

Gap Year Teaching placements, Nepal

Thank you for your interest in Adventure Alternative Gap Year placements to Nepal. This is the beginning of what will, I hope, be one of the most memorable experiences of your life. Your year out should be one of the biggest adventures you have ever embarked on, so I hope that you will find the time to read this pack thoroughly and consider applying for a placement in Nepal.

If the pack does ignite a spark within you to go to Nepal, then please take the time to fill out our application forms carefully. Filling out the forms is not meant to be an easy process; it's good if you find it challenging. After all, it's a small challenge compared to what will be asked of you in those Nepalese schools if you are successful in your application.

We offer places to motivated, easy-going and resourceful people who want to expand their travel experience. We run a variety of innovative projects in Nepal, which combine education with adventure for periods of roughly 8 weeks. We offer you the unique opportunity to have your own house in the areas where we operate; to discover life as the Nepalese live it. You can live in a Himalayan village and work in the local school, live in our house in Kathmandu while working in a city secondary school and perhaps trek to Everest Base Camp.

Every Gap Year traveller wants the freedom to explore the country they are visiting, and to do so independently. It's all part of the great travel experience. After a rest back in Kathmandu you can go white water rafting or on an elephant-back safari, visit the Annapurna Sanctuary or even embark on an overland journey through India or Tibet. We will work with you, discussing your plans to make your trip happen.

OVERVIEW

Gavin Bate (founder of Adventure Alternative) has guided expeditions around the world, including three Everest Expeditions. He was the organiser and leader of the Millennium Seven Summits Expedition, which climbed the highest peak on each of the seven continents, in under one year; a world record. He has walked solo across the Sahara Desert, skied the coldest mountain in the world and climbed the 6th highest in the world without supplementary oxygen. He has been organising and leading expeditions for thirteen years and is sponsored by Berghaus and Tiso's.

Adventure Alternative came about through a need to formalise the different aspects of Gavin's travelling life. The company has expanded to have branches in Belfast, Nairobi, Moscow and Kathmandu. In Nairobi we have offices and houses, as well as a large store of safari equipment and vehicles, managed by very capable staff. In Kathmandu the company has its own apartment and a sub-office from which we provide a service selling bottled oxygen for climbing expeditions. We have another sub-office in Moscow which manages our Russian expeditions.

The central tenet of Adventure Alternative is our commitment to provide a really good service for everyone from climbers to trekkers to travellers, from extreme adventures in Antarctica to luxury

safaris in Kenya, from a chance to stand on the top of Everest to a Gap Year placement which will change your life forever.

How did the programme in Nepal start?

In 2000 Gavin led the successful British Everest Millennium Expedition and in 2002 he climbed on the North Ridge of Everest without supplementary oxygen. In 2005 his third Everest bid was made alone, without backup or support, and without oxygen. In 2007 he is heading back again and hopes to climb up the north side of Everest, from Tibet, and down the south side to Nepal, again alone and without oxygen. Gavin's experiences in the Everest region over the last fifteen years have led him to have a close attachment to a particular Himalayan village, Khari Khola; which used to be supported by Nepalese climber Babu Chiri Sherpa, the first man to sleep on the summit of Everest. Babu is now dead but Gavin is trying to maintain support of the village through Adventure Alternative and the charity Moving Mountains.

The Gap Year placements offered by Adventure Alternative in the Himalayas are therefore largely based on personal friendships, built over the past years, with the Sherpas of this Khumbu region.

We offer two different trips; **Teach & Trek** and **Gap Teach**.

As with all our Gap expeditions, we are flexible on start and finish dates. If doing Teach & Trek you can divide your teaching with a trek halfway through, or do the trek at the beginning or end of your placement - just give us a call to discuss your requirements.

Teach & Trek involves a 3 week long trek to the base camp of Mount Everest and 5 weeks spent working in a school in Kathmandu, living in our apartment and experiencing life in the capital. It is also possible, on occasion, to visit the Himalayan village of Khari Khola, which Adventure Alternative and the charity Moving Mountains have been supporting with various community projects. There you can meet the Sherpa villagers and perhaps help with their everyday work, picking tea leaves or harvesting barley.

Gap Teach is an 8 week placement in Kathmandu, available throughout the year. You will work in a secondary school and have the chance to live in your own apartment, with the freedom to explore Kathmandu independently in your spare time. You will also have exciting opportunities for travel in the surrounding area; to discover the Kathmandu Valley, go elephant trekking or white-water rafting, and visit other cities such as Pokhara in the Annapurna region.

TEACH & TREK; 8 week programme

On arrival in Kathmandu you will be met by our staff and spend your first night in our spacious three bedroom apartment where you can relax and unwind. You might go out to Thamel on your first evening, to sample local cuisine at the Yak and Yeti or Rum Doodle restaurants and have drinks at the famous Tom'n'Jerrys bar.

You will meet Ang Chhongba Sherpa who is our main sirdar and will be your guide to Everest Base Camp. His home is in Khari Khola and it is his house that you will be living in if you go to the village.

Before your placement starts, or during the teaching placement, you go on an 18 day trek to the base camp of the highest mountain in the world. Having flown from Kathmandu to Lukla, you begin what is undeniably one of the world's greatest treks, to one of the most incredible places on the planet. Eventually you will reach the last settlement, Gorak Shep, perched on the edge of the massive Khumbu Glacier under the sheer slopes of Mount Everest. From there mountaineers begin their climb to the summit. This trek is fully supported; you will have a porter to carry your bag and you will be staying in comfortable lodges all the way up, eating wonderful food and taking your time in order to acclimatise properly.

Once back in Lukla, it is possible for you to trek a further two days down the valley, to stay in the village of Khari Khola. It is a stunningly beautiful area, where three valleys meet, their sides covered with lush forests or terraced with plantations of tea, barley and other crops. You will stay with Chhongba Sherpa in a traditional Nepalese family home. The house is lovely, large enough for you to have your own space and with amazing views across the valley. Chhongba's Mum will look after you, cooking delicious food for you, and villagers will visit often to talk and drink tea. Chongbba is actually a qualified solicitor, the first in his village to be educated, so he and his guests are highly regarded in the village.

It is sometimes possible to teach at the school just up the 'street' (more a path than a street as there are no roads or vehicles here, only yaks) or to help out with one of Moving Mountains' community projects. You'll find the people extremely sociable and overwhelmingly generous and friendly. At times it can be almost too much, especially when you have to drink the local *rakshi* wine in every house you pass ! The local pace of life is slow and relaxed, people on placements in the past have said that life in the mountains was so tranquil that they just didn't want to leave.

After your time in the mountains you will be back to the excitement and bustle of Kathmandu. You will live there in a three bedroom apartment built above the house of Ang Rita, my partner in Nepal. I have been working with him for about 15 years, he's a lovely guy, very small but lovely! There are likely to be other Gap travellers and medical students on placements staying in the apartment with you; it should be very sociable, with lots of trips into Thamel for drinks and meals, shopping and sight-seeing. Thamel is a wonderfully colourful vibrant place, a real blend of old and new, traditional and modern.

You will now start work teaching in a local secondary school which I support through the charity Moving Mountains. You'll find it very different from life in the mountains, but equally fulfilling. In the morning you'll just take a bus or *tuktuk* in to school and build up a daily routine. The house has a house-girl to look after things and there's a cook if you need it.

It is possible, depending on the length of your trip, to start by teaching in Kathmandu, then go to the mountains, or to spend a few weeks in Kathmandu, take a break for the trek and then return to finish your teaching afterwards.

All your costs are taken care of: In Kathmandu you will be given a weekly food allowance to use as you wish, and in Khari Khola Chhongba's family will look after you. On the trek there will be cooks to prepare really tasty meals every day. All the costs of the trek (your own porter, internal flights between Lukla and Kathmandu, transport in Kathmandu and staff back-up) are included.

You need only worry about your international flight, visa, vaccinations, insurance and personal spending money.

For sure, you will be well looked after. Everybody you meet in Nepal is overwhelmingly kind and you are certain to make some very good friends.

Conservation and Building projects

As mentioned above, your teaching placement will sometimes coincide with a specific community project we are undertaking with the charity Moving Mountains. This would enable you to work in the Himalayas with locals on projects they have requested help with. To date we have worked on a school, a clinic, a monastery as well as a hydro-electric scheme for Khari Khola and nearby villages.

The building is simple work; apart from getting the materials to the site, it could include woodwork, dry stonewalling, roofing, cement work and making basic furniture. There will always be Nepalese builders on site to teach and help you.

Teach & Trek, Summary:

Teaching in Kathmandu (possibly with time in Khari Khola) 5 weeks

Kathmandu - Everest Base Camp round trip 3 weeks

Independent travel

Cost: For the latest prices please refer to our website; www.adventurealternative.com

GAP TEACH; 8 week programme

If you don't fancy trekking to Everest Base Camp, or wish to do your placement at a time of year when trekking in the Himalaya is out of season, we also offer 8 week teaching placements in Kathmandu.

We are offering people the opportunity to travel out to Nepal, to live and teach as the locals do. The school in Kathmandu has four teaching positions, available all year round, for keen and enthusiastic volunteers. All lessons in the school are taught in English so you will be able to make a great impression upon the children during the weeks you spend with them.

You will live in our comfortable apartment with lounge, kitchen and private bedroom and bathroom. Company employee Ang Rita lives downstairs and is on hand to assist you in any way he can. You will have plenty of free time to explore the local area, visit shrines and temples and enjoy the restaurants, shops and nightlife of Thamel.

These placements are really enjoyable, in no time you will have settled into the Nepalese way of life and feel completely at home, while having the chance to enjoy new and unforgettable experiences.

Gap Teach, Summary:

Teaching in Kathmandu 8 weeks

Independent travel

Cost: For the latest prices please refer to our website; www.adventurealternative.com

Summary of all costings

Includes:

1. Complete back-up throughout your stay in Nepal
2. Food, lodging and daily transport (to and from the school only) whilst teaching in Kathmandu.
3. Payment for a house girl to clean the flat in Kathmandu.
4. 3 week trek to Base Camp including: all food, porters, cooks, sirdar, lodging and/or tent accommodation, National Park fees, permits and western guide. All group gear, but *not* personal clothing and equipment (kit list provided)
5. Return flight to Lukla.
6. Food, lodging and staff in Khari Khola (should you choose to visit) plus funding for any community projects that we are supporting in the villages
7. Nepalese staff – their wages, insurance, equipment, medical benefits.
8. All airport transfers and organisation of permits, movement of gear, materials, and people within Kathmandu.
9. All UK administration and organisation of placement.

Not including:

Vaccinations	-	estimate £50
International flight	-	estimate £650
Travel Insurance	-	estimate around £70
Visa	-	currently \$20
Personal expenses	-	souvenirs, sightseeing, telephone calls,
Independent travel	-	generally you can live on around \$25 per day in Nepal or India

Independent Travel in Nepal and India

After your placement you have the opportunity to explore Nepal by yourself if you wish. You could visit Pokhara and trek the Annapurna Circuit, go white water rafting or on an elephant-back safari, even embark on an overland journey through India by bus, train or perhaps a boat on the Ganges. You could end up in Delhi and fly home from there, or you may fly home from Kathmandu. There is a great wealth of places to visit and discover, and we are more than happy to discuss your plans and offer advice on where to go and what to do.

Estimate \$25 per day for budget travel in most areas of Nepal and India.

The success of any trip like this lies in its preparation and we make a big effort to help you with this. All you need is an open mind and lots of enthusiasm!

Information about extra costs:

Airfares - You can try USIT or STA if you a registered student, remember to book early!

Insurance - try using your home policy or a discounted travel insurance policy with a credit card, or try STA. Contact us for details of our policy.

Visa - it is \$20.00 now but could change.

Meals in Kathmandu - there are lots and lots of restaurants and plenty cater for the budget traveller, offering every imaginable cuisine. You can get a really nice basic meal for \$5, or splash out at the Yak and Yeti for \$50.

Vaccinations - clinics may be able to charge less for your vaccinations if they know what you will be doing in Nepal. Ask your GP for advice.

Personal Expenses - Up in the hills you will hardly need to spend anything, only on a few cheap chocolate bars or sodas, the odd battery or extra meal. In Kathmandu you might want to hire a guide to show you round the temples, and you'll want to buy souvenirs. We can help you shop around for bargains. \$20-30 per week should be adequate.

Porters - Adventure Alternative is committed to providing good working conditions, wages, benefits and equipment for our Nepalese staff. We give them a proper insurance policy and we ensure they are well trained. We promote a long term employment plan to people who are otherwise often abused by irresponsible, unregistered operators offering cheap treks to Base Camp. You can be very very sure that the people we employ are well treated and properly paid. Your involvement in our Gap Year programme helps to promote human rights for Nepalese porters

GENERAL INFORMATION - NEPAL

Safety and responsibility;

We provide extensive back-up for our treks in Nepal, including porters, cooks, sirdars and guides, to ensure your comfort and safety in the high altitude environments you will be trekking through.

Spending time in a Himalayan mountain village will give you the experience of living in a different culture. It will be a real step back in time for you, the mountain lifestyle is very slow and peaceful, dictated by the passing of the seasons. The Sherpa people are friendly, gentle and very religious. Their communities are centred around the monastery and they lead very traditional, ritualistic lives. You will learn a lot about Tibetan Buddhism and it is important to respect the Sherpas' beliefs and way of life.

During your independent travel, you will find Nepal is generally a very safe place to travel through and the people very helpful and kind. Crime is not common in Nepal. These are poor people but, in the mountains especially, you will find them proud and honest. That is not to say that in Kathmandu there is not the danger of being hit by a fast moving rickshaw!

If you do decide to travel into India you will find it an extraordinary sensory experience. India can be very overwhelming for some people, especially after the relaxed pace of life in Nepal. Having said that, on the whole you will find people helpful and decent. Finding places to stay is really very easy and we can help you plan your trip. There is plenty of public transport from the border at Gorakhpur to Delhi, from where you can make a day trip to the Taj Mahal at Agra, or plan a longer trip further afield .

Living arrangements, food and transport;

In Kathmandu you will be staying in our very comfortable apartment with a hot shower and private bedrooms. From there it is a short bus or taxi ride into Thamel where there are plenty of restaurants, internet cafes, bars and shops.

Once on the trek, Nepal is a land without roads. Everything is carried by human or by yak. The pace of life slows quite literally to a walking pace. You will be staying either in comfortable lodges along the route or in 2-man tents. In Khari Khola you will be staying in Chhongba's house or a lodge, both with comfortable beds. Once you are on your own travelling, it is easy to find a small hotel to stay in. Tourist facilities are numerous and inexpensive, and the people are generous and helpful.

Food will always be plentiful, varied, tasty and local. Everything from *dahl batt*, noodles and chilli potatoes to the famous yak steak! There is also plenty of western style food such as soup, omelettes and pizza. Keeping healthy on the trail is the most important thing and we ensure that our cooks maintain a high standard of hygiene. If staying in lodges we chose the well-established places which we know serve good food.

Transport is easy to answer as it's all on foot in the hills! In Kathmandu you will either walk or take rickshaws. Travelling independently outside Kathmandu you can use local buses, which are cheap and reliable. Once in India trains are a safe, colourful and exciting way to travel across the subcontinent. If you go to the jungle you will be on elephant back or in a dugout canoe. In fact you will experience a wide range of new and exciting forms of transport during your placement.

Project sustainability;

Gavin Bate has been climbing in the Himalayas for many years now and has made some firm friends among the Sherpas of various villages in the Khumbu. Through them we have the opportunity to put something back into their community and to work with the Sherpas in a joint attempt to improve their lot. Adventure Alternative projects in these villages are not one-off things, it takes months of meetings with the local monks and village elders to agree where our help is most needed, and how the villagers can also help. It is very much a joint effort. Even when schools, clinics and monasteries are built, repaired and up and running, there will always be a need for sustainable projects to counter the heavy impact of tourism in the region.

Fundraising ;

We help you with advice and can provide you with letters of support and certificates of involvement but we do not raise the money for you. That is your job and there are many resources available to you. It will require a lot of effort and commitment which is part of the Gap experience. We will not leave you out there in the cold though, we are always available to talk and offer advice.

You need to sit down and divide the costs of the trip into manageable chunks. Work out what you can put in, how much you can raise through work, what your parents can help you with, your relatives, your friends. Then look at how much you can raise through sponsorship, through community support (e.g. Rotary Club, businesses) and from grants (there are many, but it takes research and time to find and apply for them).

Then look at your timing, look at what you could borrow if it came to it. Brainstorm a series of fundraisers; no-uniform day, dinners, quizzes, bedpushes, sponsored events, themed parties, fashion shows etc. Then start writing letters and make yourself a portfolio. Get the local paper to feature you in an article, go on the radio, run a competition with a prize donated by a shop (the better the prize, the more people the competition will attract) and put posters up asking for help. Work weekends if you want to but make sure you don't jeopardise your studies. Above all get the support of your parents and their friends. You'll probably find they would love to get together and run a jumble sale, car boot sale, garden fete or fundraising dinner. Organising all this should be a great experience and a steep learning curve.

Insurance;

You will need to organise your own travel insurance and you must give us the details when the policy is in place. You only need a standard travel policy for this trip. Your money will be put into a secure client account.

Politics;

Nepal has been in the press a great deal recently, however this has not affected the running of our placements. There has been no record of Maoists or other Nepalese targeting tourists in the past and we, and our Nepalese staff, believe it is perfectly safe for you to go there. Obviously we monitor the political situation in Nepal closely and you will find an up to date statement on this issue on our website.

Code of Conduct;

Nepal is a country of strong traditions, religion, values and ritual. We are looking for people who we think will respect their place in a school, in another country, another culture. People who will show character and integrity, common sense and initiative, humour and patience, strength of purpose and humility.

But we are also looking for people who won't expose themselves to danger or embarrassment; drinking, taking drugs, excessive swearing, revealing clothing and a lack of respect to village elders will cause great offence and may have long term detrimental effect on our entire programme in Nepal.

The Nepalese are tremendously warm people who are almost embarrassingly polite, quite quiet and tremendously honest and devout. Their life in the mountains is one of purity and simplicity. They are very open and compromising generally and the children are a delight. But you will need to respect the fact that you are visitor in their country. We reserve the right to remove you from your placement and send you home if we feel that there is a problem and that you are becoming a liability to yourself and others in your group. We are looking for some considerable degree of humanity and understanding, humour and generosity of spirit.

All this is not intended to worry, more to inspire. This trip is special because we want you to absorb the absolute uniqueness of life in Nepal and the wonder of the people who live there. With your cooperation it will be a wonderful experience you just won't forget. It's up to you.

Selection;

Adventure Alternative currently offers places for 20 people to go to Nepal per year. This means we have to be selective about who we choose to go on a placement. It is vital you understand that we are not interested in simply filling places or trying to get quota for the year. That is not our ethos at all.

We want the right people to go on our placements so there is an element of competition in the application. There is no point in making it too easy, so that at the end there is little or no satisfaction in having really challenged yourself. And we do not want our Gap placements to become just another hurdle to jump in the race to fill your cv. Of course it will be good for future careers but we also want to think of the people you will be visiting and working with, the impact you will have on the kids you will teach and so on.

Payments;

You need to pay a deposit of £250.00 if you are accepted onto the placement scheme with us, and we then operate a system of instalments. The final balance must be paid at least 8 weeks prior to departure. All monies are kept in a secure client account.

All payments must be made in sterling or euro to Adventure Alternative Ltd. We can provide you with our bank details if you wish to make a transfer. All payments will receive a receipt which will indicate amount paid and balance remaining. You can also pay online through our website.

Adventure Alternative is a Limited Company and a registered tour and expedition company with full tour operator, employer's liability and public liability insurance.