Nuthatch (top right) and Kathmandu (bottom right)

winged Blackbirds (in winter months), Long-tailed Minivet, White-tailed Nuthatch, Buff-barred Warbler, Orange-bellied Leafbird and many more. More elusive species include Himalayan Cutia, Kalij Pheasant, Red-billed Leiothrix and Black-faced Warbler.

Before heading back to our hotel we will stop (if there is enough time) at the base of Phulchowki hill. Within this mixed broadleaf patch we hope to find some of the lower altitude species such as the spectacular Blue-whistling Thrush, Red-billed Blue Magpie, Lemon-rumped Warbler, Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher, Yellow-bellied Fantail and perhaps the elusive Spotted Forktail.

Mammals are, of course, more elusive. However, stealthy progress may reward us with views of some of the more common diurnal species. The cheeky Rhesus Macaques that scavenge a living around the villages are far from shy than their far more elegant cousins, the Grey Langurs, are more wary, and more likely to be encountered at Chitwan National Park. The reclusive Assamese Macaque is still more wary and infrequently encountered. Higher up the mountain, the Orange-bellied Squirrel is the most likely mammal to be found, preferring the oak and rhododendron forests. The exquisite Yellow-throated Marten is also worth looking for, being regularly seen here; whilst the Indian Muntjac, though regularly heard on the mountain, is less easy to see. Such animals as Leopard have been seen on rare occasions in the past by our groups but you should consider yourself very lucky to encounter this sought-after species!

Day 4

Tuesday

Camping

We make an early start this morning, driving northwards to Trisuli Bazaar (a journey of some four hours) and then along the newly-constructed military road that continues up above the Trisuli River to Dhunche. En route we will look for White-capped Water Redstarts, Plumbeous Water Redstarts and Blue Whistling-thrushes that decorate the riverside whilst, in the stands of sal, mynas, Indian Rollers and Spot-winged Starlings are likely to be seen. Arriving at Dhunche in the evening we will make camp by the roadside at the start of tomorrow's trek.

Day 5

Wednesday

Camping

After dropping from Dhunche to cross a tributary of the Trisuli River, we ascend to traverse hillsides of pine forests where small birds are numerous. Here we will encounter our first flycatchers, tits, warblers, babblers, yuhinas and laughing thrushes. All along the trail the views are spectacular. Far below us flows the Trisuli River; to the west stands snowbound Ganesh Himal, and at the head of the valley lie some of the high peaks of Tibet. We camp this evening at Thulo Syabru (2,134 metres) – allowing ourselves time to discover the birds and flowers of the area. With luck we may find the beautiful and localised Pied Ground Thrush.

Days 6 – 7

Thursday – Friday

Camping

At Thulo Syabru we leave the Trisuli Valley behind; we now turn eastwards into the Langtang Valley, the focal point of the Langtang National Park and an outstanding area for wildlife. We soon enter the magnificent mixed forest that dominates the lower valley. Amongst oaks and rhododendrons, beautifully decorated with mosses and lichens,

are Himalayan Black Bears, Red Pandas and Leopards! Sadly they are hard to see, but we have a good chance of seeing Himalayan Tahr (a large and shaggy, brown goat), Common Goral and Royal's Pika, plus numerous flowers and birds. The latter include many species of sunbird, rosefinch, woodpecker, flycatcher and warbler, and such forest gems as Red-headed Bullfinches, Mrs Gould's Sunbirds, Beautiful Niltavas and ground warblers. The wealth of this natural history demands that we spend two nights camped in this forest, and a full day off (Day 9) to explore.

Days 8 – 9

Saturday – Sunday

Camping

Continuing up through the forest, with occasional tantalising glimpses of Langtang Lirung (one of the region's highest peaks) through the evergreen oak trees, the trail enters open ground at Ghora Tabela (2,987 metres). There was once a Tibetan resettlement project here, but now the only residents are the soldiers of a Nepalese army post. We are entering a different habitat now as the valley broadens and climbs above the tree line. There are a few temporary settlements here, used by the herders who bring their livestock up to graze in the high pastures each summer. Amongst the scrub, boulders and potato fields, as we approach Langtang village, are flocks of Snow Pigeons and choughs, mountain finches, Rufous-breasted Accentors, Tickell's Warblers and Blue-fronted Redstarts. We camp near Langtang (3,307 metres), a village built in Tibetan style which accommodates the headquarters of the National Park and a Buddhist monastery that we may visit. In the stone-walled fields around the village, potatoes and buckwheat are grown; in the pastures above the village yaks are grazed.

Days 10 – 11

Monday – Tuesday

Camping

As we continue our climb beyond Langtang village, the valley opens out further and the views become more extensive. To our left is the impressive sight of Langtang Himal, and ahead is the great snow-covered bulk of Ganchempo. At 3,719 metres we reach the monastery of Kyangjin, set well above the Langtang River and surrounded by snowy peaks. There is a cheese factory here, set up in 1955 with Swiss technical aid. During the summer months large quantities of yak's cheese are produced, which can be purchased at the factory. Across the valley a beautiful forest of gnarled birch trees and dwarf rhododendrons and junipers provide a final refuge for rosefinches, Blood Pheasants, Himalayan Monals and also the very rare Musk Deer. We have a free afternoon, and a full day tomorrow (Day 12) to explore this forest, and the glaciers, peaks and stony riverbed in this bleak but spectacular alpine wilderness. Tibetan Snowcocks and Snow Partridges live on the slopes, Ibisbills and Citrine Wagtails by the river; these are several of the beautiful species to be found at these Himalayan heights. The high mountain scenery is stunning, the peaks and ice-falls all enveloping.

Day 12

Wednesday

Camping

We leave Kyangjin and move slowly back down the Langtang Valley again, enjoying the birds and flowers we have now come to know.... and alert for new ones! We will camp on the edge of the forest at Ghora Tabela, once again with time for afternoon exploration.

Days 13 – 14**Thursday – Friday****Camping**

For most of the time we will be walking through the extensive oak and rhododendron forest again, but this time we will cross to the south side of the valley where the damp, north-facing slopes hold a greater variety of trees, and a lush undergrowth ideal for many species of babblers and other ground-feeding birds. A short but hard afternoon climb brings us back to the village of Syabru, a Sherpa village strung out along a ridge at 2,134 metres, which produces excellent "rakshi", the local fire-water. At the top of the village prayer wheels are kept turning by the waters of a stream. We will camp here tonight and try the rakshi!

Days 15 – 17**Saturday – Monday****Camping**

Over these three days we must climb 2,134 metres to the beautiful holy lake of Gosainkund (4,267 metres), an important place of pilgrimage for Hindus all over India (though thankfully just once a year, at the annual August festival). The lake is said to have been created when the god Shiva, suffering from a thirst occasioned by poison, thrust his trident, or "trisul", into the mountainside, whereupon three streams burst forth and ran together to form a lake.

The first day of our climb, from Syabru to Sing Gompa, takes us through outstanding mixed forest which offers us our best chance of glimpsing the rare Satyr Tragopan, plus a good variety of woodpeckers and numerous small species. Above all this forest, on our second day, are beautiful alpine meadows, littered with rhododendron and juniper bushes and carpeted with anemones, irises and a variety of primulas. Botanists will be in their element for the next few days, and the views are magnificent. To the west, over the cavernous Trisuli Valley, stand Himalchuli, Manaslu and Ganesh Himal, whilst Langtang Himal lies just to the north. Finches, warblers and accentors are abundant on these airy slopes; Golden Eagles, Himalayan Griffon Vultures and Lammergeiers fly overhead. The area is uninhabited and our campsites are blissfully peaceful.

Days 18 – 19**Tuesday – Wednesday****Camping**

From Gosainkund the trail climbs more gently through a wild and rugged terrain, passing four smaller lakes before the summit of the Laurabini pass at 4,602 metres. Flocks of blue Grandalas greet us beyond the pass as we descend flower-filled pastures to rocky ravines where, amongst the boulders, junipers and dwarf bamboo that cling to the steep slopes, we will look for breeding Gould's Shortwings. We will camp near Gopte cave (3,566 metres) for two nights, allowing a full day for our search for the elusive shortwing, and other specialities of this superb area.

Days 20 – 21**Thursday – Friday****Camping**

Beyond Gopte is an undisturbed juniper and rhododendron forest, carved by tumbling streams. We will spend the morning looking at the birds and flowers of this forest. The primulas and rhododendron flowers should be in full bloom, and the bird specialities include Red-flanked Bluetails, Rufous-bellied and White-browed Bush Robins, Fire-

tailed Sunbirds, wren-babblers, tit-babblers, rosefinches, warblers, Collared Grosbeaks, Fire-tailed Myzornis, Blood Pheasants and Himalayan Monals, amongst other beautiful species of the high Himalayan forests. During the afternoon and the following day (Day 21), we follow a high ridge southwards. We pass through oak forests where orchids grow, and look left to the magnificent views of the whole of the east Himalayan chain. All the time we will be descending gently, and easily able to appreciate the wildlife and the scenery during the final days of our trek. We camp on the evening of Day 21 at Chisapani and listen out for the calls of Mountain Scops Owls and Jungle Nightjars.

Day 22

Saturday

Kathmandu

An early morning climb brings us to Burlang Bhanjyang (2,438 metres), a ridge top village amongst oak and rhododendron forest from where, on a clear day, a view of the Himalaya from Annapurna to Mount Everest presents itself. For the rest of the day, a hot descent through oak, then subtropical forest, allows us to acquaint ourselves with birds of lower altitudes. Rufous Sibilias and Black Bulbuls abound; there are Hoary Barwings, Chestnut-tailed and Blue-winged Minlas, White-crested and White-throated Laughing-thrushes, and Tickell's Thrushes that sing from the tops of oak trees. Reaching Sundarijal on the edge of the Kathmandu Valley, transport awaits us. We will return to our hotel for a most welcome shower and that long-awaited restaurant meal.

Day 23

Sunday

Kathmandu

A free day for last minute shopping, sightseeing, or another valley excursion.

If you would prefer to spend this day doing a sightseeing tour of the city and temples of Kathmandu we will be pleased to arrange this for you (but this must be booked with us prior to your departure from London and will cost £195 for any single traveller and £150 per person for 2 or more). The tour may include Nepal's largest Hindu temple at Pashupatinath, the Buddhist "stupa" (shrine) and Tibetan settlement at Boudhinath, and the fine temples and palaces of Patan's Durbar Square. It also includes lunch in one of the traditional restaurants.

Day 24

Monday

London

Today we must transfer to Kathmandu airport for our return flight to London. It should be noted that some flights will arrive back into London early on Tuesday morning, being an overnight flight back from Kathmandu. Flight times will be confirmed closer to departure dates.

N.B. Should you wish to extend your holiday by spending extra days in Kathmandu (or elsewhere), we should be pleased to arrange this if you can give us early warning!

Chitwan extension

(The minimum number of people required to run this extension is five; however, we may decide to operate it with fewer people, at our discretion, with local guides.)

The Chitwan National Park, in the lowland jungles – “terai” – of Nepal, comprises 932 square kilometres of sal and riverine forest and grassland. It is a magnificent and unspoilt "jungle" environment with a greater variety of wildlife than any other area of Nepal. Over 500 bird species have been recorded in the park and we can expect to see nearly half of these, as well as many mammals and reptiles which are likely to include the endangered Indian One-horned Rhinoceros, Wild Boar, Sambar, Muntjac, Spotted and Hog Deer, Rhesus and Hanuman Monkeys, and possibly Marsh Mugger and the fish-eating Gharial Crocodiles. Leopards, Sloth Bears and Gaur (wild bison) are all regularly seen, particularly at this time of the year when the water is limited and populations more concentrated. Tigers also occur here and it is always a possibility that we will be lucky enough to see one of these magnificent animals.

Day 1

Monday

In Flight

We depart from London this evening on board Qatar Airways' scheduled flight to Kathmandu, via Doha. Please note that airlines flying to Kathmandu are very limited and therefore seats get booked up early. We may not always be able to accommodate group members on Qatar, in which case alternatives such as Gulf Air may be used on some occasions.

Day 2

Tuesday

Kathmandu

Arriving in Kathmandu in mid afternoon, we transfer to our hotel, generally the Hotel Yak & Yeti or the Hotel Shangri-la. The rest of the day is free for relaxation. In the evening we will venture into the heart of the old city in search of one of Kathmandu's fine restaurants.

Day 3

Wednesday

Chitwan National Park

An early start this morning for the five-hour minibus journey to Chitwan National Park, where we will spend four nights at a jungle lodge. We should arrive in time for lunch and have the afternoon free – perhaps for an evening expedition into the Sal forest to look for Indian Rhinoceros.

Days 4 – 6

Thursday – Saturday

Chitwan National Park

Three full days based in the park. A variety of excursions are arranged with the help and enthusiasm of the lodge's excellent naturalists. During our time in Chitwan we will be able to explore the rivers by dugout canoe, search the grasslands for Tigers, Rhinos and other mammals, and go birdwatching on foot through the forest.

Day 7

Sunday

Kathmandu

We must return by minibus to Kathmandu to meet up with the rest of our group and set out for Langtang.

N.B. Temperatures in Nepal's lowlands at this time of the year are VERY HIGH! You can expect midday temperatures in excess of 100°F (38°C) and it can be very humid too! Most people will wish to limit activities to the morning and evening excursions with a siesta in the middle of the day. HOWEVER, for the enthusiast, this is perhaps the most exciting time of the year to visit Chitwan. It is the best time of the year for birds, as many exotic species (pittas and cuckoos, for example) have returned from Sri Lanka and southern India, where they winter, to breed in Nepal. Many interesting migrants are also moving through the Park at this time of year. For mammals too, this is one of the best seasons, as they are they more concentrated and predictable now that the park's water supplies are drying up.

Trek grading

This trek is graded B/C. It is however one of our longer treks – 19 days – and therefore not the best for those who dislike camping! Most days involve between six and seven hours walking, and generally offer opportunities for optional afternoon and evening excursions after we have settled into camp each day. We have three full "rest" days. One major pass is involved on the trek – the Laurabini pass at 4,602 metres – but taken over four days, this should not pose a problem to anyone – whatever your age! – provided you are active and used to regular walks. This does not mean you should never feel tired. You will! Altitude should not be a problem, even though much of the trek is at a fair height. We acclimatise very slowly on this trek and altitude sickness should be avoided; but this does not mean that you will not sometimes feel breathless when ascending.

Weather

The late spring is not the most popular season for trekking; this is because the lowland areas of Nepal (up to 1,524 metres) are hot at this time of the year, and because cloud and occasional pre-monsoon rain can restrict visibility. It is, however, by far the best season for the naturalist: birds are singing and abundant, flowers are everywhere. Further, our circuit, blocked by snow for much of the year, can only be completed during late spring and autumn. This is the obvious season to complete the best wildlife trek in Nepal. Undoubtedly it will be fairly hot at the beginning and end of our trek (75 - 85°F or 23 - 29°C), but most of our route (16 days) is between 1,829 and 4,570 metres where temperatures are much more manageable; they will range between 40 - 75°F (4 - 23°C), depending on whether the sun is in or out! Night-time temperatures are likely to drop towards freezing point at all our high camps. Mornings at this time of the year are usually clear and sunny (a good time for mountain views) but cloud is quite usual during the afternoon and may occasionally bring rain. Dramatic, pre-monsoon storms can occur, though, if they do, it is usually late in the day, and they tend to leave clear skies (and fresh snow on the highest, now crystal-clear, peaks) by sunset. Such conditions are ideal for photography. In Kathmandu it is likely to be hot and sunny (up to 85°F or 29°C), though sometimes cloudy and wet in the afternoons.

Clothing

Please inspect the separate clothing list, sent to you on booking, thoroughly.

Warm clothing will be important on this trek. You will need a good “3 or 4 seasons” sleeping bag and a duvet/quilted jacket; gloves and a balaclava will also be useful to those who feel the cold. Shorts and T-shirts will be just as essential, especially if you plan to go on our Chitwan extension. Sleeping bags are normally provided by our ground agents, so unless we tell you to the contrary, you will not need to take your own unless you would prefer to do so.

Food & accommodation included in the price

All accommodation and meals are included, except for lunches and dinners in Kathmandu. Allow £45.

Entry requirements

All UK passport holders and most other nationalities require a visa for Nepal, which is obtainable in advance from your nearest Embassy. No vaccinations are mandatory for entry, but as recommended in our brochure we think it is wise to be protected against TB, polio, typhoid, tetanus and hepatitis A and take malaria prophylactics. We recommend that you consult your GP or local Travel Health Clinic about your requirements as soon as possible before travelling.

Mammal, bird & plant lists

Where available these are automatically provided on booking, and will gladly be sent to you before, if you wish for a more detailed preview.

Your safety & security

You have chosen to travel to Nepal. Risks to your safety and security are an unavoidable aspect of all travel and the best current advice on such risks is provided for you by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. In order to assess and protect against any risks in your chosen destination, it is essential that you refer to the Foreign Office website – www.fco.gov.uk/travel or telephone 0870 6060290 regularly prior to travel.

How to book your place

In order to book your place on this holiday, please give us a call on 01962 733051 with a credit or debit card, book online at www.naturetrek.co.uk, or alternatively complete and post the booking form at the back of our main Naturetrek brochure, together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost plus any room supplements if required. If you do not have a copy of the brochure, please call us on 01962 733051 or request one via our website. Please stipulate any special requirements, for example extension requests or connecting/regional flights, at the time of booking.

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